



## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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# Interaction of Body Image Perception on Garment Size Preferences: Consumption Patterns of Ready-to-Wear Fashion

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The nuances between size systems and ideal body figures among fashion consumers play a pivotal role in the fashion industry, influencing both apparel production and the complex decisions consumers face. This study aimed to examine the impact of body image perception on size selection, brand preference, and overall shopping experiences, and how size-inclusivity initiatives shape these behaviours in Ghana.

**Methodology/Design:** A group-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from 238 respondents, both male and female, aged 18–60, who are in active service on the main campuses of 3 universities in the Ashanti region of Ghana. Using a Quantitative approach, analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and correlations to measure relationships between senior members of these public universities and other variables.

**Findings:** Key findings revealed a strong relationship between body image satisfaction and clothing size selection, influencing both consumer and retailer behaviour. Individuals with a negative body image often engage in compensatory purchasing behaviours, whereas those with a positive body image demonstrate more flexibility in size choices. Additionally, retailers that incorporate size diversity in their marketing strategies receive more favourable responses from consumers across the body image spectrum.

**Practical and Social Implications:** The research underscores the growing need for size inclusivity, highlighting its impact on consumer loyalty and market share. Hence, the fashion industry addresses body image issues proactively by incorporating customer feedback to enhance satisfaction and promote more sustainable purchasing practices of RTW garments.

**Originality:** There is a deep connection between body image perception and customer behaviour in the ready-to-wear garment sector, yet this relationship remains understudied in the Ghanaian context. While other studies investigate the various subjects in isolation, this study looks at the psychological dimensions of body image perception, in relation to certain consumer behaviours, mostly garment size preferences, within the framework of ready-to-wear.

### Keywords

Body image, consumer behaviour, ready-to-wear fashion, size inclusivity, garment preferences

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Clothing practices reflect personal standards and social recognition, and the perception of body image significantly influences consumer behaviour, including fashion (Shetty & Kotian, 2023; Apeagyei, 2008). Clothing or garment fit is highly subjective in every individual and appears as an indicator of the feelings of love and comfort that arise when consumers choose a particular outfit (Wiyantoro et al., 2017; Shin, 2013). To the garment consumer, the use of garments or clothes serves as psychological need as a

component of the self; as a means through which the self is established and validated; as a symbol of one's identity, mood, or attitude; as an expression of self-worth, and seen as an element of an effective response to self-evaluation as well as body cathexis among others (Sontag & Lee, 2004; Shetty & Kotian, 2023). Ready-to-wear, informally called "off-the-rack" or "off-the-peg", is created to be worn without extensive modification and is mass-produced clothing sold in standard sizes, as it accommodates the majority of individuals (Honu et al., 2020; Pandarum & Yu, 2015; Ashdown, 2014). In recent decades, the ready-to-wear apparel business has encountered heightened examination about its size systems and their effects on consumers' self-image and shopping experiences (Jeon & Lee, 2024). Studies have shown that the size of a garment influences the perception of body size variably, contingent upon the wearer's actual body dimensions. The influence of garment fit on body image perception differs based on gender, body size, and shape (Li et al., 2025). For instance, with a garment ease of 2-3 cm, it effectively minimises perceived body size in obese individuals (Liu et al., 2006). However, larger garments generally enhance the perceived body size of thin and medium-built individuals, whereas they may produce a slimming effect for obese individuals (Liu et al., 2006; Fan et al., 2004). Anecdotally, fit and size systems appear to be an issue among Ghanaian fashion stakeholders. Fashion trends, cultural influences, age, gender, body shape, comfort, aesthetics, and lifestyle all have an impact on people's clothing fitness choices throughout their lives (Wiyantoro et al., 2017; Shan et al., 2012). However, the consumer exposure to a wide range of designs, sizes, colours, and materials from local clothing stores as well as the media has made clothes choices more difficult (Nkambule, 2010).

