CLOTHING AND FIT PREFERENCES OF FEMALE BABY BOOMERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–STOUT

by

Brenna Lee

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree
in

Home Economics

Approved: (2) Semester Credits

Dr. Renee Howarton

Dr. Renee Howarton

The Graduate School

University of Wisconsin-Stout

May, 2005

The Graduate School

University of Wisconsin-Stout

Menomonie, WI 54751

ABSTRACT

	Lee	Brenna	E.
(Writer)	(Last Name)	(First Name)	(Middle Initial)

Clothing and Fit Preferences of Female Baby Boomers at the University of Wisconsin- Stout

(Title)

Home Economics	Dr. Renee Howarton	May, 2005	96
(Graduate Program)	(Research Advisor)	(Month/Year)	(# of Pages)

American Psychological Association, 5th edition

(Name of Style Manual Used in this Study)

The purpose of this study is to describe and compare female Baby Boomers' attitudes regarding apparel and fit preferences. It examines female Baby Boomers' purchasing attitudes and behaviors and identifies characteristics female Baby Boomers value in apparel, how they expect clothing to fit and their frustrations with fit relative to clothing that is currently available. Two main questions were addressed in this study: Are female Baby Boomers satisfied with the apparel currently provided by the apparel industry? If they are not satisfied, is fit a major factor in their dissatisfaction?

The self-developed questionnaire consisted of four sections and 75 questions. The sections included profile, attitudinal, behavioral and apparel preferences. The questionnaire was sent to all female employees of the University of Wisconsin-Stout. Three hundred and five (305) usable questionnaires were returned. Two hundred and twenty-nine (229) of these were Baby Boomer respondents.

Results were analyzed using ordinal and nominal statistics. Frequency counts and percentages were computed on all questions, while mean, T-test and standard deviation were calculated for questions in the attitude and behavior sections. Cross tabulations were applied to all appropriate questions. Chi-square analysis was used to determine whether statistically significant differences existed between questions. Cross tabulation and chi-square analysis was also used to compare the responses of the three different age groupings.

Generally, respondents were married, employed full-time and had a personal income after taxes of $25,000-$49,999. The majority felt they were physically fit and wore a size large (14-16). Most participants shop for themselves at least two to four times a year and spend an average of $51-$200 per shopping trip. The majority of Boomer participants do not believe that the apparel industry caters to their needs. Most prefer to wear business casual and leisure wear. They prefer pant combinations over skirt combinations and look for fit, quality and price over style and brand name. Most participants would appreciate more fit information on garment hang tags.

Acknowledgments

The researcher wishes to thank everyone who has contributed to the completion of this study. Special thanks are owed to Dr. Renee Howarton for her infectious enthusiasm, guidance, patience, kindness and encouragement throughout this entire process.

Thank you to Christine Ness for performing the statistical analysis of the data and for her guidance with the data. Thank you to the faculty of the Apparel, Textiles and Design Department as well as the faculty of the Retail Merchandising and Management Department for guidance and inspiration. The researcher is grateful to all University Staff who completed the questionnaire, as this study would not have succeeded without your participation. Finally, the researcher would like to thank her family for continued undying support, encouragement and enthusiasm.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter I: Introduction

The Baby Boom generation prides itself on having a progressive lifestyle, freedom, independence and health (Trim, 1999). This generation has the attitude and numbers to redefine what it is like to age in American society. "The generation we're talking about is truly on a search for eternal youth" (Holstein & Tharp, 2000, p. 37). They do not feel like their parents, they do not want to think about moving into assisted living and they certainly do not feel old. Some believe life is just starting. Because they are aging differently than previous generations, marketing to them will call for creative new strategies and opportunities for companies that succeed in meeting their expectations. Industries must react to the aging Baby Boomers quickly because the older population will increase significantly between the years 2010 and 2030 when the Baby Boom generation reaches age 65. By 2030, there will be about 70 million people aged 65 and over, more than twice their number in 1997 (Trim, 1999). This gives Boomers an incredible sense of power compared to other generations with less market influence.

Industries that want to capture the aging Boomers realize they must start targeting them immediately. Baby Boomers have enormous purchasing power. "Boomers are where the money is" (Holstein & Tharp, 2000, p. 36). They are the most powerful demographic in the United States, representing 78 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964 (Trim, 1999). With Boomer women bringing in additional income, two-income Boomer households are the fastest growing consumer segment for many industries including automobiles, apparel, cosmetics, travel, and pharmaceuticals, to name a few. However, Baby Boomers have demonstrated they will not just hand over their money to these industries; industries have to earn it by repositioning products and services to attract them. This is not a frivolous generation. Boomers expect quality and are not seeking to acquire clutter. According to Rick Johnson, (Trim, 1999) director of the senior-living group at Torti Fallas Partners, "Baby Boomers are generally more privileged, more educated, have more disposable income, and are more savvy, informed consumers than previous generations" (p. 25).

Baby Boomers are used to having a choice of products and services designed around their needs and wants. Designers are already working to ensure that aging Baby Boomers live their lives independently, to the absolute fullest, free of the limits of old age (Trim, 1999). If industries can succeed in keeping Baby Boomers healthy and active, they will spend more. Consequently, businesses are doing everything they can to keep Baby Boomers feeling young and carefree. Demographic projections show that Baby Boomers can expect to live longer. The Administration on Aging predicts that by 2050, American males will live an average of 86 years and females will live to an average age of 92 years. "Never before in history has the phase of later life had the potential to be so long and fruitful. Old age as we now know it is very new, and doesn't look at all like it used to" (Merrell, 1996, p. 34).

Boomers acknowledge that they are aging, but they do not feel old and will not respond to messages aimed at seniors. They want to feel attractive and healthy. Still active in the community, they want to look successful and fashionable and will spend significantly on items that promote youth. "Baby Boomers have both masterminded and fallen victim to an anti-aging epidemic far more virulent than the average case of mass hysteria" (Merrell, 1996, p. 34). Sales are dramatically up for anti-aging products, including everything from anti-wrinkle creams to botox injections.

The apparel industry is among many industries that need to respond to the Baby Boomer's needs. So far they have not accomplished this. Poor fit is the number one customer complaint related to apparel and also the number one reason for returns (Heaton, 2000). Consumers define well-fitted garments as "comfortable to wear" and "looks good on my body." Poor fit is also a reason why some customers no longer enjoy shopping and find it more of a burden to find clothing that suits them. Baby Boomers who feel that nothing is specifically designed for them and that sizing is ambiguous also feel discouraged when shopping for clothes. Customers have garments in their closets that range in size so dramatically that they have no idea what size they are. The lack of sizing standards is hurting the apparel business greatly because it adds to customer's confusion and frustration when trying to find well-fitting garments. It does not help that customers are unknowledgeable about fit. The average customer simply does not understand how garments are supposed to fit and what is most flattering on their bodies. Fit gets even more complicated when one factors in different fabrics and style trends.

Women have an especially hard time with fit as their bodies vary greatly and change dramatically with age. Female bodies shift and change shape as they age. Unflattering, overly simplistic, baggy clothing has been a solution for the aging female, but this type of apparel is not acceptable and will not sell to female Baby Boomers. The Boomer generation already lived through the sack dress; they are unlikely to adopt its older relative, the mu-mu.

Female Baby Boomers find themselves in a no-woman's land between their daughter's clothing and their mother's clothing. As the body ages, fit becomes a complicated and frustrating issue for women. Even if they maintain their weight and physical fitness, their bodies change and they notice that the clothes that fit them last year no longer look the same. Shopper Ann states, "It's very depressing trying on stuff and not having it fit. It just reminds you of growing older…" (D'Innocenzo, 2003, p. D08). Fit becomes even more important to the aging Baby Boomer customer as it affects her psychologically, socially, and emotionally as well as physically (Hazen, 1994).

Activities and lifestyle play a big role in determining clothing requirements. Female Boomers are still in the work force and live active volunteer and social lives. Fit is the number one priority for female Boomers deciding whether or not to purchase a garment. Women are demanding clothing that fits both their bodies and their lifestyles properly or they will simply not purchase it. This creates a new market for professional, evening and active wear. Because the female Baby Boomers are still very active in the community their dress must be current, yet age appropriate. They refuse to wear shapeless clothing that does not fit correctly or that hides their bodies. Business consultant Alexandria, 56, says,

> I may be over 50, but inside I haven't changed. I still want to be attractive, and I take care of myself, so in many ways I think I look better than ever. I still like wearing nice clothes too, but the difference is, now I won't buy something simply because it's in fashion–my clothing has to fit both my shape and my lifestyle ("Coming of Age," 2000, p. 148)

Boomer women take care of themselves physically and want to be fashionable. They are confident enough to wear apparel that previous generations would never wear: short skirts, sleeveless dresses, and even sexy dresses.

Industry-wide standards do not exist in the apparel industry today. Many women's clothing patterns are still based on government body measurement standards from 1942 (Clark, 1999). There are two main problems with continuing to use old measurement standards. Women are significantly fuller and taller than they were in 1942 and America is much more ethnically diverse than it was in the mid-20th century. Although there is women's specific sizing today, sizing standards are non-existent. Vanity sizing has become a huge inconvenience for today's customers.

The Baby Boomers' taste in apparel is contemporary and not significantly different than the taste of the younger market. However, Baby Boomer customers replenish their wardrobes less frequently than younger customers. This means that Boomers want garments that look current, but are not so drastic that they can only be worn for one season. Because Boomers replenish their wardrobes less frequently, they are much more concerned with quality and durability. They also value casual wear more than younger customers.

Female Baby Boomers are seeking more options in apparel. The market is powerful and ready to spend, but does not see that the apparel industry is catering to them, so they are increasingly frustrated by a lack of apparel choices. This paper explores female Baby Boomer apparel preferences and how the apparel industry could more effectively respond to their needs.

Statement of the Problem

Clothing preferences for female Baby Boomers have not been reflected in apparel design because the industry continues to focus on younger women. As females age, their bodies change dramatically. In the past the apparel industry has clothed aging women in poor fitting, oversized clothing. Baby Boomers are still very active and fashion conscious, so they reject this type of clothing, leaving them little choice for age-appropriate fashion that fits their bodies and lifestyle.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe and compare female Baby Boomers' attitudes regarding apparel preferences. This study examines their purchasing attitudes and behaviors. It also examines what characteristics female Baby Boomers value in apparel, how they expect clothing to fit and their frustrations with fit relative to clothing that is currently available.

Research Objectives

This study will focus on the following objectives:

1. To examine the demographics and psychographics of female Baby Boomers in terms of age, income, work status, body image and attitudes toward aging.
2. To examine shopping behaviors of female Baby Boomers including what they value in apparel, garment qualities that motivate female Baby Boomers to purchase a particular garment, and apparel style preferences.
3. To examine the importance of apparel fit in terms of female Baby Boomers' knowledge of fit, their desire to know about fit, how they judge whether a garment fits them correctly, their inclination to request alterations, and the importance of fit in making purchase decisions.

Definition of Terms

Baby Boomer. Individuals born from 1946 to 1964.

Fit standards. Established guidelines designed to keep garment sizes and fit uniform (Heaton, 2000).

Good fit. Good fit enhances the customer's body, it creates an illusion that the customer's body is both symmetrical and well proportioned (Hazen, 1994).

Knit. Fabric composed of a sequence of intertwined loops.

Woven. Fabric composed of two sets of yarn, a horizontal and vertical yarn that are interlaced together.

Osteoporosis. A disease that weakens the bones and affects posture.

Assumptions and Limitations

A number of assumptions, in addition to honesty, were made throughout this study. These assumptions are related to the limitations. The population sampled may or may not be reflective of other female Baby Boomers in the United States. The population sample was limited in that it was made up of only professional females in Wisconsin and surrounding areas. Menomonie, Wisconsin is a rural area with primarily Caucasian subjects. This may limit the application of results to more diverse, cosmopolitan or urban subjects who may have different opinions on the topics included in the questionnaire.

Chapter II: Literature Review

What Shaped the Baby Boomers

Each generation is molded and shaped by its life experiences. Baby Boomers have been through it all: the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, AIDS, Woodstock, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the rise of Starbucks ("Are Baby Boomers Conceding," 2002). Their economic attitudes are shaped by the long economic expansion that followed World War II.

Boomer parents created an entirely different world for their children than the world that they experienced themselves. Their parents had been through the First World War, the Depression and World War II. Their parents' and grandparents' generations experienced social and political uncertainty and poverty (Dychtwald, 1999). Boomer parents wanted their children's lives to be free of the hardships that they endured.

Traditional Boomer parents instilled in their children the belief that they could do or be anything that they wanted. "As a result, Boomers became idealistic and optimistic, convinced they could change the world" ("The Click and Clash," 2003, p. 37). However, they were exposed to incidents that also shook their world, such as the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King. Another incident that impacted their worldview was the Vietnam War. Boomers did not embrace the war and quickly blamed their parents for it.

This generation gap caused Baby Boomers to be eager to go to college in order to be independent from their parents and change the world. With so many peers, Boomers quickly became very competitive and concerned with getting ahead. Today the Boomers are less deferential and less prone to conformism than any other generation before or after them (“Old? Me?,” 2004). Boomers were strongly encouraged to be both intellectually and socially individualistic and to find their authentic selves. In school, at home and in media they were told to “be special,” “do your own thing,” “think for yourself” (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989).

Today this generation that resented “the establishment” now makes up the establishment. Baby Boomers are now in the Oval Office and in boardrooms throughout America (Day, 1998). The Baby Boomer demographic is so significant that Boomers are using their collective influence to leverage businesses to cater to their preferences. “Boomer CEOs are working with Boomer staffs to serve Boomer customers” (p. 21).