However, the perception of body image significantly influences consumer behaviour in the ready-to-wear apparel sector (Makhanya & Mabuza, 2020). The intricate connection between body perception and clothing selection illustrates the psychological and sociological aspects of consumer decision-making (Monge, 2023). Psychologically, the effects of garment sizing surpass simple fit preferences, influencing consumer self-esteem and purchasing behaviour (Monge, 2023; Brooks et al., 2020; Makhanya & Mabuza, 2020). Studies have shown that negative body image perceptions can lead to avoidance behaviours in shopping, size label anxiety, and altered consumption patterns (Lou & Tse, 2020; Dittmar, 2007). This phenomenon is particularly significant in the modern retail landscape, where the proliferation of internet purchasing has eradicated the conventional fitting room experience, simultaneously presenting new challenges in size selection and fit satisfaction (Merino et al., 2024). Studies show that customers' impressions of their body image frequently differ from their actual physical dimensions, resulting in diverse emotional reactions during the clothing selection process. This gap can profoundly affect purchasing decisions, brand loyalty, and overall pleasure with ready-to-wear apparel. The fashion industry's standardised sizing procedures, which frequently neglect to accommodate varied body shapes and sizes, exacerbate this link.

Body image is a complex concept comprising various facets, including perceptual, affective, and cognitive elements affecting self-esteem and quality of life (Alleva et al., 2023; Monge, 2023; Shetty & Kotian, 2023). Body image perception and garment size preferences are closely interrelated, influencing fashion choices and self-esteem (Dewayanti & Andhini, 2023; Shetty & Kotian, 2023). In the Ghanaian context, the nuances existing between how the concept of self-body-image or self-satisfaction interrelates with the choice and purchase patterns of RTW garments remain underexplored. Also, a key strategy for sustainability is producing clothing based on accurate sizes to avoid overproduction and material waste. Research indicates a complex relationship between body image perception and preferences for garment size (Merino et al., 2024; Shetty & Kotian, 2023). However, in emerging markets like Ghana, sizing is often overlooked, leading to consumer dissatisfaction and unsustainable fashion practices. According to

Makhanya and Mabuza (2020), whereas body size shows a positive correlation with these preferences, understanding the intricate relationship between body image and preferences in clothing is crucial for both retailers and manufacturers, as well as the Ghanaian fashion industry as a whole, as they work to address consumer needs and expectations in the evolving fashion marketplace. To this end, this study attempts to fill this gap by examining how body image perception influences consumers' preferences for ready-to-wear garments in relation to size selection, while assessing the sizing and fit-related challenges experienced by the Ghanaian consumers when purchasing RTW garments.

## 2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 | Body Image Perception, Psychological Factors

Body image refers to an individual's perception of their physical appearance, encompassing their thoughts, feelings and attitude towards their body (Shetty & Kotian, 2023). Body image perception is a multifaceted construct influenced by individual cognition, emotional responses, sociocultural factors, and these dynamics are essential for developing effective interventions at improving self-satisfaction (Stein et al., 2023; Mahdifar et al., 2024; Merino et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2023). According to Shetty and Kotian (2023), the individual's behavioural intention is shaped by attitudes, norms, and perceived control. Moreover, everyone in society has different expectations, and one's image can be expressed using fashion products. Shetty and Kotian (2023) cited that culture, religion, economic status and social identity can be proven through fashionable products. Social identity possesses a considerable standard which can influence purchasing intentions. Self-individuality significantly influences attitude and behavioural control; thus, Individuals act in accordance with social acceptance, and self-identity significantly influences customers' sentiments, reflecting their societal position (Shetty & Kotian, 2023). Psychological traits such as anxiety about one's body profoundly affect body image and the choice of ready-to-wear (RTW) apparel, especially in teens (Shetty & Kotian, 2023). Studies have shown that persons with body image dissatisfaction are at a heightened risk of developing anxiety disorders, such as generalised anxiety disorder and social anxiety disorder (Mental Health UK, 2022; Vannucci & Ohannessian, 2018; Halliwell & Dittmar, 2005).

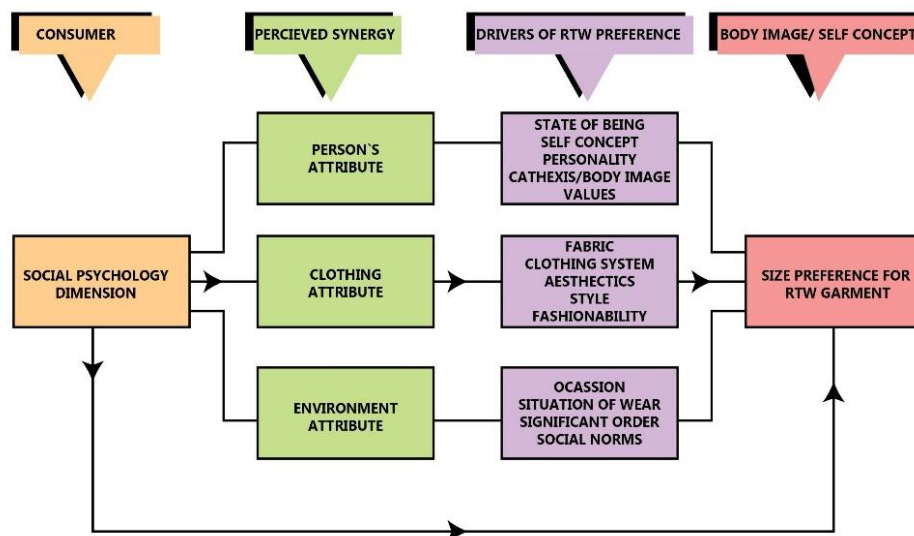
### 2.2 | Consumer Perception and Behaviour on Garment Preferences

Fashion has evolved from tailor-fitted garments to mass-produced garments (Honu et al., 2020). Ready-to-wear (RTW), informally called "off-the-rack" / "off-the-peg", is created to be worn without extensive modification, mass-produced and sold in standard sizes to accommodate the majority of individuals (Wang & Zakaria, 2024; Pandarum & Yu, 2015; Ashdown, 2014). Fashion signifies social status and is frequently utilised to convey an individual's image and social standing, with the wearer playing a crucial role in the whole fashion ecosystem (Shetty & Kotian, 2023). Consumers who purchase from the same company may hold favourable sentiments toward it, and customer loyalty can manifest as heart, mind, and hand loyalty (Long & Nasiry, 2022). According to Shetty and Kotian (2023), brand identification in fashion trends fosters recurrent purchasing behaviour and consumer loyalty. Clothing preferences were influenced by cultural and religious factors (Shetty & Kotian, 2023; Nurani & Adinugraha, 2022). Studies have noted a significant association between body image, body cathexis, body size, and clothing preferences (Chattaraman & Rudd, 2006). According to Czekala et al. (2019), an individual's buying behaviour depends on social factors, which may influence garment fit, a highly subjective attribute that is often taken as an indicator of comfort. Hence, it is critical to the consumer experience because it helps style, complement, and flatter any body shape (Wiyantoro et al., 2017; Shin, 2013; Dinye & Nyaba, 2001). Fit and size systems appear to be an issue among fashion stakeholders because they serve numerous purposes, including psychological needs, self-establishment and identity validation, mood and

attitude regulation, self-worth, self-evaluation, and body cathexis (Stolovy, 2021; Sontag & Lee, 2004). Based on the relevant review, the Clothing Comfort Model (CCM) is adopted as the theoretical base in understanding the consumption pattern of the Ghanaian market in terms of how the body image can influence our size preference of RTW garments.

### 2.3| Theoretical Framework

The research applies the Clothing Comfort Model (CCM). This theory helps unravel the intricate relationship between social influences and individual psychological factors in shaping consumer behaviour. It sheds light on how external societal forces and internal psychological processes jointly impact consumption choices. The Social Psychological Dimension Theory by Branson and Sweeney (1991), delves into consumer behaviour from social and psychological viewpoints. The theory asserts that consumer behaviour is multifaceted, encompassing individual traits, motivations, the social environment, and psychological factors. Matté and Broega (2017) described the attributes of the Social Psychological Dimension Theory, categorised within the clothing comfort triad (person, clothing, and environment). Person Attributes include aspects like "state of being," "self-concept," "personality," "cathexis/body image," and "values." Clothing Attributes encompass "fabric and clothing system," "aesthetics," "style," and "fashionability," while Environment Attributes involve "occasion/situation of wear," "significant other," and "social norms." In essence, this theory highlights that individuals often align purchase decisions with their desired self-image or social group. It recognises the impact of social comparison and the influence of social class and socioeconomic status on consumption behaviours.



**Figure 1.** The Clothing Comfort Model (CCM), Adapted from Sontag (1985); Branson and Sweeney (1991)

### 2.4| Hypotheses

The study tested the following hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance,

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between gender and the choice of RTW garments, whether locally made or imported.