Baby Boomer Psychographics

Baby Boomers are collectively described as idealistic, competitive, likely to question and be skeptical of authority, work hard to stand out from the crowd and “put their own stamp on things” (“The Click and Clash,” 2003, p. 39). Boomers value individuality, youth, optimism, determinism and social activism (Morton, 2001). They do not feel old and don’t want to be treated as if they are aging. They are open-minded and are willing to try new things (Bernstein, 2001). They are use to having things their way in the marketplace and expect products and services to revolve around their needs and preferences. They are optimistic and see their lives as just beginning. They see the rest of their lives as full of new opportunities, rather than sickness and negative experiences.

How Boomers Effect Industries

Industries were totally unprepared to respond to the needs of such a massive generation. Baby Boomers created an overwhelming need for more hospital rooms, more baby food, larger houses, disposable diapers, shoes, Band-Aids, toys, televisions etc. For example, the diaper business grew from a $32 million industry in 1947 to a $50 million industry in 1957 (Dychtwald, 1999). Boomer parents showered their children with abundance to make up for the hardships they had endured. Consequently, the Baby Boomer generation quickly became the main consumers, rather than their parents.

The rise of Levi Strauss Jeans exemplifies the market influence of the Baby Boom generation. In the 1950s James Dean and Marlon Brando both wore a pair of Levi Strauss blue jeans in their films and influenced Boomers to purchase the blue jeans (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989). Boomers saw jeans as a statement. They were anti-establishment, anti-adult, anti-elitist, earthy, proletariat, democratic and youthful. The Boomers' enthusiastic embrace of jeans caused Levi Strauss to become the largest clothing manufacturer in the world.

Baby Boomers without a doubt drive all product design and are reached through the media. "By the time the first Boomers were six, each of them had watched roughly 5,000 hours of television–more than their parents had seen in their entire lifetimes" (Dychtwald & Flower 1989, p. 59). Today Boomers still get most of their messages from the television. Consequently, the majority of video messages not only target Boomer interests, but take their dollar as well. Baby Boomers have substantially fueled growth of the United States economy in the last 50 years. In 1963, American adolescents accounted for an estimated $22 billion in sales.

Baby Boom to Age Wave

The Baby Boom is now becoming an "age wave" that will crash onto society changing all industries in its path (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989). "The rise in the proportion of the world's old will be the century's defining demographic trend" ("Forever

Young", 2004, p. 4). The 77.7 million Baby Boomers represent almost 30% of the United States' population (Purdum, 2002). "Americans are living longer than ever before, and older Americans are healthier, more active, more vigorous, and more influential than any other older generation in history" (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989, p. 5). With numbers comes power. Boomers have always had this and are not prepared to let it go just because they are aging. They still question authority and see themselves as young, free and in charge (Dychtwald, 1999).

Redefining Retirement and Aging

Many Baby Boomers have now reached retirement. The cliché image of retirement pictures seniors playing in their gardens, taking leisurely walks to the pastry shop and slowly meandering through life, leaving their professional lives behind. Baby Boomers will not follow this cliché. They see retirement as beginning another chapter in their lives in which they start new careers, take up new hobbies or become active in organizations. The majority of Boomers view retirement as an opportunity to continue working because this generation views work as fulfilling rather than a burden (Fry, 2003).

Boomers also have significant family responsibilities as they age. They are not only taking care of their own families, but often find themselves taking care of their parents as well. Boomers will take on as much as they can because they hate admitting that they are burned out and cannot do everything that they wish, or feel as if they ought to do ("The Click and Clash," 2003).

Physical Aging

As the Baby Boomers age, their bodies are inevitably going to change. The most common signs of aging are weakened eyesight, graying of the hair, increased pigmenting of the skin, decreased strength, wrinkled skin, and arthritis (Lam & Sulindro, 2001). Because of these inevitable changes, Baby Boomers purchase products they swore they would never use. For example, 53% wear bifocals ("Are Baby Boomers Conceding," 2002).

Diversity and Individuality of the Aging Baby Boom Generation

With numbers comes diversity. The Baby Boom generation is more diverse than any other generation (Fry, 2003). Thus, if industries market to the entire generation, they will not be successful. America has created the myth that once you have seen one old woman, you have seen them all (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989). "When we look beyond the myth, there is no age group more varied in physical abilities, personal styles, tastes and desires, or financial capabilities than the older population" (p. 47).

Within the Baby Boom generation there are significant differences between older Boomers, born from 1946-1955, and younger Boomers, born from 1956-1964. Younger Boomers are still primarily focused on their children and mortgage payments in terms of spending, while older Boomers are free to spend on themselves. Empty nests allow older Baby Boomers to spend 13% more than average on adult women's apparel ("American Baby Boomers," 2003).

Minorities makeup16.9% of the Baby Boom generation: 12% are black, 4% are Asian or Pacific Islander, and .8% are American Indian ("American Baby Boomers," 2003). In order to successfully target Baby Boomers, marketers must look at lifestyle, race, demographics, family situations and psychographics, not simply age (Harris, 2004).

Americans' View on Aging

For the majority of America's history as in other countries, growing older was not considered negative, but was seen as a positive thing. "In the early centuries of American history, in nearly every aspect of community, family, and work life, old people reigned. Only during the 20th century have they temporarily been knocked to the mat, viewed largely as a social burden" (Dychtwald, 1999, p. 18).

Today there is a strong message to stay as young as possible. America's unique image of aging is negative because of the glorification of youth (Dyctwald & Flower, 1989). Since youth is personified by power, sex and ideals, it leaves older people with the connotation of being lazy, incompetent, attached to the past, poor and sick. Negative connotations of the elderly has been embedded in American culture. "Our culture is deeply gerontophobic. We have a fear of aging and prejudice against the old that clouds all our perceptions about what it means to grow old in America" (p. 30).

However, industries will no longer be using words associated with aging if they wish to be profitable. For example, senior citizen discounts will likely be phased out when it applies to Baby Boomers. Boomers look on these classifications as negative and not applicable to them.

Baby Boomers' Purchasing Patterns

After they graduated from college, Baby Boomers were eager to move up the economic ladder and spend, spend, spend. Because they were such a spoiled generation and wanted it all, it should come as no surprise that they did this with the help of Visa, MasterCard and American Express.

America has been led to believe that all older people are poor and do not consume products or services. Another popular perception is that the older population is extremely loyal to their brands and too set in their ways, so they are not worth the effort to market to (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989). These beliefs may have been true in the past, but they could not be more incorrect for the Baby Boomer generation. Older Boomer consumers tend to be more thoughtful in their purchases and less inclined to buy into fads or on impulse, but they are not afraid to try new things. The reason why the older population does not try new products or switch brands is simply because no one is marketing to them and changing their minds about products that they currently use. Thus, their minds and actions remain stagnant because they do not know of any other options available to them. "They are ardent consumers, used to experimenting with brands; they are relatively libertarian, having grown up with women's lib and marijuana; and they know about ethical consumption" ("Old? Me?," 2004, p. 1).

The Baby Boom generation values quality in products and services; products need to be reliable, user-friendly and efficient (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989). Baby Boomers do look at price, but are willing to pay more for quality and services than younger consumers. Older consumers want information that will allow them to take charge and make their own informed decisions. "They want to play an active role as consumers and expect to be responded to in this regard. The sales message should thus be based on facts, not emotions." (p. 271).

Although the Baby Boom generation does not want to buy into the youth culture, they want to appear how they feel: lively and energetic. Today Baby Boomers want products that do not announce that they are aging, but are user-friendly (Purdum, 2002). Purdum (2002) states,

> ..the generation that marched in the '60s, discoed in the '70s, coined the "Me" generation in the '80s and learned what an empty nest feels like in the '90s and beyond doesn't want to go gently into that good night. They want stylish products that are easy to use; products that don't scream, "I'm old! (p. 1)

Boomers also want products that have a status attached, whether that is quality associated in a brand name or style; they have money and want to spend it.

Boomer purchases reflect their new lease on life. Sport-utility vehicles, self-help books, hair coloring, Botox, and Viagra are all products that are driven by Baby Boomers (Drezen & Pohlman, 2004). Almost half the people who purchased BMW's sporty Z3 were in their 50s and over half of the purchasers of Harley Davidsons are 45 or older ("Old? Me?," 2004). Because Baby Boomers are so active, they drive the active wear business. Lee (2004) found the following:

> Since 1990, the number of people aged 55-plus joining clubs has increased 158% to 4.9 million. And spending on sports apparel by consumers 45 and over topped $8.5 billion in 1998; that's 22.1% of total consumer expenditures in the category. (p. 36)

Ignored Generation

Because the Baby Boomer generation has been targeted for so much marketing, one can imagine their confusion when products and promotions do not solely revolve around them anymore, but are starting to concentrate on generation Y's needs. "These twenty- and thirty-somethings are a logical replenishment strategy for brands whose consumers have traditionally been in their 40s and 50s" (Meyers, 2004, p. 1). This transition is due to the influence of young advertisers and the belief that companies must focus on young markets in order to survive. There is a belief that consumers die when they reach the age of 50 ("Old? Me?," 2004). This thinking is explained by Thomas Heilmann ("Old? Me?,"2004), chief executive of Scholz & Friends,

> …a product that gets a reputation for being an old person's brand looses value in the market at large. If I can convince someone of 25 to drink my coffee, I have a customer for 65 years. If I convince someone of 70 to change, I may have a return for only ten years (p. 9).

Harris (2004) puts it bluntly, "They don't understand the market and frankly don't really care" (p. 14).

Female Baby Boomer Psychographics

Female Baby Boomers believe in themselves, believe in equality and are very ambitious. They are fulfilled by a combination of work, family, friends and personal accomplishments ("What Do Women," 1996). Ninety-six percent (96%) of female Baby Boomers believe that beauty is inner strength and kindness, 95% believe that it is confidence and 90% believe that it is sensitivity and generosity ("What Do Women," 1996). Female Baby Boomers were particularly shaped by birth control and the women's movement. These two events, along with education, empowered women and gave them a sense of control. Female Boomers quickly adopted this control and intertwined it into their lives. Through self-actualization, education and a desire to work, they have singlehandedly changed following generations. The number of women who are in the work force has been steadily increasing throughout history. In 1999, 49% of the workforce was female; whereas, in 1950 the female work force made up only 29.6% of the work force (Dychtwald, 1999). In addition to numbers of women in the workforce, women earn as much or more than their husbands in 45% of dual income households.

Today, 52% of women ages 55 to 64, and 77% of women ages 45 to 54, work full- or part-time and16% of women ages 65 to 74 continue to work (Francese, 2003). The reason why women remain in the workforce longer is because they are living longer and the majority of female Boomers have better jobs than previous generations due to their education level. Of the women in the workforce age 45 to 54, 31 percent are college graduates, compared to 19% of women aged 65 to 74. This high education level translates to women now taking managerial and leadership positions in the workforce. Forty percent (40%) of female 45-to 54-year-olds year olds in the workforce have managerial or professional occupations; only 22% of women in the workforce aged 65 to 74 hold managerial or professional roles. Forty percent (40%) of women aged 45 to 54 are employed in a managerial or professional occupation and spending $23.3 billion a year on clothing (Rozhon, 2004).

Because Boomer women are working as long as possible, this translates into more spending power. Francese (2003) states, "The big increase during the next 10 to 20 years in the number of working women over the age of 55, combined with a significant rise in their income, will likely pump billions of dollars into the consumer economy" (p. 40). The number of women 55 and older in the work force is projected to increase by 52%

between 2000 and 2010, making it 10.1 million women in the workforce in 2010, a 4.7 million difference from 2000.

Aging in America for Female Baby Boomers

Female Baby Boomers strongly feel the pressure from the media and American society to stay young. There are many roads that are empty promises to become younger today: plastic surgery, health clubs, fad dieting, or dressing in the juniors department. Baby Boomer Seney (2004) explains her frustration,

> The hell with it–I've had enough. I don't want to starve myself every day to stay thin. I don't want to build my day around my exercise schedule. I don't want to jam my feet into high heels. I don't want to wear tight clothes that force me to stand up straight and suck in my stomach. In other words, I don't want to fight it anymore. (p. L4)

Most Boomer women would rather age gracefully and be comfortable in their own bodies than take extreme measures that are available now. Boomer women will collectively challenge the misconception that if you embrace aging, you are, "letting yourself go" (Seney, 2004).

Apparel Industry's Attitude Toward Female Baby Boomers

In their early stages, female Baby Boomers dictated to the apparel industry. Whatever they wanted was created for them and marketed to them. However, when a female Boomer goes into a store today she cannot find anything that feels "made for her" as she did in the past. The apparel industry has simply forgotten its most loyal and valuable customers (Rozhon, 2004). This has forced Baby Boomers to spend their money in other industries. "This Boomer generation does have money to spend, but needs convincing that it should be diverted from purchases for the home and on to clothes" (Aldridge, 2004, p. 2). Baby Boomers only appear to have lost interest in apparel because they have been ignored and there is nothing that appeals to them enough to purchase due to the inattentive retailers.

Women's apparel has dropped an alarming 13 percent since 2000 (Gardyn, 2003). A lack of attention to fit and sizing issues has significantly led to this decrease. In 1993 households spent an average of 6% on apparel where in 2003 only 4% was allocated to apparel. One may blame the economy, but restaurant, electronic and entertainment industries have remained stable, or even increased. Women want to update their wardrobes. They just cannot find what they want.

The apparel industry must cater to the Baby Boomers' needs without patronizing their age. Information, such as hangtags and sewn size and care labels must be produced with a larger font and in highly contrasting colors. Buttons, hook and eyes, zippers and other fastening devices must be easy to use and get a hold of. Eighty Six percent of Baby Boomers feel it is harder than ever to feel confident with their appearance, but are not likely to go through surgical procedures to feel better about themselves ("Are Baby Boomers Conceding," 2002). The apparel industry can cater to this need. Clothing can greatly affect how women think of themselves and make them look and feel younger. "The challenge for retailers is to woo this generation with stylish clothing that fits but doesn't remind them that they're getting older ("Clothes Sellers Embrace," 2004, p. 3)."