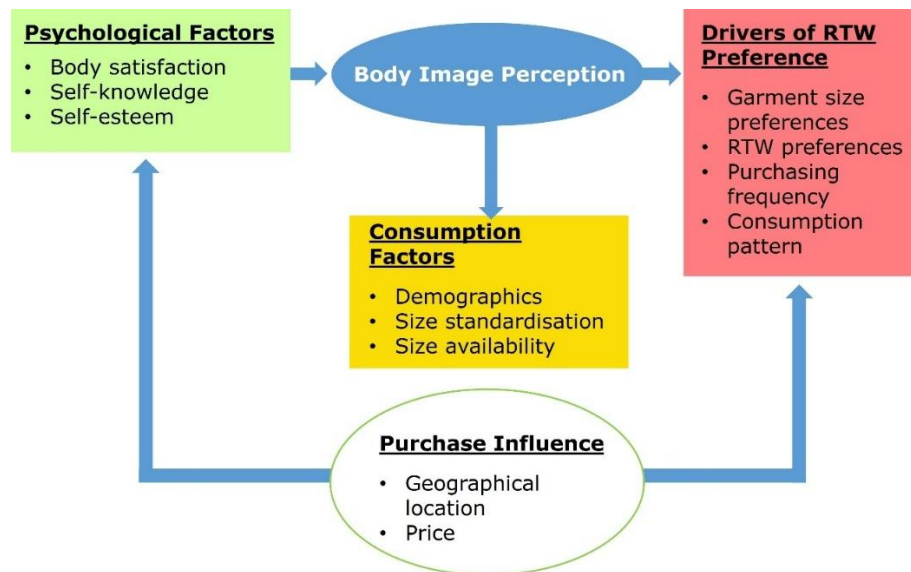
**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant difference in the gendered perception of self-satisfaction of consumers of RTW garments and their clothing choices.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between body satisfaction (Body Cathexis) and the choice of RTW garments, whether locally made or imported.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant relationship between body satisfaction (Body Cathexis) and the choice of RTW garments, whether locally made or imported.

## 2.5| Conceptual Framework

The relationship between body image perception and clothing selections is a complex interplay of psychological, consumption, and purchase factors. This conceptual framework provides a comprehensive examination of the relationships between body image perception and clothing preferences, and how these factors influence consumer behaviour in the ready-to-wear (RTW) clothing industry.



**Figure 2.** Conceptual framework of body image perception on garment size preferences

Source: Authors own construct, 2025

### 2.5.1 | Psychological Factors

Perceptions of body image are primarily shaped by psychological factors such as body satisfaction, self-awareness, and self-esteem (Grogan, 2016). Body image refers to an individual's perception of their physique, which is associated with self-perceptions, self-attitudes, self-esteem, interpersonal confidence, and emotional stability, among other factors (Yadav, 2024; Shetty & Kotian, 2023). These psychological constructs underpin consumers' self-evaluation and, hence, their clothing requirements. Studies indicate that people with greater body satisfaction prioritise clothing selection differently than those with lower satisfaction levels (Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009). Consumer body perception directly affects clothing size preferences and overall ready-to-wear consumption habits (Kim & Damhorst, 2010). This association underscores the necessity of perceiving body image not solely as a psychological construct but as a crucial influence on consumer behaviour. According to Magwaza (2015), individuals who are content with their bodies tend to explore various clothing styles, colours, and designs more freely without feeling restricted by body-related insecurities. This highlights that higher body satisfaction can simplify the process of choosing well-fitting garments.

### 2.5.2 | Consumption Factors

Demographics, size standardisation, and size availability are critical consumer factors that affect the correlation between body image perception and apparel preferences (Alexander et al., 2005). The inconsistency in sizing standards among brands and the presence of varied size ranges can profoundly influence consumer satisfaction and purchase choices, especially for those whose body types diverge from industry norms. Clothing size selection is influenced by both physical and psychological factors, necessitating tailored sizing methods and fit technologies (Hossain et al., 2025; Suganya et al., 2024; Joshi & Sawant, 2024).

### 2.5.3 | *Purchase Influence*

Geographic location and price appear as significant purchasing influence variables, influencing both psychological aspects and RTW preferences (Easey, 2009). Regional differences in beauty standards and economic factors result in varied consumer landscapes across markets, necessitating personalised approaches by clothes sellers. Individuals categorise themselves into distinct purchase patterns based on physical satisfaction levels, leading to market segmentation. Consumer behaviour, according to Hossain et al. (2025), is influenced by psychological self-perception, with garment purchases reflecting body satisfaction (Kowald, 2024; Suganya et al., 2024).

### 2.5.4 | *Drivers of RTW Preference*

According to Workman and Lentz (2000), the framework identifies a number of important factors that influence RTW preference, such as preferences for clothing sizes, RTW preferences, frequency of purchases, and consumption habits. These preferences are influenced by the intricate interaction of the previously listed components and ultimately dictate consumer purchase behaviour. Opinions regarding the ease of purchasing RTW garments, the availability of sizes and styles, and hassle-free shopping experiences contribute to heightened purchasing trends (Joshi & Sawant, 2024). Hence, body satisfaction influences clothing exploration, reflecting self-esteem and influencing design and retail strategies; therefore, effective products and retail experiences must fulfil psychological needs in addition to physical ones.

## 3 | **METHODOLOGY**

This study is quantitative in nature and employed descriptive statistics to systematically capture the characteristics, behaviours, and preferences of the selected population (Creswell, 2009). The research aimed to investigate body image perception regarding size selection, size preference, and the overall shopping experience, as well as the influence of size inclusion initiatives on these behaviours in Ghana. It also examined the link among four variables: psychological factors, drivers of RTW preference, consumption factors, and purchase influence, while testing two hypotheses based on contemporary scientific literature. Each variable comprises 3 to 5 items, derived from a demographic questionnaire designed to collect background information about participants, thereby contextualising the data gathered. Additionally, a scale measuring perceptions is employed, utilising a Likert scale that ranges from 1 to 20 items, rated on a scale of 1 to 5 points, where 1 signifies "Very Dissatisfied" and 5 denotes "Very Satisfied," along with gradations from "Not Very Well" to "Very Well" and from "Not Useful at All" to "Very Useful." The identical range of values was employed to evaluate all latent factors related to body satisfaction, garment preference, RTW perception, purchase frequency, and associated challenges (García-Salirrosas et al., 2022).

### 3.1 | **Validation of the Instrument**

The authors developed a self-formulated instrument, drawing on existing literature for each variable, to create a concise, user-friendly questionnaire that minimises the number of items while incorporating essential elements for measuring body image perception in relation to RTW preference. The items were verified through expert panel assessment of the methodology and instruments, as well as through pilot testing of the survey instruments, with a focus on construct and question clarity. The content was presented to two distinct groups for evaluation. The initial assessment was conducted with experts and a specialised panel via conference calls and in-person meetings to evaluate the comprehension and

appropriateness of each item collectively. Subsequently, the study considered the recommendations for enhancement and validated the content of the constructs. The second group comprised 15 respondents from the senior members within the study area, who received a copy through face-to-face interactions and the WhatsApp platform, to ascertain that consumers from the three study areas comprehended the true meaning of the statements, considering the technicalities of certain items.

### **3.2| Method of Data Collection and the Instruments**

Data collection was a cross-sectional survey using questionnaires as the main instrument. Cross-sectional studies are more common nowadays because they provide an opportunity to quantify the level of prevalence of the variables and their relationships at one point in time without longitudinal limitations (Levin, 2006). This method of research is particularly useful in trying to understand sift dynamics and the orientation of the sample population. Data was collected by combining both online and paper-based surveys. The participant survey instrument contained closed-ended questions and structured Likert items intended to yield quantitative data on the study variables. Online surveys are sent via participants' institutional email and WhatsApp groups, while the personalised paper surveys are given to respondents with limited access to technology.

### **3.3| Population and Sampling**

The target population for this study comprised university workers from three universities in Kumasi, Ghana, with an estimated population of about 2495. This group includes academic and non-academic staff, offering a diverse perspective on the topic under investigation. The selection of university workers as the population ensures the relevance of findings within the context of an educated and professional demographic (Etikan et al., 2016). The study employed a combination of purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select the three universities to ensure the representation of institutions, while the simple random sampling was conducted to choose individual respondents within each university in order to reduce sampling errors and ensure that all members of the population have the same opportunity to be sampled (Taherdoost, 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015). The data was gathered from March 2023 to July 2023. At the end of the data collection period, 278 respondents had responded to the questionnaires' items.

### **3.4| Data Analysis**

Data collected was analysed using descriptive and correlational analysis in order to meet the research goals. Descriptive analysis of the data was done through the use of frequencies, percents, means, and standard deviations (Kaur, Stoltzfus, & Yellapu, 2018). The relationships between the variables were determined by correlational analysis using the chi-square and Pearson's correlation coefficient, where appropriate. The SPSS software was utilised in performing the statistical analysis, which is a popular quantitative research software because of its effectiveness and dependability with big data sets (Pallant, 2020).