Female Boomer Spending on Apparel

Although Baby Boomers are aging, seven out of ten are healthy, which suggests that their spending comes from their wants rather than their needs (Drezen & Pohlman, 2004). For females this translates into about $29 billion in casual clothing alone.

Female Baby Boomers Will not Wear What Their Daughters are Wearing

Because of the concentration on younger generations, Boomers are finding that their body types are no longer acceptable. Rozhon (2004) states,

> "It was an odd shift, given the amount of attention that had been lavished on the Boomer woman over the years... Then she abruptly dropped from the fashion radar, stranded in a no woman's land somewhere between low-rise jeans for teenagers and olive-drab pantsuits for grannies" (p. C1).

Clothes are not made for aging customers, thus most Boomers feel abandoned. The Boomer's favorite stores have begun to re-position themselves to attract the younger generation despite the fact that 13 to 24-year-olds make up only one-fifth of the population and only 17% of the apparel industries profit, while the 35 to 54-aged customer buys an impressive 40% of clothes sold (Barker, 2002). Stores are too trendy now. "The disconnect between consumers and retailers is a major reason why the apparel industry is in a very tough state" (p. 1). Clothes are simply not fitting their aging bodies and for Baby Boomers, finding the right clothes that fit is often the bottom line for the shopper.

Female Baby Boomers Will Not Wear What Their Mothers Wore

"A few decades ago, a woman pushing 60 might have gone gently into polyester pantsuits and shapeless dresses, resigned that her fashionable days were behind her. No more. Older women want style" (Kelley, 2004, p. H3). A gap remains in available clothing between the trendy and the dowdy. Because Baby Boomers are not aging as their parents did, they are creating a need for apparel from a different perspective. They do not want to wear shapeless clothes that "fit," but look like potato sacks. Female Boomers associate this type of clothing with clothes that their mothers wore and are not ready to adopt these styles (Aldridge, 2004). They still want to show off their bodies and wear clothes that have shape to them (Barker, 2002).

Because female Boomers take better care of themselves, they are wearing clothing that previous generations would never dreamed of wearing such as short skirts, sleeveless dresses and sexy sundresses ("Coming of Age," 2000). According to Pat Murphy, chief merchandising officer of Chico's, "She wants all the fashion, she wants sheer fabrics, uneven hemlines, flirty skirts, color. But while she doesn't want to be reminded of her age, she doesn't want to look ridiculous" (Rozhon, 2004, p. C1).

The apparel currently available to Boomers is not sufficient to meet their specific wants and needs. Consumers may be able to find pieces that work in their wardrobe after extensive searches, but as a result outfits do not look pulled together (Rozhon, 2004). Boomers may not have the same figures that they had in college, but they still want to dress in contemporary, up-to-date fashion. Boomers are much more aware of what is current in fashion and they want to look current. They have a love for apparel, the disposable income to spend on fashion and a desire to dress well ("Coming of Age," 2000). Boomers want to feel comfortable, feminine, fashionable and sexy.

Fabric Preferences

Fabric content is extremely important to the female Baby Boomer. Seventy-one percent prefer to know the fabric content of a garment and half always check the fabric composition label when purchasing a garment, whereas only half of the younger generation (aged 16-24) check fabric content when purchasing apparel ("Baby Boomers Prefer," 1997). Boomers are looking for fabric that is aesthetically pleasing, feels good on their skin and wears well.

"This group of women has a strong preference for natural fibers that results from a kind of subconscious hangover effect from the synthetics stigma of the late '70s and early '80s" ("Baby Boomers Prefer," 1997, p. 1). Cotton, wool and silk have followed them from their yuppie days. Sixty-three percent (63%) of female Boomers believe that apparel made of natural fibers is higher quality and 81% are willing to pay more for apparel made of natural fibers. Natural fibers are favored because they are perceived as comfortable, practical, breathable and easy to care for.

Boomers prefer tweed and textured fabrics are preferred to hide any figure flaws (Bernstein, 2004). However, this generation will not purchase heavier, bulky, textured fabrics if it makes them look five pounds heavier. Stretch and Lycra blends are welcomed as long as they do not hug the body, but are used for ease instead (Yeung, 2002). The female Baby Boomer prefers softer colors and more subdued prints (Kelley, 2004).

Style Preferences

Women look for style, fit, color, and brand, in that order and want more style options (Lents & Newman, 2001). They like shirts to be able to be tucked in and remain tucked in, but also able to be worn out; they do not want their undergarments to show and they like shape through tailoring (Rozhon, 2004). Female Boomers want young attitude rather than young clothes. They also want their wardrobes to translate from office to weekend (Lee, 2004). The waistbands need to be forgiving, but cannot look like they are gathered around elastic (Bernstein, 2004).

Female Boomers prefer their pants to drape rather than cling, and to have enough movement ease to sit comfortably and have a forgiving waistband. The entire waistband must stretch without adding bulk or puckering. Only the customer wants to know that her waistband stretches (Sarkisian-Miller, 2003). Female Boomers prefer their tops to have shape, but not cling; blouses must cover the derrière if meant to be worn outside of the bottom piece (Hobson, 2002). Boomers want longer sleeves, more comfortable necklines, and knee-length skirts in well fitting and more exciting clothes (Bettendorf, 1993).

Fashion revolves around lifestyle. Women's preferences in clothing are more affected by lifestyle than by age ("It's All About Lifestyle," 2001). Boomers want to follow trends, but do not allow the trends to get ahead of their lifestyle. They want the classics, but with a twist. For example, cardigans will appear in their wardrobes, but with a zipper instead of buttons (Bernstein, 2004). According to Yeung (2002):

> There will always be a demand for the corporate basics, but we can't overlook the need for a younger, more contemporary line for the maturing customer. This simply adds up to more choices...especially the mature woman who wants to project an image of youth. In other words, looking as young as she feels. (p. 1)

Female customers want more options in sleeve length, torso length and bust circumference measurements (Chun-Yoon & Jasper, 1995).

Different style elements may be added to a garment's design to aid in fit. Extra layers, or stiffer fabrics may be introduced for "upper arm and tummy control" and add support to the bust (Kaplan, 2004). Boomers prefer a relaxed and comfortable look, but not sloppy, versatile pieces that build on their wardrobe, garments that reflect trends but are not based on them, classic styles and forgiving fit (Kelley, 2004). The Boomer wants to be current, but have a more comfortable fit (Hobson, 2002). One shopper puts her frustration candidly, "Yes, unfortunately, elastic waistbands are appealing to me more and more. It has to do with the fact that I've added a few pounds and that my body shape has changed. I'm not delighted about it" (Drezen & Pohlman, 2004, p. 2).

The Importance of Quality

Boomers are not afraid to spend money, but the product must prove worthy. "Women want and demand quality. They want shirts that continue to look good and fit well, even after several washings" (Lents & Newman, 2001, p. 12). Boomers do not replenish their wardrobes as often as the younger generations, so they want classic cuts and good quality clothing that will last at least a few seasons (Otsuki, 2000). Boomers are much more willing to spend more on quality than other generations. When it comes to spending more on quality apparel, these women definitely feel that it is worth it: 62%, more than any other age group, say they are willing to pay more for better quality ("Coming of Age," 2000).

Loyalty and Implication of Brand Name

This same age group also says that fiber content is more important to them than the brand of clothing ("Coming of Age," 2000). Seventy-one percent (71%) of female Boomers prefer to know fiber content to brand name ("Baby Boomers Prefer," 1997).

"They want clothes that are more realistic and less about an image; they don't want to feel like they paid for a brand name" ("It's All About Lifestyle," 2001, p. 18). "The biggest factor driving a woman's store choice is cost, followed by ease of mobility, fabric with fashion/style/color and functionality…the last thing they look for is a brand name" (p. 19). Boomers no longer purchase apparel because it is in style; they purchase it to fit with their hectic lifestyle. "They are seeking more value from current brands…there is a significant opportunity for brands to increase sales through greater innovation, better fit and more relevance to today's changing lifestyle" ("Branding to Men," 2001, p. 59).

Female Physical Changes with Age

Females inevitably grow 3-5 inches in the waist, 1-3 inches in the hips and 4-6 inches in the chest as they age (Sorkin, 2004). During this time 58% of women feel that they are overweight. Because the hips widen so greatly in females their figure changes to be predominately pear-shaped.

Osteoporosis changes female's bodies dramatically. Osteoporosis is a disease that plagues many women as they age. It weakens the bones, which in turn affects their posture. This disease affects 28 million women (Heaton, 2000).

As the female body ages, its entire composition shifts. Female bodies lose muscle mass and increase fat mass if inactive (Anderson, 2004). Even if the aging female is active, she will notice fat shifting more toward the abdominal region. "As women age, their spines compress, and their backs get rounder and longer. The tummy gets more pronounced, and the fanny gets lower and flatter" (Hazen, 1994, p. 98).

How Body Changes Affect Fit

While female Boomers are in excellent health and are taking care of their bodies, gravity inevitably takes its toll (Kaplan, 2004). Even if their weight and size stays the same, the body shifts, weight goes to different places and bone structure shifts. An aging female's side view changes the most, making length measurements very important to obtain good fit (Hazen, 1994).

Osteoporosis affects women's posture so significantly that clothing fits them very differently than people with good postures. Posture is a basic, central determiner of alignment of fabric grain of garments on the separate body segments (Heaton, 2000). Because the body is leaning forward, the hemline in tops and bottoms goes down in front and up in back.

Changing bodies also affect a woman's psychological, social and emotional-well being (Heaton, 2000). Fit contributes to positive feelings of self-esteem and confidence (Hazen, 1994). "They just aren't finding what they want and when they do, often it doesn't fit. And if it doesn't fit, forget it" (Gardyn, 2003, p. 24). Good size and fit is one of the top three factors influencing purchase decisions. Layne Bryant, Entrepreneur of Plus Sized Fashion states, "You should never ask women to conform their figures to fashion, but rather bring fashion to the figure" (Verdon, 2004, p. L09).

Because of their changing bodies, female Boomers need the flexibility that is currently offered in mature clothing such as roomy pieces and elastic waistbands; however, they refuse to wear those particular pieces. Female Baby Boomers need larger sizes as a result of aging, but they do not want their mother's clothes. The apparel industry must reformulate mature apparel by hiding elastic in regular waistbands and make more ease via drape of the fabric. Boomers want fashionable-yet-forgiving styles (Lee, 2004). Sleeveless shirts are not inviting to a customer who has flabby arms, but she refuses to let the world know about her secret (Lach, 1999).

Female Baby Boomers' Knowledge of Fit

Fit is an individual preference. Good fit enhances the customer's body, it creates an illusion that the customer's body is symmetrical and well proportioned (Hazen, 1994). The average consumer generally believes that good fit is a garment that is comfortable and looks good on her body (Heaton, 2000). Fit is one of the first things that customers consider in evaluating a garment. It is also the number one customer complaint and reason for return.

The average customer has a very limited knowledge of the human body in terms of evaluating it against the industry standard. "Many individuals cannot, or have never tried, to look at their body objectively in the mirror and recognize deviations from the so-called average body shape" (Heaton, 2000, p.1). Different fabrics and trends just complicate this issue even more. Customers do not understand fit because there is no information provided to them about it. Customers need something–brief, easy to understand and accessible to be more knowledgeable about fit (Heaton, 2000).

Sizing

Sizing has always been a difficult issue in the women's market because standards do not exist (Clark, 1999). A leading complaint from consumers is that sizing is inconsistent. The only form of standards was developed in 1942 in which the government measured a handful of young, Caucasian females. However, with time Americans' bodies have become longer and wider, not to mention more diverse (Sorkin, 2004).

The female body has changed from an hourglass shape to a more pear shape over the years (Sorkin, 2004). Half of American women are over size 14 (Clark, 1999). With Boomers aging, it is inevitable that a plus size niche must evolve. Although Americans are getting larger, they are not ashamed of their bodies, but instead are demanding clothes that are appropriate for their changing bodies. Current American women are deciding to "love the skin they're in" rather than hide it. The Plus Sized apparel industry is a $30 billion industry that caters to more than 65 million women (Bermudez, 2002). People are growing heavier faster than they are growing taller and the sizing for most manufacturers does not reflect this (Ross, 2003). Boomers have been through a phase when the size of jeans were sewn to the outside of the pocket to vanity sizing today. Sizing has become overly psychological and retailers are all taking their own spin on it. Only recently did the American Society for Testing and Materials make a standard sizing system for Misses: size two to 20. However, the use of these standards is not required.

The apparel industry is slowly recognizing this problem. The current standards correctly fit a mere 13% of women aged 35-55 (Clark, 1999). A National Sizing Survey was done last year that scanned over 10,000 people across the country (Sorkin, 2004). The lack of research and standards gave way to vanity sizing creating disparity between the clothes available to the customer and their actual body shapes and sizes (Ross, 2003). This resulted in an inevitable need for extensive and pricey alterations. If alterations were not done, the customer was simply left with an unsatisfactory fit. Nearly 20% of Americans today say that finding clothing that fits is one of their greatest challenges ("Lands' End," 2002).

Sizing Problems in Retail

When purchasing apparel in the store, the only information provided on the garment is via hangtags and sewn in labels. The customer does not have any idea how the garment will fit, if at all, until they try the garment on (Chun-Yoon & Jasper, 1995). In order for a correct garment to be selected, sizing must be explained thoroughly. "Current size labels of women's garments, however, lack adequate information to guide consumers in proper selection" (p. 429). The only distinction for women of shape is in tall, petite, and plus sized, but sizes within these ranges vary dramatically. Female numerical size codes are not related to body dimensions and only confuse the customer. Even when an individual finds a size in a certain brand that fits well, she cannot necessarily go back the next season and expect that particular size to fit again. This inconsistency in sizing has resulted in confusion between manufacturers, customers and retailers and has translated into financial loss and frustration. Because of these internal problems in the apparel industry, they are losing their most important customer–the female Baby Boomer. The apparel industry must start catering to their new customer and quickly before she spends her money elsewhere.

The Baby Boomer generation has completely changed the American mindset of aging. Aging is no longer a negative aspect of life. Boomers still have many options as they age. They can now stay at work, retire, travel, become involved in the community or spend more time with family members. Boomers simply reject the previous fears, stereotypes, and caricatures of aging. If you ask them their age, they may tell you, but they do not think of age as a relevant fact about themselves, nor does it hinder the lifestyle they choose. In fact, according to "The Wrinkle Report," a national survey of more than 1,200 people ages 30 to 50, three in four Baby Boomers believe that they actually look younger than their actual years. Merrell (1996) states,

> The fact is that aging tends to be subtle and most losses come hand in hand with small, new rewards. For example, one's first grey hairs may arrive around the same time one earns a major promotion—somehow the equation of loss and gain nets out in a surprisingly satisfying manner." (p. 35)

The Baby Boomers' lust for life is sometimes overwhelming. They are still running marathons or taking on a hobby that they could never get around to because they were working. It is not uncommon to see nontraditional students in a classroom or to see someone over 55 in the workplace. Even as they age, Boomers are looking for a new lease on life and go after it with full force. Industries that cater to Baby Boomer wants and needs the best will reap the greatest rewards.

Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this study is to describe and compare female Baby Boomers' attitudes regarding apparel preferences. This study examines female Baby Boomers' purchasing attitudes and behaviors. It also examines what characteristics female Baby Boomers value in apparel, how they expect clothing to fit and their frustrations with fit relative to clothing that is currently available. This chapter describes the methodology used in this study. It includes subject selection and description, questionnaire development, pilot testing, validity, data collection procedures, data analysis, and assumptions and limitations.

Subject Selection and Description

The sample for this study consisted of all female employees of the University of Wisconsin-Stout. Jo Johnson from Human Resources at the University of Wisconsin-Stout gave permission and contact information used to sample this population. To maintain confidentiality, no names or respondent codes were recorded on the questionnaires. Participants indicated their willingness to participate in the study by completing the questionnaire. The only identifying information collected was the participant's year of birth.

Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire consisted of four sections and 75 questions with directions for completion before each section. Refer to Appendix B for a copy of the questionnaire. All questions in the questionnaire were self-developed. The questionnaire was printed on the front of five 8.5 x 11 sheets of white paper.

Section I. Profile. The first section of the questionnaire consisted of nine questions regarding age, height, clothing size, marital status, employment, retirement plans and income. Participants filled in the year of birth to indicate age. The remainder of the questions in the first section had answers in which the participant circled the letter preceding the applicable answer. These profile questions were cross-tabulated with fit and apparel preference questions.

Section II. Attitudinal. The second section of the questionnaire explored attitudes toward the apparel industry and how well the apparel industry caters to the participant's specific tastes and needs. This section consisted of fourteen statements regarding the participant's opinion about the importance of salespeople's product knowledge, salespeople's knowledge about fit, body image, style preferences, fit of purchased apparel, alterations, reliance on other people's opinions when assessing whether a garment fits, personal fit knowledge, price of apparel and the importance of fit, style and care in the purchase decision. Participants were asked to circle the letter(s) that indicated their level of agreement with the statements. Participants' attitudes were measured using a Likert-scale with "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree" as the end points: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

Section III. Behavioral. The third section of the questionnaire consisted of fourteen statements regarding the participant's apparel purchasing behavior. Statements included frequency of finding appropriate apparel, purchasing behaviors, spending on apparel, brand loyalty, and alterations. Participants were asked to circle the letter(s) that indicated how their actions matched the statements. Participant's behavior was measured on a Likert-scale with "almost always" and "never" as the end points: Almost Always (AA), Often (O), Sometimes (S), Rarely (R), and Never (N).

Section IV. Apparel Preferences. The fourth section of the questionnaire consisted of 24 questions describing the participant's apparel preferences. Participants were asked to mark all answers that applied to the question or statement. This section included questions and statements that reflected the participant's willingness to emphasize or hide her body, decision-making factors when purchasing apparel, fit knowledge, desire for information regarding fit, spending on clothing, apparel style preferences, work attire and fabric preferences. If there was a possibility of another answer, a blank for an open-ended answer was provided at the end of the question or statement.

Pilot Testing

The preliminary questionnaire was tested in June 2004 with ten female Baby Boomers, six of whom were University of Wisconsin-Stout employees. After making changes and additions, the questionnaire was tested again with five female Baby Boomers in November 2004. A professor in the Retail Merchandising and Management Department and a research specialist at the University of Wisconsin-Stout reviewed the final questionnaire. The questions were tested and reviewed to ensure clarity, relevance, and estimate the time required to complete the questionnaire.

As a result of pilot testing, the researcher received both written and verbal comments on all questionnaires. After each pilot test, revisions were made to the questionnaire. The final questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to complete and was mailed to all female employees of the University of Wisconsin-Stout in February 2005.

Validity

The purpose of the questionnaire was to collect information about female Baby Boomer's views toward the apparel industry and how well the apparel industry is catering to participants' specific tastes and needs. Each question reflected the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was reviewed and corrected by female Baby Boomers, a professor and students of the Applied Evaluation class in June 2004, a professor in the Retail Merchandising and Management Program and a research specialist at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. Consequently, each question was relevant to the study's specific objectives. The questionnaire was determined to be valid because each question related to the topic under investigation, there was adequate coverage of the research topic, the directions were clear, unambiguous and appropriate for the sample surveyed. Several pilot tests and expert reviews determined that all questions were appropriate for the final questionnaire.

Data Collection Procedures

The 75-question instrument was mailed via campus mail on February 8, 2005. All responses were received by February 22, 2005. The total sample size was 547 female University of Wisconsin-Stout employees. The response rate was 55.8% (N=305). The total sample size of University of Wisconsin–Stout female employees born between 1946 to 1964 was 380. Some participants not born between 1946 and 1964 sent back blank questionnaires or did not respond at all when they saw that the cover letter indicated the study was dealing with female Baby Boomers. The total sample size of University of Wisconsin-Stout female employees born during1945 and before was 46. The response rate was 43.5% (N=20). The total sample size of University of Wisconsin-Stout female employees born during 1965 and after was 380. The response rate was 60.3% (N=229).

Most of the questionnaires were sent to the offices of female University of Wisconsin-Stout employees via campus mail. Three questionnaires were sent via United States Mail due to residential addresses. The questionnaires were sent in 6" x 9" envelopes that contained a questionnaire, a 9.5" x 4" return envelope with stickers that instructed respondents to send the return envelope back via campus mail and another sticker that stated "my thoughts on apparel…" The questionnaires were returned to the office of Dr. Renee Howarton.

Participants had two weeks to complete and return the questionnaire. Two follow-up e-mails were sent to all faculty via the University of Wisconsin-Stout daily e-mail. The completed questionnaires were received in the office of Dr. Renee Howarton between February 9 and February 22, 2005. They were then opened and transported to Christine Ness for data entry.

Data Analysis

Data from the respondents was analyzed at the University of Wisconsin-Stout Academic Computer Center in Menomonie, Wisconsin. SPSS-X, the Statistical Package for Social Science, was used for the frequency counts, percentages, means, and T-test. A total of 305 questionnaires were analyzed using nominal and ordinal statistics. Frequency counts and percentages were computed on all questions, while mean and standard deviations were calculated for questions in the attitude and behavior sections of the questionnaire. T-test was also used for questions in the attitudinal and behavioral sections. Cross tabulations were applied to all appropriate questions. Chi-square analysis was used to determine whether statistically significant differences existed between questions. Cross tabulation and Chi-square analysis was also used to compare the responses of three different age groupings.

Assumptions and Limitations

A number of assumptions, in addition to honesty, were made throughout this study. These assumptions are related to the limitations. The population sampled may or may not be reflective of other female Baby Boomers in the United States. The population sample was limited in that it was made up of only professional females in Wisconsin and surrounding areas. Menomonie, Wisconsin is a rural area with primarily Caucasian subjects. This may limit the application of results to more diverse, cosmopolitan or urban subjects who may have different opinions on the topics included in the questionnaire. Finally, option "f" in question number seventeen in the apparel preferences section had a typographical error that could cause confusion and caused the 3/4-sleeve option not to be properly represented.

Summary

The purpose of this questionnaire was to describe and compare University of Wisconsin-Stout female Baby Boomer employees' attitudes regarding fit and apparel preferences. Specifically, the survey examined the participants' satisfaction with the apparel industry and fit of clothing currently available for them.

Chapter IV: Results

Questionnaires were used to collect information regarding apparel and fit preferences of female Baby Boomers. Respondents were a sample of females who are employed by the University of Wisconsin-Stout in Menomonie, Wisconsin. Using nominal and ordinal statistics, results from the collected data are presented under four major headings: profile, attitudinal, behavioral and apparel preferences.

Profile

Of the 547 questionnaires mailed, 305 (55.8%) were returned. Out of the 380 female Baby Boomers in the sample frame, 229 (60.3%) responded to the questionnaire. The profile information gathered data included age, height, clothing size, relationship status, retirement status, personal income after taxes and household income after taxes.

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of All Respondents by Year Born

Year Born	Frequency (N=305)	%
1939-1945	22	7.2
1946-1964	229	75.1
1965-1980	48	15.7
No Response	6	2.0

The frequency and percentage of distribution of participants by age is shown in Table 1. Because the title of the questionnaire contains "Baby Boomer," many individuals who are not a part of the Baby Boomer generation did not complete the questionnaire. Women born in 1945 or earlier and in 1965 or after were excluded from further analysis because they do not fit the definition of Baby Boomer used in this study. Over 75% of the questionnaires were filled out by Baby Boomers. Over 15% of the respondents were born between 1965 and 1980, while 7.2% of the respondents were born between 1939 and 1945. Six questionnaires were excluded because participants did not indicate their birthdates.

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Boomer Respondents by Height

Height	Frequency (N=229)	%
Petite (under 5'4)	53	23.1
Average (5'4 to 5'6)	109	47.6
Tall (over 5'6)	66	28.8
No Response	1	0.4

Almost half of female Baby Boomer respondents (47.6%) were average height. Nearly 29% were tall and just over 23% of respondents were petite.

Table 3

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Boomer Respondents by Clothing Size

Clothing Size	Frequency (N=229)	%
XS/ 0-2	2	0.9
S/4-6	18	7.9
M/8-10	61	26.6
L/12-14	72	31.4
XL/16-18	44	19.2
Plus size/16W-26W	32	14.0

The most common clothing size was large or numeric size 12 to 14 (31.4%). This is followed closely by Boomers that wear a size medium or size 8 to 10 (26.6%). Only two Boomers responded that they wore a size XS (.9%). One respondent noted that she never knows what size she is because the sizes vary so much from brand to brand. Many participants circled more than one answer because sizing is so ambiguous. In this case the largest size chosen was reported.

Table 4

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Boomer Respondents by Relationship Status

Relationship Status	Frequency (N=229)	%
Single	20	8.7
Dating	1	0.4
Committed Relationship	21	9.2
Married	169	73.8
Separated	2	0.9
Divorced	13	5.7
Widowed	2	0.9
Committed/widowed	1	0.4

When the questionnaire inquired about the relationship status of the Boomer, the majority (73.8%) indicated that they were married. The percent of Baby Boomers in committed relationships (9.2%) was followed closely by single Baby Boomers (8.7%). Less than one percent of the sample responded that they were separated, widowed, dating, or committed/widowed.

Table 5

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Boomer Respondents by Retirement Status

Retirement Status	Frequency (N=229)	%
Retired	3	1.3
Not Retired	221	96.5
No Response	5	2.2

Almost all respondents to the questionnaire were not retired (96.5%). This is due to the sample frame used–females employed by the University of Wisconsin-Stout in 2004. One respondent born in 1944, and another born in 1950, both indicated that they were currently retired, but continued working full-time and part-time respectively. This is an indication of the way Baby Boomers think. Female Boomers are very comfortable in the workforce and do not see themselves leaving any time soon (as shown in table 7).

Table 6

Frequency and Percentage Distribution by Boomer Respondents' Working Status

Working Status	Frequency (N=229)	%
Full-time	199	86.9
Part-time	26	11.4
Seasonally	1	0.4
No Response	3	1.3

The largest percentage of respondents (88.1%) worked full time, followed by those who were employed part-time (11.5%). This response was influenced by the sample frame used–females employed by the University of Wisconsin-Stout in 2004.

Table 7

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Boomer Respondents by Expected Retirement

Expected Retirement	Frequency (N=229)	%
1 year or less	5	2.2
2-5 years	32	14.0
6-9 years	50	21.8
10 years or more	137	59.8
No Response	5	2.2

When asked how soon they expected to retire, the majority of female Baby Boomers said that they would retire in ten years or more (59.8%). Only five boomers believed that they would retire in one year or less (2.2%). It is important to note that although 2.2% of Boomers indicated that they expected to retire in the next year or less, it did not mean that they would disappear from the work force.