### **3.5| Ethical Considerations**

In this study, ethical approval was obtained from the Akenten Appiah Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development (AMMUSTED) Ethical Approval Board to ensure adherence to all guidelines and the protection of participants' rights. Important ethical principles, including ensuring anonymity, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and informed consent, were maintained during all

phases of the research process (Resnik, 2015). During the execution of the research, participants were always made aware of their opportunity to discontinue their participation at any point and at no detriment to them.

## 4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1| Socio-Demographic Background

The demographic analysis revealed that the study had an equal representation of males and females, with 238 participants in total. Most respondents (68%) were within the age range of 28 to 47 years. Specifically, 37% fell within the 38-47 age bracket, 31% were aged 28-37, 19% were between 18-27, 11% were aged 48-57, and only 2% were 58 years and above. Notably, the majority of both male and female participants were within the 28-47 age group. Additionally, at least 90% of respondents identified as Christians. Table 1 summarises the demographic characteristics of the participants.

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics/Profile

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
<b>a. SEX</b>			
	Male	119	50.0
	Female	119	50.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>238</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>b. AGE</b>			
	18-27	46	19
	28-37	74	31
	38-47	88	37
	48-57	26	11
	58+	4	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>238</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>c. RELIGION</b>			
	Christianity	220	93
	Islam	15	6
	No religion	3	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>238</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

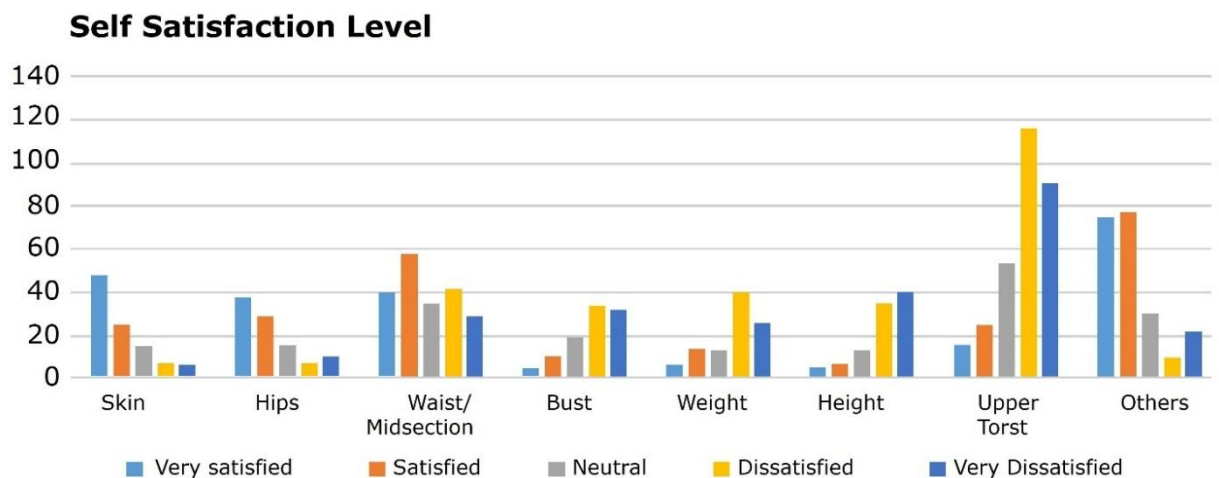
### 4.2| Self-Knowledge

A notable finding was that a significant portion of respondents, at least 40% were either unaware of or uncertain about their specific body shape. Among those who identified their body shape, 5% described themselves as V-shaped, 7% as Apple-shaped, 13% as Triangle-shaped, 9% as Hourglass-shaped, 11% as Rectangle-shaped, 3% as Square-shaped, 3% as Oval-shaped, and 4% as Banana-shaped. Knowledge of specific body measurements varied widely. For the shoulder-to-waist ratio, 32% had limited understanding, 23% exhibited very poor knowledge, 26% had good knowledge, and 19% demonstrated a very high level of understanding. Regarding waist measurements, 27% and 29% showed poor and limited knowledge, respectively, while 31% and 14% displayed good and very high knowledge levels, respectively. Respondents had better knowledge of across-the-back measurements, with 46% demonstrating good understanding and 30% exhibiting very high knowledge. However, 15% and 10% showed limited and poor knowledge, respectively. Thigh measurement knowledge was also limited, with 39% and 25% showing poor and limited understanding, respectively, while 24% had good knowledge, and 13% exhibited a very high level of understanding. Similarly, knowledge of hip girth was limited for 31% and 25% of respondents, while 25% and 19% showed good and very high levels of understanding, respectively. Female respondents reported challenges with specific body areas, including the

waist/midsection, bust/chest, hips, opening/fastening sections, and general fit issues. Overall, 48% of participants were categorised as having lower self-awareness of their bodies, while the remaining 52% demonstrated higher body knowledge. In the shoulder-to-bust dimension, over half (55%) of respondents lacked a high level of knowledge, 19% were poorly informed, 17% had a good understanding, and 9% exhibited very high knowledge.

### 4.3| Body / Self-Satisfaction

The results revealed that 73% of respondents reported a high level of body satisfaction, while 27% expressed low satisfaction. Notably, 45% of participants never experience body anxiety, while 18% report regular occurrences. However, 30% of respondents expressed a desire for a different body type, with many uncertain about their specific body shape, indicating a mix of satisfaction and dissatisfaction across various body parts. Anxiety and insecurity about body image remain prevalent among some respondents. Specific findings showed that 48% of participants are very satisfied with their skin, while satisfaction with their buttocks is lower, with only 39% expressing very high satisfaction. Gender disparities are evident, with males generally reporting higher satisfaction across most body parts, whereas females exhibit greater dissatisfaction, particularly with their skin and stomach. Among those with low body satisfaction, 55% are female, compared to 45% male. Conversely, 52% of individuals with high body satisfaction are male, while 48% are female. Age also plays a role, with 40% of those with low body satisfaction falling within the 38 to 47-year age group. In contrast, the majority of respondents with high body satisfaction (51%) belong to the 28 to 37-year age group.



**Figure 2.** Self-Satisfaction

### 4.4| Garment Preference for Consumer

When examining specific garment types, 45% of respondents were satisfied with semi-fitted dresses and shirts, with 17% very satisfied and 14% dissatisfied. For fitted dresses, 44% were satisfied, while 11% were very satisfied, and 20% were very dissatisfied. Long-length garments had 34% satisfaction, with 22% dissatisfied. Loosely-fitted shirts and blouses saw 42% satisfaction, while fitted blouses had 36% satisfaction, with a notable 40% very satisfied with long-sleeved shirts and blouses. Short-sleeved shirts and blouses had 43% satisfaction, and sleeveless shirts and blouses were more polarised, with 25% satisfied and 22% dissatisfied. The "Satisfied" category consistently had the highest percentage across most garment types, ranging between 35-45% of responses. Semi-fitted and fitted dresses/shirts received the highest satisfaction rates, with the "Satisfied" category reaching 43-44%. The "Very

Dissatisfied" and "Dissatisfied" categories remained relatively low across most garment types, typically below 20%. The "None" category varied across garment types, indicating that some items were not owned or used by a significant portion of respondents. Loosely fitted clothes and plain fabrics showed moderate satisfaction, with responses fairly evenly distributed between neutral and satisfied categories. Fitted garments generally received more positive feedback than loosely fitted ones, and traditional styles like semi-fitted dresses and long-sleeved shirts had higher satisfaction rates compared to more specialised styles. The neutral category consistently accounted for 15-20% of responses, reflecting a steady group of customers who were neither particularly satisfied nor dissatisfied. For trousers and pleats, 30% were satisfied, with an equal proportion dissatisfied, while straight dresses and shirts had 35% satisfaction. Full skirts (A-line or gathered) saw 35% satisfaction, with 9% very satisfied. Shorts and skirts above knee length had 27% satisfaction, while those below knee length had 34% satisfaction. Dark-coloured fabrics showed a mix of satisfaction (34%) and dissatisfaction (19%), while bright-coloured fabrics had around 40% satisfaction. Plain fabrics had 36% satisfaction, with 20% dissatisfied. Overall, the findings reflect significant variation in garment satisfaction across different categories, with a mix of positive and negative sentiments influencing consumer preferences.