Table 8

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Boomer Respondents by Personal Annual Income After Taxes

Personal Annual Income After Taxes	Frequency (N=229)	%
$09,999 or less	2	0.9
$10,000-$24,999	55	24.0
$25,000-$49,999	127	55.5
$50,000-$89,999	39	17.0
$90,000 or more	2	0.9
No Response	4	1.7

Respondents were asked to indicate their personal annual income. Table 8 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of respondent responses regarding personal annual income after taxes. Over half (55.5%) indicated that they made $25,000-$49,999 annually after taxes. The second largest group of respondents (24.0%) indicated that they made $10,000-$24,999 annually, this is followed by 17.0% who indicated that they made $50,000-$89,000 per year. Less than one percent responded that they made $9,999 or less or $90,000 or more annually.

Table 9

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Household Income After Taxes

Household Income After Taxes	Frequency (N=229)	%
$9,999 or less	-	-
$10,000-$24,999	5	2.2
$25,000-$49,999	53	23.1
$50,000-$89,999	104	45.4
$90,000 or more	39	17.0
No Response	28	12.2

In terms of annual household income after taxes, female Baby Boomers responded that most (45.4%) of their households made between $50,000 to $89,999 per year after taxes. The second largest group (23.1%) made $25,000-$49,999 annually. The third largest group (17.0%) made $90,000 or more annually. Only 2.5% of female Boomers surveyed indicated that their household income was $10,000-$24,999 annually.

Attitudinal

A five point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree" was used to identify the attitudes of female Baby Boomer respondents towards the apparel industry, respondents' self-image, the fit of apparel, and the importance of apparel properties. The mean scores and standard deviations of these attitudes are presented in Table 10 to Table 13. These were the values associated with the five possible answers: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1).

Table 10

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Female Baby Boomers' Attitudes Toward the Apparel Industry

Attitudes Toward the Apparel Industry	M	SD	N
I feel that the apparel industry currently caters to my preferences.	2.54	1.078	227
I feel that it is important for salespeople to be knowledgeable about the product that they are selling.	4.51	.626	229
I feel that it is important for salespeople to be knowledgeable about fit.	4.41	.673	229

These scores indicate that the majority of female Baby Boomer respondents did not feel (M=2.54) that the apparel industry currently caters to their needs. They did agree that it is important for salespeople to be knowledgeable about the product that they are selling (M=4.51) and that they be knowledgeable about fit (M=4.41). Two respondents voiced their dissatisfaction with the helpfulness of sales associates stating: "Are there any salespeople?" and "I rarely get their opinion. Where are they?"

Table 11

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Female Baby Boomers' Attitudes Toward Their Self-Image

Attitudes Toward Their Self-Image	M	SD	N
I believe that I am physically fit.	3.10	1.103	229
I feel that my clothing preferences have become more conservative.	3.46	.945	228
I feel that it is important to always look my best.	3.91	.856	229

Boomer respondents felt (M=3.91) that it was important to always look their best. They also agreed (M=3.46) that their clothing preferences had become more conservative as they aged. Regarding becoming more conservative, one respondent stated, "I do not feel I have changed much, but today's fashions have gone away from my taste." Respondents were about equally balanced between those who consider themselves physically fit and those who did not consider themselves physically fit.

Table 12

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Boomers' Attitudes Toward Apparel Fit

Attitudes Toward Apparel Fit	M	SD	N
I feel that the majority of my clothing fits me correctly.	3.50	.963	229
I feel that the majority of clothing that is available to me needs to be altered.	2.73	1.094	229
I value other's opinions when assessing whether a garment fits me or not.	3.54	.991	228
I know how to tell if a garment fits me correctly or not.	3.92	.730	229

Respondents strongly agreed (M=3.92) that they were able to tell whether a garment fit them correctly. They also agreed (M=3.54) that they valued others' opinions when assessing whether a garment fits their bodies correctly. The respondents were nearly balanced (M=2.73) on whether clothing available to them needed to be altered.

Table 13

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Female Baby Boomers' Attitudes Toward the Importance of Apparel Properties

Attitudes Toward the Importance of Apparel Properties	M	SD	N
I feel that fit is a major factor when purchasing apparel.	4.45	.658	229
I feel that style is a major factor when purchasing apparel.	3.87	.908	229
I believe that ease of care is a major factor when purchasing apparel.	4.26	.767	229
I believe that clothing is overpriced.	4.09	.909	229

Female Boomers responding to this survey ranked fit (M=4.45), ease of care (M=4.26) and style (M=3.87) in order of declining importance when deciding whether to purchase apparel. Respondents also agreed (M=4.09) that clothing was overpriced. Participants indicated that they waited for sales to get quality apparel at cheaper prices. One participant believed that men's clothing was available at lower price points and women's clothing should be priced comparably.

Behavior

Respondents were asked how often they participated in certain shopping behaviors. A Likert scale was used that consisted of response categories ranging from (5) Almost Always to (1) Never. The value corresponding to the level of agreement is as follows: Almost Always (AA), Often (O), Sometimes (S), Rarely (R), and Never (N). The mean scores and standard deviations of shopping behaviors of female Baby Boomers are presented in Table 14.

Table 14

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Boomers' Shopping Behaviors

Shopping Behaviors	M	SD	N
When shopping for apparel, I find what I went shopping for.	3.11	.756	229
I look for clothing to emphasize specific parts of my body.	2.45	1.028	229
I look for clothing that conceals specific parts of my body.	3.66	1.046	229
I am influenced by salespeople's opinions when deciding whether or not to purchase a garment.	2.45	.919	229
I will spend more on a garment if it is of high quality.	3.65	.909	229
I will spend more on a garment if it is stylish.	2.89	.916	228
I will spend more on designer label apparel.	2.21	.952	229
I tend to be brand loyal when making clothing purchases.	2.62	1.084	229
I follow clothing trends closely.	2.21	.900	229
I prefer to shop for others rather than myself.	2.83	1.078	229
I enjoy shopping for clothing for myself.	3.17	1.130	228
I keep clothing for 3 years or more.	4.47	.747	229
I refuse to buy clothing that needs to be altered.	3.61	1.193	227
I have to alter at least 4 items of clothing per year.	2.32	1.343	228

The three most common shopping behaviors of female Baby Boomer respondents were:

1. Looking for clothing that conceals specific parts of their bodies (M=3.66)
2. Spending more money on garments that are of high quality (M=3.65)

3. Refusing to purchase clothing that would require alterations (M=3.61)

The least common behaviors for Boomers were:

1. Spending more on designer label apparel (M=2.21)
2. Following clothing trends closely (M=2.21)
3. Altering at least four items of clothing per year (M=2.32)

Apparel Preferences

The information requested in the apparel preferences section includes participants preferences in willingness to emphasize or hide their bodies, decision-making factors when purchasing apparel, fit knowledge, desire for information regarding fit, spending on clothing, apparel style preferences, work attire and fabric preferences. For questions where there was a possibility of another answer, a blank for an open-ended answer was provided at the end of the question or statement. This is the only section in which blanks were provided for additional answers where respondents could choose multiple answers to a question and where respondents were directed to skip certain sections based on their stated preferences.

Table 15

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Ways Boomer Respondents Emphasize or Hide Their Features

Ways Boomer Respondents Emphasize or Hide Their Features	Frequency (N=229)	%
Silhouette	91	39.7
Color	165	72.1
Texture	49	21.4
Patterns	80	34.9
Layering	147	64.2
Other:	16	7.0

The majority of respondents utilized color (72.1%) and layering (64.2%) to emphasize or hide certain body features. Two respondents said that they specifically use black to hide figure flaws and layering of longer tops. Texture was the least common way to emphasize or hide body parts (21.4%). However, many participants showed a preference for tweed or textured jackets. One participant indicated that she looked for shaped garments, such as those with shirring to hide or emphasize parts of her body. Participants were asked to mark all answers that applied, so the sum of percentages may be higher than 100.

Table 16

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Body Parts Boomers Are Comfortable Showing

Body Parts Boomers Are Comfortable Showing	Frequency (N=229)	%
Forearms	195	85.2
Lower leg	181	79.0
Neck	180	78.6
Upper chest	115	50.2
Upper arms	87	38.0
Back	59	25.8
Upper leg	41	17.9
Breasts	24	10.5
Stomach	11	4.8

Respondents were most comfortable showing their forearms (85.2%), their lower legs (79.0%), and their neck (78.6%). They were least comfortable showing their upper legs (17.9%), breasts (10.5%) and their stomach (4.8%). Participants were asked to mark all answers that applied, so the sum of percentages is higher than 100. One respondent indicated that her comfort level depended on the weather and the company that she was in.

Table 17

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Body Parts That Respondents Prefer to Hide With Clothing

Body Parts Respondents' Prefer to Hide With Clothing	Frequency (N=229)	%
Stomach	207	90.4
Breasts	160	69.9
Upper arms	117	51.1
Upper leg	115	67.7
Back	102	44.5
Upper chest	48	21.0
Lower leg	25	10.9
Neck	23	10
Forearms	11	4.8

When asked which body part they wished to hide with clothing, Boomers indicated that they would choose clothing to hide their stomachs (90.4%), their breasts (69.9%), their upper legs (67.7%), and their upper arms (51.1%). Participants were asked to mark all answers that applied, so the sum of percentages is higher than 100.

Table 18

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Factors that Boomer Respondents Consider When Shopping for Apparel

Factors that Boomer Respondents Consider When Shopping for Apparel	Frequency (N=229)	%
Care instructions	189	82.5
Fabric content	173	75.5
Construction	130	56.8
Seam finishes	77	33.6
Brand of clothing	73	31.9
Cut of fabric	62	27.1

Boomer respondents valued care instructions (82.5%) when shopping for apparel, followed by fabric content (75.5%) and construction of the garment (56.8%). They placed the least emphasis on the cut of the fabric (27.1%) and the brand of clothing (31.9%). One respondent said, "When purchasing clothing, I always look for higher quality, irregardless of the name brand." Participants were asked to mark all answers that applied, so the sum of percentages is higher than 100. Two respondents specified that they preferred clothing that could be machine washed, as dry cleaning is too expensive and time consuming.

Table 19

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Indicators That Convey Good Fit to Boomer Respondents

Indicators That Convey Good Fit to Boomer Respondents	Frequency (N=229)	%
There is enough room for movement.	205	89.5
The garment drapes/ lays well on my body.	191	83.4
The silhouette/ line of the garment is flattering.	169	73.8
Both sides of the garment are balanced.	85	37.1
Seam lines follow the lines of my body.	70	30.6
The garment is cut on grain.	41	17.9

When respondents were asked what they looked for to determine whether a garment fits well, Boomers replied that they checked to see if there was enough room for movement (89.5%) and if the fabric draped well on their bodies (83.4%). They were least likely to look at the grain of the fabric (17.9%) and whether the seam lines followed the lines of their bodies (30.6%). Participants were asked to mark all answers that applied so the sum of percentages is higher than 100. One participant commented that she was unknowledgeable about all aspects of fit and did not know how to respond. The only aspect that she knew how to judge was movement room/ease.

Table 20

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Boomer Respondents' Preferences for Conveying Fit Information

Respondents' Preferences for Conveying Fit Information	Frequency (N=229)	%
Salespeople	73	31.9
In-store literature	28	12.2
Garment hangtags	109	47.6
Other	7	3.1
I don't need any additional information.	77	33.6

The majority (47.6%) of respondents preferred to receive fit information through garment hangtags. However, a significant number (33.6%) of respondents stated that they did not need any additional information regarding fit. Participants were asked to place an x by all answers that applied. In addition, a blank was provided for other answers. Five respondents commented that they would like more information regarding fit online. Another participant requested that more fit information be available in catalogs and another voiced her frustration and that she wanted fit standards to be consistent with all brands.

Table 21

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Frequency in Which Boomer Respondents Shop for Themselves

Frequency in Which Boomer Respondents Shop for Themselves	Frequency (N=229)	%
Once a year/less	12	5.2
2-4 times/year	65	28.4
5-7 times/year	56	24.5
8-10 times/year	43	18.8
11-12 times/year	18	7.9
13 times/year or more	35	15.3

When asked how many times they shopped for themselves, respondents indicated that five to seven times a year is the median frequency of shopping for themselves. A surprising 15.3% of respondents indicated that they went shopping 13 or more times per year for themselves. Twenty three percent (23%) of Boomers shopped for their own clothing 11 or more times per year. Once a year or less was the least common answer (5.2%). One participant stated that she had not shopped in ages because she had too many clothes and they were not worn out yet.

Table 22

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Amount That Boomer Respondents Spend on Clothing for Themselves per Shopping Trip

Amount that Boomer Respondents Spend on Clothing for Themselves per Shopping Trip	Frequency (N=229)	%
Less than $50	59	25.8
$51-$200	139	60.7
$201-$400	25	10.9
$401-$600	1	0.4
$601-$800	-	-
$801-$1,000	-	-
$1,000 or more	-	-
No Response	5	2.2

The most frequent answer for amount spent per trip on apparel for themselves was $51-$200 (60.7%). The second most common spending amount per shopping trip was less than $50 (25.8%). None of the respondents reported regularly spending $600 or more per trip and only one respondent spends more than $400 per trip.

Table 23

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Boomer Respondents' Preferred Clothing Styles

Boomer Respondents' Preferred Clothing Styles	Frequency (N=229)	%
Slacks and blouse	177	77.3
Jeans and T-shirt	164	71.6
Jeans and blouse	143	62.4
Pant suit	124	54.1
Sweats or athletic wear	119	52.0
Dress	85	37.1
Skirt/dress suit	75	32.8
Skirt and blouse	59	25.8

Respondents were asked to indicate clothing styles they preferred to wear. The most popular styles were slacks and a blouse (77.3%), while 71.6% opted for jeans and a T-shirt. These two styles were followed closely by the preference for jeans and a blouse (62.4%). Dresses and skirts were the least popular styles. Participants were asked to mark all answers that applied, so the total exceeds 100. Many participants indicated that they felt that blouses were outdated and that they preferred knit tops paired with slacks or jeans. The most commonly mentioned knit was sweaters. Many respondents also clarified that their preference depended on their environment. One participant commented, "I dress professionally for work, but dress athletic as soon as I'm home." This supports Lee's statement that Boomers want their wardrobes to translate from the office to the weekend (Lee, 2004).

Table 24

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Boomer Respondents' Least Preferred Clothing Styles

Respondents' Least Preferred Clothing Styles	Frequency (N=229)	P
Skirt and blouse	123	53.7
Skirt/dress suit	116	50.7
Dress	103	45.0
Pant suit	57	24.9
Sweats or athletic wear	56	24.5
Jeans and blouse	37	16.2
Jeans and T-shirt	28	12.2
Slacks and blouse	26	11.4

The least preferred style of clothing was the skirt and blouse (53.7%), and the skirt/dress suit (50.7%). The lack of enthusiasm for more formal attire was significant given that all respondents were employees of the University of Wisconsin-Stout and that 87% of respondents were in full-time employment. Participants were asked to mark all answers that applied, so the total percent is greater than 100.

Table 25

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Style of Clothing Most Frequently Worn by Boomer Respondents

Style of Clothing Most Frequently Worn by Boomer Respondents	Frequency (N=229)	%
Casual/ leisure	95	41.5
Professional/ business	63	27.5
Formal or semi formal	3	1.3
Other	7	3.1
Multiple responses	61	26.6

Table 25 shows that the style of clothing most frequently worn by Boomer respondents was casual/leisure clothing (41.5%). One in four respondents (27.5%) indicated that they frequently wore professional or business clothing and only 1.3% of respondents marked that they frequently wore formal or semi-formal attire. Participants were asked to mark all answers that applied, so the total percent is greater than 100. Some participants clarified that they wore professional/ business attire to work and once they were home they changed into casual/ leisure attire. Seven participants mentioned business casual as a style of clothing most frequently worn by Boomers.

Table 26

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Required Work Attire

Required Work Attire	Frequency (N=229)	%
Work uniform	14	6.1
Dress code	48	21.1

Slightly more than one quarter of respondents were required to either wear a uniform to work (6.1%) or follow a dress code at the University (21.1%). One participant indicated that she only wore a uniform for certain events.

Table 27

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Neckline Preference of Boomers

Neckline Preference of Boomers	Frequency (N=229)	%
Round/jewel/crew	168	73.4
Turtleneck/mock turtleneck	160	69.9
V-neck	134	58.5
Scoop	70	30.6
Square	48	21.0
Bateau	45	19.7
Sweetheart	20	8.7
Queen Anne	12	5.2
Asymmetrical	7	3.1
Off the shoulder	3	1.3

Most respondents preferred to wear garments with round/jewel/crew neckline turtlenecks (69.9%) and 58.6% preferred to wear garments with a V-neck line. Participants were asked to mark all answers that applied, so the total percent is greater than 100. Some participants indicated that weather impacted their preference.

Table 28

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Necklines Disliked by Boomers

Necklines Disliked by Boomers	Frequency (N=229)	%
Off the shoulder	168	73.4
Queen Anne	130	56.8
Sweetheart	110	48.0
Asymmetrical	81	35.4
Square	80	34.9
Scoop	71	31.0
Bateau	58	25.3
Turtleneck/mock turtleneck	31	13.5
V-neck	27	11.8
Round/jewel/crew	21	9.2

Respondents' least desired necklines were off the shoulder (73.4%) and Queen Anne (56.8%) necklines. Participants were asked to check all answers that applied, so the total percent is greater than 100. Participants indicated that temperature influenced their preference.

Table 29

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Sleeve Type Preferred by Boomers

Sleeve Type Preferred by Boomers	Frequency (N=229)	%
Full sleeve	182	79.5
Short sleeve	175	76.4
3/4 sleeve	92	40.2
Full straps	63	27.5
Cap sleeve	53	23.1
Oversized sleeve	35	15.3
Sleeveless/strapless	23	10.0
Spaghetti straps	10	4.4

Table 29 and 30 reflect Boomer participants' sleeve preferences. Full sleeves (79.5%) and short sleeves (76.4%) were the highest scoring sleeve type. The survey was completed by participants in February, which may have influenced their relative preference for full sleeves. Participants were asked to mark all answers that applied, so the total percent is greater than 100. Participants stated that temperature influenced their preference.

Table 30

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Sleeve Types Disliked by Boomers

Sleeve Types Disliked by Boomers	Frequency (N=229)	%
Spaghetti straps	180	78.6
Sleeveless/strapless	166	72.5
Oversized sleeve	104	45.4
Cap sleeve	87	38.0
Full straps	67	29.3
Short sleeve	9	3.9
3/4 sleeve	5	2.2
Full sleeve	4	1.7

Respondents were not looking for sleeveless tops. The sleeveless styles, spaghetti straps (78.6%), and sleeveless or strapless garments (72.5%) were disliked by three out of four Boomers. Participants were asked to mark all answers that applied, so the total percent is greater than 100. Some stated that temperature influenced their preference.

Table 31

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Fabric Construction Preference of Boomers

Fabric Construction Preference of Boomers	Frequency (N=229)	%
Knit	24	10.5
Woven	44	19.2
No preference	160	69.9
No Response	1	0.4

The majority of respondents indicated that they did not have a preference whether their garments were knit or woven. Nineteen percent of respondents said that they preferred woven fabric; knit fabrics were the least, preferred (10.5%). The lack of preference for knits is surprising due to the number of participants that voiced their frequent use of sweaters and other knit tops. One respondent commented that the reason she preferred knits because they slimmed the body and did not add extra volume to already plus sized figures.

Table 32

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Boomers' Preference of Fabric Content

Preference of Fabric Content	Frequency (N=229)	%
Natural	83	36.2
Synthetic	4	1.7
Blend	90	39.3
Natural/Blend	28	12.2
Synthetic/Blend	6	2.6
All of the Above	12	5.2
No Response	6	2.6

Most respondents (54.1%) indicated that they preferred blended fabrics. Natural blends (12.2%) were preferred over synthetic blends (2.6%) among respondents who distinguished between types of blends. Natural fabrics were preferred by 36.2% of respondents. One respondent stated that she hated rayon and other fabrics that pilled. Two Boomers said that they did not purchase garments made out of some natural fabrics due to allergies. Two participants indicated that they preferred cotton blends for comfort, resilience and fit.

Table 33

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Preferred Skirt Length of Boomers

Preferred Skirt Length of Boomers	Frequency (N=229)	%
Long (hits at or past ankle)	55	24.0
Hits at lower calf	98	42.8
Hits at mid calf	91	39.7
Hits just below the knee	96	41.9
Hits just above the knee	63	27.5
Hits 2" or more above the knee	11	4.8

The preferred skirt lengths were those that hit at the lower calf (42.8%) and just below the knee (41.9%). Only one in 20 respondents preferred a skirt that hit two inches or more above the knee. Participants were asked to mark all answers that applied, so the total percent is greater than 100. One participant voiced that she did not wear skirts at all. One respondent said that she would purchase more skirts, but she did not feel that the lengths available to her age group were flattering and she got burned out wearing miniskirts in the 70s.

Table 34

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Fabric Design Boomers Prefer

Fabric Design Boomers Prefer	Frequency (N=229)	%
Solid	128	55.9
Print	16	7.0
No preference	85	37.1

Respondents were asked to identify the type of fabric design they preferred. The frequency and percentage distribution is shown in Table 34. Solids were preferred by over 50% of respondents while prints were the sole preference of only 7%. Overall, 44% of this group would consider purchasing a print fabric clothing item and 93% would consider buying a solid color item. Some respondents clarified this by saying that they wore solid suits with print tops, solid bottoms and patterned tops or jackets, solids interrupted by a flash of spectacular color, solid basics and color in accessories such as scarves, etc.

Table 35

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Pattern Preference by Boomers

Pattern Preference by Boomers	Frequency (N=16)	%
Plaids	8	50.0
Stripes	6	37.5
Dots	2	12.5
Floral	10	62.5
Paisley	8	50.0
Geometric	7	43.8
Other	2	12.5
No preference	16	100.0

Table 35 reflects respondents' pattern preferences for apparel if they answered in question 21 that they preferred a patterned fabric. Such a small number preferred patterns (N=16) that the results of this question are not significant. Participants were asked to mark all answers that applied, so the total percent is greater than 100. A blank was also provided for answers that were not available. Two respondents indicated that they avoided large prints. A plus-sized respondent voiced her preference:

> My big pet peeve with manufacturers of clothing is that there are many choices of color, prints, etc. for the smaller sizes that are very nice; then I go to the 'fuller figure' area of the store and the dresses are huge flowers that make me feel that when I put it on I am this huge flower garden. They do not understand that the

fuller figure women like to look as nice in a dress etc. as the women who can wear the sizes one to 16.

Table 36

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Color Preference of Boomers Who Prefer Solids

Color Preference of Boomers Who Prefer Solids	Frequency (N=141)	%
Bright	30	21.3
Subdued	78	55.3
No preference	33	23.4

The majority of respondents who preferred solid colors said they preferred subdued colors (55.3%) to bright colors (21.3%). Thirty-three Boomers did not have a preference (23.4%). This question was asked only of Boomers who answered that they preferred solid colors in question 21.

Table 37

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Overall Reasons for Boomer Clothing Preferences

Overall Reasons for Boomer Clothing Preferences	Frequency (N=229)	%
Comfort	209	91.3
Fit	183	79.9
Flattering to figure	176	76.9
Hides figure flaws	142	62.0
Versatile	121	52.8
Timeless piece	101	44.1
Other	14	6.1

Participants were asked to give an overall reason why they preferred certain garments over others. Table 37 shows the frequency and percentage of the respondents by reasons for apparel preferences. Findings indicate that almost all (91.3%) of respondents preferred apparel that was comfortable. Next they preferred garments that fit well (79.9%) and that were flattering to their figures (76.9%). The least important reasons for garment preference was because it was a timeless piece (44.1%) or was versatile (52.8%). However, this is still a significant number of people who preferred a garment because it was versatile or a timeless piece. Participants were asked to mark all answers that applied, so the percentage is greater than 100. There was also a blank provided for any other answers that may have applied. Other responses included: colors that enhance skin tone, garments that prompt complements, if it feels right, uniqueness, vintage, conversation piece, matches with other clothing items in wardrobe, warm in winter, quality, unique construction, fun to wear, brightly colored and mementos of travels. Two respondents stated that they preferred clothing that were made of interesting fabrics and texture. Six respondents preferred clothing in relation to its price.

Seven respondents indicated that they did not feel as if the apparel industry was catering to them. Their reasons related back to their size and the frustration of finding themselves lost between clothing for their mothers and clothing for their daughters. Comments included:

- "Clothing for middle age and older women is difficult to find. The styles, color, etc. are often too youthful or matronly appearing."
- "I am in my 50s, but do not like most women's clothes- too frumpy. I prefer stylish timeless pieces when I can find them."
- "In general, I find the fashion industry too focused on new trends. There are many times when I shop that I don't find much that appeals to me. I favor more traditional styles and am often very discouraged by the lack of affordable classy and traditional clothes."
- "Industry needs more clothes for large ladies in business. Be aware of figures & shapes of ladies. Design clothes with shapes in mind. Not cutsie stuff like Whinny the Pooh."
- "All the stores seem to cater to young, nimble bodies. My figure is still good for a 61-year-old. Old woman. There's not enough available for us to select from in separates. Everyone carries the same tops and bottoms."

- "I find many clothes that I like and I believe would be flattering if available in my size."
- "Very little clothing is stylish and fits the figure as it ages. Waistbands with stretch or larger waists are hard to find."

Chapter V: Discussion

Baby Boomers are the largest market segment in terms of size and influence. Boomers have been changing industries ever since the demand for hospitals exploded to handle their births. The Boomers have reinvented every stage in life because they have the market power to do so. As the Boomers age, American industries are starting to tailor their products and services to their new wants and needs. However, the apparel industry has not currently responded to Boomers specific preferences and needs. Female Boomers have very few options in apparel today and are deferring purchases due to the lack of good choices.

Statement of the Problem

Female Baby Boomers' preferences have not been reflected in apparel design because the industry continues to focus on younger women. As females age, their bodies change dramatically. In the past the apparel industry has offered aging women poor fitting, oversized clothing. Female Baby Boomers are still very active and fashion conscious, so they reject this type of clothing, leaving them few choices of age-appropriate fashion that fits their bodies and lifestyle.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe and compare female Baby Boomers' attitudes regarding apparel and fit preferences. This study examines female Baby Boomers' purchasing attitudes and behaviors. It also examines what characteristics female Baby Boomers value in apparel, how they expect clothing to fit and their frustrations with fit relative to clothing that is currently available.

Research Objectives

This study focuses on the following objectives:

1. To examine the demographics and psychographics of female Baby Boomers in terms of age, income, work status, body image and attitudes toward aging.
2. To examine shopping behaviors of female Baby Boomers including what they value in apparel, garment qualities that motivate female Baby Boomers to purchase a particular garment, and apparel style preferences.
3. To examine the importance of apparel fit in terms of female Baby Boomers' knowledge of fit, their desire to know about fit, how they judge whether a garment fits them correctly, their inclination to request alterations, and the importance of fit in making purchase decisions.

Methods and Procedures

A questionnaire consisting of four sections and 75 questions was given to all female employees of the University of Wisconsin-Stout on February 8, 2005. The questionnaire was analyzed using nominal and ordinal statistics. Frequency counts and percentages were computed on all questions, while mean and standard deviation were calculated for questions in the attitude and behavior sections of the questionnaire. T-test was also used for questions in the attitude and behavioral sections. Cross tabulations were applied to appropriate questions. Chi-square analysis was used to determine whether statistically significant differences existed between questions.

Results

The results of the survey are organized according to the three objectives.

Objective One. The following results are for Objective one. "To examine the demographics and psychographics of female Baby Boomers in terms of age, income, work status, body image and attitudes toward aging." The majority of Boomer respondents were average height (5'4 – 5'6) and wore a size large, which for this study was equivalent to size 14 to16. However, a significant (N=61) amount of Boomers that indicated that they wore a size medium, which was equivalent to a size 8 to 10. This agrees with Clark's statement that although female Boomers are in good health and active that half of American women wear size 14 or higher (Clark, 1999). Boomers studied said they still care about their bodies and their self-image. They feel that they are fit and that it is important to always look their best. Over 70% of Boomers were married and worked full-time. Slightly over 6% wore a uniform to work, while 21.1% followed a dress code. A majority of Boomers personal annual income after taxes was $25,000-$49,999, while their household income was $50,000-$89,999. With their disposable income, most Boomers shop for themselves at least two to four times a year, with nearly equal numbers reporting shopping five to seven times a year and 13 or more times a year. On their average shopping trip most respondents tend to spend $51-$200. The Boomers do not expect to retire any time soon. One hundred and thirty seven (137) Boomers indicated that they do not plan on retiring for the next ten years or more. One boomer indicated that although she is technically retired that she still works for fun. This confirms Fry's findings that Boomers see retirement as an opportunity to keep working, as they see work as fulfilling rather than a burden (Fry, 2003).

Objective Two. The following results are for objective two. "To examine shopping behaviors of female Baby Boomers including what they value in apparel, garment qualities that motivate female Baby Boomers to purchase a particular garment, and apparel style preferences." The majority of female Boomers do not believe that the apparel industry caters to their preferences. When they go shopping for apparel, they rarely find what they went shopping for. This emphasizes Gardyn's point that the sale of women's apparel has significantly decreased because women are not finding apparel that appeals to them. There is nothing "made for her" (Rozhon, 2004). Their specific needs and wants are being overlooked by the apparel industry. There is nothing available that fits both the female Baby Boomer's body and style preference. There is a gap between trendy and dowdy apparel (Aldridge, 2004). More respondents look for clothing that conceals specific parts of their body instead of clothing that emphasizes specific parts of their body. The methods that they use to emphasize or hide their features are color, layering, silhouette, patterns and texture in descending order. Bernstein says that Boomers prefer tweed and textured fabrics to hide their figure flaws (Bernstein, 2004). Although this is true, it is not the most prevalent way that the women surveyed use to hide figure flaws. Boomers are most comfortable showing their forearms, lower legs and neck. They strongly prefer to hide their stomach, breasts and upper arms with clothing. This data contradicts the "Coming of Age" article when the author states that female Baby Boomers are wearing short skirts, sleeveless dresses and sexy sundresses ("Coming of Age," 2000). When shopping for apparel Boomers consider care first, followed by fabric content, construction, seam finishes, brand and cut. This concurs with findings in chapter two that state that 71% of female Boomers prefer to know the fabric content of a garment and half check the label when deciding whether or not to purchase the garment ("Baby Boomer Prefer," 1997). The statement also reiterates the statements in chapter two that explain why Baby Boomers are perceived to be extremely brand loyal, but in reality are very open to trying new brands (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989). Boomers prefer to wear pant combinations, while their least preferred styles are skirt combinations. The most preferred style was slacks and a blouse, while the least preferred style was a skirt and blouse. If participants did wear a skirt, they preferred a skirt that hit at the lower calf or that hit just below the knee. Bettendorf also believes that Boomers prefer knee-length skirts (Bettendorf, 1993). Casual and leisure clothing was the most frequently worn style followed by professional and business. Many respondents indicated that they preferred various pant combinations with knit tops. However, when asked their fabric construction preference, Boomers indicated that they preferred wovens to knits and 69.9% said that they did not have a preference. Garments made of natural fibers were preferred by over 35% of Boomers followed by synthetics and blends. Natural blends were preferred over synthetic blends. This is further explained in Chapter Two where the reason for Boomer's preference of natural fibers stems from the "synthetics stigma" of the 70s and 80s ("Baby Boomers Prefer," 1997). Over three quarters of Boomers preferred a round neck, a turtleneck/mock turtleneck or V-neck design. Off the shoulder was the most disliked neckline followed by the Queen Anne and Sweetheart neckline. Boomers prefer full sleeves, short sleeves and 3/4 sleeves and dislike sleeveless/ strapless, oversized sleeves and cap sleeves. Although they are healthy and in shape, Boomers are still modest. They prefer garments that are subdued, solid colors. They use prints sparingly, preferring floral prints followed by plaids and paisley prints. Female Boomers were reported to prefer softer colors and more subdued prints in Chapter Two (Kelley, 2004). Many indicated that they do not have a preference in patterns. Survey respondents indicated that the reasons they preferred a specific garment were (in descending order of importance): comfort, fit, flattering to their figure, hides figure flaws, is versatile or is a timeless piece. This compares with Lents and Newman's statement that women look for style, fit, color and brand in that order (Lents & Newman, 2001).

Objective Three. The following results are for objective three. "To examine the importance of apparel fit in terms of female Baby Boomers' knowledge of fit, their desire to know about fit, how they judge whether a garment fits them correctly, their inclination to request alterations and the importance of fit in making purchase decisions." Almost eighty percent (79.9%) of Boomer respondents cited fit as a reason for their clothing preference. The fit indicators that Boomer women look for are movement room or ease, drape, silhouette, balance, whether the seams follow the line of the body and finally whether the garment is cut on grain. Boomers believe that salespeople should be more knowledgeable about fit and the product that they are selling. The majority of Boomers (M=3.5) agree that the majority of their clothing fits them correctly and that it does not need to be altered. They also (M=3.92) agree that they know how to tell if a garment fits them correctly. They do put a strong emphasis on fit when deciding whether or not to purchase a garment. Fit was the most valued apparel characteristic followed by care and style. If a garment does not fit in the store, Boomers are not likely to request alterations, but will continue looking for a garment with better fit. "They just aren't finding what they want and when they do, often it doesn't fit. And if it doesn't fit, forget it" (Gardyn, 2003,

p. 24). Boomers would like more information about fit from hangtags, salespeople and in-store literature. Over 33% said that they do not need any additional information about fit.

Recommendations

1. Investigate and compare men's and women's satisfaction and attitudes toward the apparel industry.
2. Investigate plus-sized females' satisfaction and attitudes toward the currently available apparel compared to satisfaction and attitudes twenty years ago.
3. Investigate Boomers' evolving expectations for clothing suitable for both office and casual wear and how business casual trends affect spending in the apparel industry.

References

Aldridge, A. (2004, November 10). Clothes retailers are freezing out baby boomers. *Marketing (UK)*, *11*, 13. Retrieved January 5, 2005 from Ebsco Host database.

American baby boomers: Demographic profile. (2003). *MetLife.* 1-4. New York, NY: MetLife Mature Market Institute. Retrieved from http://www.metlife.com/WPSAssets/19506845461045242298V1fBoomer%20Profile%202003.pdf

Anderson, N. (2004, December 6). With age, your body changes it's shape. *Illinois Daily Herald, 2.* Retrieved July 10, 2004, from Lexis Nexis Host database.

Are baby boomers conceding to age? (2002) *USA Today Magazine, 131*, 1. Retrieved July 10, 2005, from Wilson Web database.

Baby boomers prefer an apparel diet high in natural fibers: Fabric content twice as important to boomers vs. younger women when making purchase. (1997). *LifeStyle Monitor*. Retrieved January 9, 2005, from http://www.cottoninc.com/ISM/article.asp?articleID=329

Barker, O. (2002, May 15). Shoppers have a fit about sizes. *USA Today, 5*, Retrieved January 5, 2005, from Ebsco Host database.

Bermudez, A. (2002, March). Plus size. *Women's Wear Daily*, *10*, 10-16.

Bernstein, P. (2001, February 5-11). Admen bank on boomers. *Variety, 381*(11), 29. Retrieved July 10, 2004, from Wilson Web database.

Bernstein, P. (2004, May 3). The retirement revolution: boomers change everything. *Accounting Today, 18*(8), 18-20. Retrieved January 5, 2005, from Ebsco Host database.

Bettendorf, E. (1993, December 16). Christmas shoppers sometimes seek advice from other shoppers. *Illinois State Journal Register*, 6A. Retrieved July 11, 2004, from Pro Quest database.

Branding to men and women. (2001, February). *Retail Merchandiser, 41*(2), 59. Retrieved January 5, 2005, from Ebsco Host database.

Chun-Yoon, J., & Jasper, C. R. (1995). Consumer preferences for size description systems of men's and women's apparel. *Journal of Consumer Affairs, 29*(2), 429-441. Retrieved January 6, 2005, from Ebsco Host database.

Clark, M. (1999, February 26). Size does matter. *The Times, 3*(30). Retrieved January 6, 2005, from Pro Quest database.

Clothes sellers embrace new age; big retailers plan stores focusing on women 35 and up. (2004, September 28). *Chicago Tribune*, 3. Retrieved July 11, 2005, from Pro Quest database.

Coming of age: Today's woman over 50 is feminine and fabulous. (2000). *Women's Wear Daily,* 148. Retrieved July 11, 2004, from Ebsco Host database.

Day, B. (1998, July 27). Baby Boomers make their mark in the executive suite. *Des Moines Business Record, 94*(30), 20-21. Retrieved January 10, 2005, from Pro Quest database.

D'Innocenzio, A. (2003, May 1). Stores retooling to target boomers. *Desert News,* D08. Retrieved January 5, 2005, from Lexis Nexis database.

Drezen, R., & Pohlman, D. (2004). No title. 5p Retrieved April 21, 2004, from Pro Quest database.

Dychtwald, K., & Flower, J. (1989). *Age wave: The challenges and opportunities of an aging America.* New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Dychtwald, K. (1999). *Age power: How the 21st century will be ruled by the new old.* New York, NY: Penguin Putnam Inc.

Francese, P. (2003, March). Working women. *American Demographics. 25*(2), 40-41. Retrieved January 5, 2005, from Pro Quest database.

Fry, P. (2003, June). Retirement baby boomer style. *World & I*, *18*(6), 286-291. Retrieved November 22, 2004, from Ebsco Host database.

Gardyn, R. (2003, Jul/Aug). The shape of things to come. *American Demographics*, *25*(6), 24. Retrieved January 10, 2005, from Pro Quest database.

Harris, R. (2004, July 12-19). The boomers' golden age. *Marketing. 109*(24), 14-17. Retrieved January 5, 2005 from Pro Quest database.

Hazen, G. G. (1994). Fantastic fit for every body. Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press.

Heaton, L. M. (2000). Setting the stage: The consumer viewpoint. *Consumer Fit and Industry Sizing: Aligning Vision and Reality,*

Hobson, K. (2002, May 13). Chic- -and comfortable: Chico's prospers selling clothes for real women. *U.S. News & World Report, 132*(16), 40. Retrieved January 5, 2005, from Wilson Web database.

Holstein, W. J., & Tharp, M. (2000, June 26). Boomers, start your engines. *U.S. News & World Report*, *128*(75), 36-42. Retrieved July 11, 2004, from Ebsco Host database.

It's all about lifestyle. (2001). *Sporting Goods Business*, *34*(4), 18-20. Retrieved January 5, 2005, from Ebsco Host database.

Kaplan, A. (2004, March 23). A stroke of genius: Women's swimsuits that fit women. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. Retrieved January 10, 2005 from Pro Quest database.

Kelley, P. (2004, September 19). Over- 50 fashion; it can be difficult for women of a certain age to find stylish clothing that isn't intended for teens or grandmothers, but help is out there. *Hartford Current*, H.3. Retrieved July 11, 2004 from Pro Quest database.

Lach, J. (1999). If the sneaker fits… *American Demographics, 21*(12), 18-19. Retrieved January 6, 2005 from Ebsco Host database.

Lam, M., & Sulindro, M. (2001). The baby-boomers anti-aging program. Retrieved January 5, 2005, from http://www.dayspaassociation.com/mainpages/anti_aging.htm

Lands' End changes the way people shop for apparel; Easy and affordable, Lands' End Custom leads custom clothing revolution. (2002, September 4). *PR Newswire*, 1. Retrieved July 11, 2004, from Pro Quest database.

Lee, L. (2004, August 16). Baby Boomer, come home. *Business Week*, *3896*, 36. Retrieved December 2, 2004, from Ebsco Host database.

Lents, V., & Newman, R. (2001). Understanding what women want. *Wearables Business*, *51,* 12. Retrieved July 10, 2004, from http://wearablesbusiness.com/mag/apparel_understanding_women/

Merrell, S. S. (1996, Nov/Dec). Getting over getting older. *Psychology Today*, *29*(6), 34-41. Retrieved June 12, 2003 from Ebsco Host database.

Meyers, T. (2004, May 13). Tip to the thirties. *Advertising Age*, *75*(37), S-2. Retrieved January 5, 2005, from Ebsco Host database.

Morton, L. P. (2001, Fall). Segmenting baby boomers. *Public Relations Quarterly, 46*(3), 46-47. Retrieved January 5, 2005, from Ebsco Host database.

Old? Me? (2004). *Economist*, *370*(8368), 8-10. Retrieved January 5, 2005, from Pro Quest database.

Otsuki, T. (2000, August) 'Essential' clothes. *Victoria, 14*(8), 72. Retrieved January 5, 2005, from Ebsco Host database.

Purdum, T. (2002, August). The age of design. *Industry Week*, *251*(7), 35-37. Retrieved January 9, 2005, from Pro Quest database.

Ross, T. (2003, August). A fitting solution. *Apparel Magazine*, *44*(12). Retrieved January 10, 2005, from Ebsco Host database.

Roszhon, T. (2004, April 7). A big middle-age demand for the not so revealing but still stylish. *New York Times*, C.1. Retrieved January 10, 2005, from Lexis Nexus database.

Salusso, C. (2000, November). Apparel Sizing to fit real people. Retrieved November 22, 2004, from http://www.wsu.edu:8080/`salusso/BODY/contents.html%20

Sarkisian-Miller, N. (2003, September 8). Tag-it Pacific announces successful launch of TekFit technology with Levi's Dockers and the signing of new letter of intent with Levi Strauss & Co. *Business Wire*. Retrieved January 10, 2005, from Lexis Nexis database.

Seney, E. (2004, November 6). Fitting into a youth-obsessed, tight-fitting world isn't easy. *Florida Times Union.* L.4. Retrieved July 11, 2004, from Pro Quest database.

Sorkin, M. D. (2004, March 8). Survey sizes up Americans for the perfect fit. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, A.1. Retrieved January 5, 2005, from Pro Quest database.

Survey: Forever young. (2004, March 27). *Economist, 370*(8368), 4. Retrieved November 22, 2004, from Pro Quest database.

The click and clash of generations. (2003, October 15). *Library Journal, 128*(17), 36-39. Retrieved January 6, 2005, from Ebsco Host database.

Trim, M. (1999). Engineering a new world for old boomers. *Business Journal, 13*(42), 24-27. Retrieved July 11, 2004, from Ebsco Host database.

Verdon, J. (2004, December 21). Inheriting the girth; Plus-size store inspired by 'gram'. *The Record*, L09. Retrieved January 9, 2005 from Lexis Nexis database.

What do women really want? (1996, October 12). *Discount Store News, 35*(16), A8. Retrieved January 6, 2005, from Pro Quest database.

Yeung, V. (2002). Boomer generation drives changes in women's fashion. *Wearables Business*. Retrieved January 9, 2005, from http://articles.com/p/articles/mi_mOCXP/is_13/ai_93138682

Appendix A

Cover Letter to all University of Wisconsin- Stout Female Employees

Brenna Lee
10289 Scarborough Rd.
Bloomington, MN 55437

Dr. Renee Howarton
261 Tech Wing
University of Wisconsin- Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751

February 8, 2005

Dear ,

I am a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin- Stout working on my Masters Degree in Home Economics with a concentration in Apparel Design. This questionnaire is part of a study to explore clothing preferences of female baby boomers. This survey takes approximately fifteen minutes to complete. Your participation in this survey will be helpful for me to complete my study and for the apparel industry to have a better understanding of your clothing preferences.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THE SURVEY. By filling out this questionnaire, you are giving your informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. The information in this study is being sought in a specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study or to withdraw from participation at any time during the study. Your decision not to participate will be respected with no coercion or prejudice. This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

This research has been approved by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.

Investigator: Brenna Lee
(952) 270-7857
leeb@uwstout.edu

IRB Administrator: Sue Foxwell, Director Research Services
152 Vocational Rehabilitation Bldg.
UW- Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751
(715) 232-2477
foxwells@uwstout.edu

Advisor: Dr. Renee Howarton
(715) 232-2540
howartonr@uwstout.edu

By completing this survey you are agreeing to participate in the project entitled "Clothing Preferences of Female Baby Boomers." I would appreciate it if you would send this survey back via campus mail in the enclosed self-addressed envelope by Tuesday, February 22, 2005. Your answers will be kept confidential. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Brenna Lee

Appendix B

Survey

Profile:

1. In what year were you born? 19 ______

Please check the appropriate response

2 Height:
  a. petite (under 5'4)
  b. average (5'4 to 5'6)
  c. tall (over 5'6)

3. I typically wear a size
  a. XS / 0-2
  b. S / 4-6
  c. M / 8-10
  d. L / 12-14
  e. XL / 16-18
  f. plus size / 16W-26W

4. I am currently:
  a. single
  b. dating
  c. in a committed relationship
  d. married
  e. separated
  f. divorced
  g. widowed

5. I am currently retired (do not work):
  a. yes: (skip to question 8)
  b. no

6. I currently work:
  a. full-time
  b. part-time
  c. seasonally
  d. volunteer

7. I plan on retiring within the next:
  a. 1 year or less
  b. 2-5 years
  c. 6-9 years
  d. 10 years or more

8. My personal annual income after taxes currently is:
  a. $9,999 or less
  b. $10,000-$24,999
  c. $25,000-$49,999
  d. $50,000-$89,999
  e. $90,000 or more

9. My household annual income (2 or more earners) after taxes currently is:
  a. $9,999 or less
  b. $10,000-$24,999
  c. $25,000-$49,999
  d. $50,000-$89,999
  e. $90,000 or more

Attitudinal

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the attitude statements below by selecting one of the following abbreviations; SA, A, N, D or SD.

If you strongly agree with the statement circle SA, if you strongly disagree with the statement circle SD. If your feelings are not as strong, choose A, N or D.

Consider each statement carefully, then evaluate it as rapidly as you can. There are no right answers. The best responses are <u>your personal opinions.</u> Please answer all of the questions.

SA	A	N	D	SD
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

1. I feel that the apparel industry currently caters to my preferences.	SA	A	N	D	SD
2. I feel that it is important for salespeople to be knowledgeable about the product that they are selling.	SA	A	N	D	SD
3. I feel that that it is important for salespeople to be knowledgeable about fit.	SA	A	N	D	SD
4. I believe that I am physically fit.	SA	A	N	D	SD
5. I feel that my clothing preferences have become more conservative.	SA	A	N	D	SD
6. I feel that it is important to always look my best.	SA	A	N	D	SD
7. I feel that the majority of my clothing fits me correctly.	SA	A	N	D	SD
8. I feel that the majority of the clothing that is available to me needs to be altered.	SA	A	N	D	SD
9. I value other's opinions when assessing whether a garment fits me or not.	SA	A	N	D	SD
10. I know how to tell if a garment fits me correctly or not.	SA	A	N	D	SD
11. I feel that fit is a major factor when purchasing apparel.	SA	A	N	D	SD
12. I feel that style is a major factor when purchasing apparel.	SA	A	N	D	SD
13. I believe that ease of care is a major factor when purchasing apparel.	SA	A	N	D	SD
14. I believe that clothing is overpriced.	SA	A	N	D	SD

Behavioral

Indicate the extent to which you participate in the content of these statements by selecting an abbreviation AA, O, S, R or N.

If you almost always do what is stated circle AA, if you never do what is stated circle N. If your activity is not as high, circle O, S or R.

Consider each statement carefully, then evaluate it as rapidly as you can. There are no right answers. The best responses are <u>your personal opinions</u> Please answer all of the questions.

AA--------------------O	--------------------S	--------------------R	--------------------N	
almost always	often	sometimes	rarely	never

Please circle the appropriate response with 5 meaning strongly agree and 1 meaning strongly disagree.

1. When shopping for apparel, I find what I went shopping for.	AA	O	S	R	N
2. I look for clothing to emphasize specific parts of my body.	AA	O	S	R	N
3. I look for clothing that conceals specific parts of my body.	AA	O	S	R	N
4. I am influenced by salespeople's opinions when deciding whether or not to purchase a garment.	AA	O	S	R	N
5. I will spend more on a garment if it is of high quality.	AA	O	S	R	N
6. I will spend more on a garment if it is stylish.	AA	O	S	R	N
7. I will spend more on designer label apparel.	AA	O	S	R	N
8. I tend to be brand loyal when making clothing purchases.	AA	O	S	R	N
9. I follow clothing trends closely.	AA	O	S	R	N
10. I prefer to shop for others rather than myself.	AA	O	S	R	N
11. I enjoy shopping for clothing for myself.	AA	O	S	R	N
12. I keep clothing for 3 years or more.	AA	O	S	R	N
13. I refuse to buy clothing that needs to be altered.	AA	O	S	R	N
14. I have to alter at least 4 items of clothing per year.	AA	O	S	R	N

Apparel Preferences
Indicate your apparel preferences by placing an x by all answers that apply to you.

1. In what way(s) do you most commonly emphasize or hide your features through your clothing choices?
(check all that apply)
__a. silhouette
__b. color
__c. texture
__d. patterns
__e. layering
__f. other (please explain)
____

2. What parts of your body are you comfortable showing? (check all that apply)
__a. forearms
__b. upper arms
__c. lower leg
__d. upper leg
__e. upper chest
__f. breasts
__g. neck
__h. back
__i. stomach

3. What parts of your body do you prefer to hide with clothing? (check all that apply):
__a. forearms
__b. upper arms
__c. lower leg
__d. upper leg
__e. upper chest
__f. breasts
__g. neck
__h. back
__ i. stomach

4. When shopping for apparel I seriously consider:
(check all that apply)
__a. fabric content
__b. seam finishes
__c. care instructions
__d. cut of fabric (ex. cut on bias)
__e. construction (ex. straight top stitching, patterns match up at seams etc.)
__f. brand of clothing

5. I know that a garment fits my body by: (check all that apply)
__a. seam lines follow the lines of my body
__b. there is enough room for movement
__c. the silhouette/ line of the garment is flattering
__d. both sides of the garment are balanced (the same)
__e. the garment is cut on grain (grain of fabric is perpendicular to the floor)
__f. the garment drapes/ lays well on my body

6. I wish there was more information regarding fit available through: (check all that apply)
__a. salespeople
__b. in-store literature
__c. garment hangtags
__d. other (please explain)
____
__e. I don't need any additional information.

7. On average I tend to shop for myself:
__a. once a year or less
__b. 2-4 times a year
__c. 5-7 times a year
__d. 8-10 times a year
__e. 11-12 times a year
__f. more than 12 times per year

8. In one shopping trip I usually spend _____ on clothing
for myself:
__a. less than $50
__b. $51-$200
__c. $201-$400
__d. $401-$600
__e. $600-$800
__f. $801-$1,000
__g. $1,001 or more

9. Please check all clothing styles that you most prefer to wear: (check all that apply)
__a. pant suit
__b. skirt/dress suit
__c. dress
__d. skirt and blouse
__e. slacks and blouse
__f. jeans and blouse
__g. jeans and T-shirt
__h. sweats or athletic wear

10. Please check all clothing styles that you least prefer to wear:
(check all that apply)
__a. pant suit
__b. skirt/dress suit
__c. dress
__d. skirt and blouse
__e. slacks and blouse
__f. jeans and blouse
__g. jeans and T-shirt
__h. sweats or athletic wear

11. Which of the following categories of garments do you currently wear the most?
__a. casual/ leisure
__b. professional/ business
__c. formal or semi formal
__d. other (please explain)
____

12. I currently wear a uniform to work:
__a. yes
__b. no

13. I currently follow a dress code:
__a. yes
__b. no

14. What type of neckline do you prefer?
(check all that apply)
__a. turtleneck / mock turtleneck
__b. v-neck
__c. round / jewel / crew
__d. scoop (U-shaped neckline)
__e. square
__f. sweetheart (forms a heart shape at bust)
__g. Queen Anne (high stand in back with low shaped neckline in front)
__h. bateau (follows the collarbone line with little to no scoop)
__i. off the shoulder (an open neckline, with the fabric resting off the shoulders)
__j. asymmetrical

15. What type of neckline do you dislike?
(check all that apply)
__a. turtleneck / mock turtleneck
__b. v-neck
__c. round / jewel / crew
__d. scoop (U-shaped neckline)
__e. square
__f. sweetheart (forms a heart shape at bust)
__g. queen Anne (high stand in back with low shaped neckline in front)
__ h. bateau (follows the collarbone line with little to no scoop))
__ i. off the shoulder (an open neckline, with the fabric resting off the shoulders)
__ j. asymmetrical

16. What type of sleeve do you prefer?
(check all that apply)
__a. sleeveless/ strapless
__b. spaghetti straps
__c. full straps (1" strap or wider)
__d. cap sleeve
__e. short sleeve
__f. _ sleeve
__g. full sleeve
__h. oversized sleeves

17. What type of sleeve do you dislike?
(check all that apply)
__a. sleeveless/ strapless
__b. spaghetti straps
__c. full straps (1" strap or wider)
__d. cap sleeve
__e. short sleeve
__f. _ sleeve
__g. full sleeve
__h. oversized sleeves

18. What type of fabric construction do you prefer?
__a. knit
__b. woven
__c. no preference

19. What type of fabric do you prefer?
    __ a. natural
    __ b. synthetic
    __ c. blend

20. What type of skirt length do you prefer?
    (check all that apply)
    __a. long (hits at or past ankle)
    __b. hits at lower calf
    __c. hits at mid calf
    __d. hits just below the knee
    __e. hits just above the knee
    __ f. hits 2" or more above the knee

21. What type of fabric coloring do you prefer?
    __a. solid; skip to question 23
    __b. print
    __c. no preference; skip to question 24

22. I prefer:
    (check all that apply)
    __a. plaids
    __b. stripes
    __c. dots
    __d. floral
    __ e. paisley
    __ f. geometric pattern
    __ g. other (please describe)
    ____
    __ h. no preference

23. Specifically what type of coloring do you prefer?
    __a. bright
    __ b. subdued
    __ c. no preference

24. Why do you prefer one piece of clothing over another?
    (check all that apply)
    __a. flattering to figure
    __b. fit
    __c. comfort
    __d. versatile
    __e. hides figure flaws
    __f. timeless piece
    __g. other (please explain)
    ____

Any Additional Comments:
____
____
____

If you would like the results of this survey please email me at leeb@uwstout.edu.

Thank you for completing this survey