#### 4.5| Factors influencing Purchase Frequency

The majority of respondents (27%) consider price to be the most important factor in their purchases, followed by 22% who prioritise design and style. Other factors include brand name (15%), fabric and prints (12%), and fit and size (11%). Females tend to prioritise factors such as country of origin, brand name, fit and size, and design and style more than males. Among male respondents, 25% indicate that price is their primary consideration when buying RTW garments. Similarly, around 30% of females also take price into account, along with other factors, before making a purchase. The data shows that females dominate the majority of those who prioritise aspects such as country of origin, brand name, fit and size, and design and style. Consumers with higher body satisfaction are generally more inclined to consider factors like garment price, brand name, fit and size, design and style, fabric/prints, and country of origin when making their purchases. Individuals with higher self-knowledge tend to focus on factors like brand name, design and style, and fabric/prints. However, Pearson correlation analysis revealed no significant relationship between self-knowledge and the factors influencing RTW garment purchases ( $r = -.054$ ,  $n = 238$ ,  $p = .407$ ). This suggests that self-knowledge does not significantly impact the purchase decision-making process in this dataset.

Regarding the overall purchase frequency of locally made and imported garments, a majority of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the fit of both types of garments. Specifically, 48% of respondents are dissatisfied with the fit of imported garments, with 17% expressing strong dissatisfaction. A smaller percentage (28%) are neutral, while 8% are satisfied with imported garments. Age is positively correlated with fit preferences for both locally made and imported RTW garments, indicating that as individuals age, they slightly adjust their views on the fit of these garments in Ghana. There is a strong preference for imported RTW garments, with 43% of respondents favouring imported garments, 27% preferring locally made garments, and 30% expressing an equal preference for both. Females are the primary group that frequently purchases RTW garments, while males (53%) represent those who do not buy them regularly. Among females, 60% prefer imported garments, while 63% of males strongly prefer locally made RTW garments in Ghana. Despite the preference for imported garments, 25% of respondents expressed strong dissatisfaction with RTW garments, and 53% report a lack of satisfaction. The data shows that 37% prefer European-made RTW garments, while 17% prefer

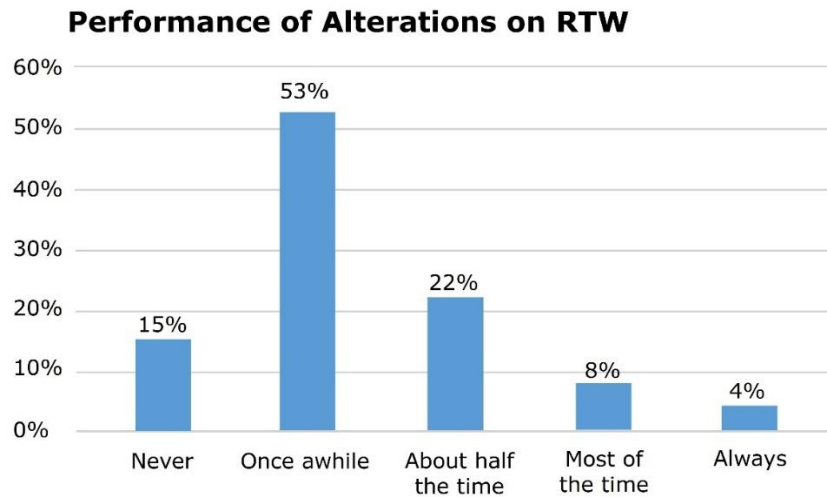
North American-made garments. Interestingly, 43% of respondents report satisfaction with locally produced RTW garments, while 60% expressed dissatisfaction with these garments.

#### **4.6| Challenges with RTW Garments**

The study revealed that a large portion of respondents (44%) expressed dissatisfaction with the fit of locally made RTW garments, reflecting similar dissatisfaction with imported garments. Nearly half (48%) are dissatisfied with the fit of imported garments, with 17% strongly dissatisfied. Age is positively correlated with fit perceptions, suggesting that older individuals may be more particular about the fit of both locally made and imported RTW garments in Ghana. A significant portion (47%) of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the fit of both locally made and imported RTW garments. Males particularly experience challenges with areas such as the chest, waist/midsection, opening/fastening sections, length, and shoulder areas. The study also found that fit issues are most prominent in the lower body, especially around the thigh and crotch areas. The bust/chest area shows a more balanced distribution across satisfaction ratings, while lower body measurements tend to receive more negative feedback, indicating potential fit issues. When it comes to movement comfort within garments, 40% of respondents find the fit to be good, and 27% rate it as very good. However, 26% feel that RTW garments in Ghana do not provide satisfactory ease of movement. The study also highlights that 19% of respondents struggle with the waist/midsection of garments, 17% with the bust, and other areas of concern include length (13%), openings/fastening (12%), and hips (10%). In general, 53% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with RTW garments, with the majority (57%) dissatisfied with fit issues, especially around the waist.

#### **4.7| Alterations on RTW Garments**

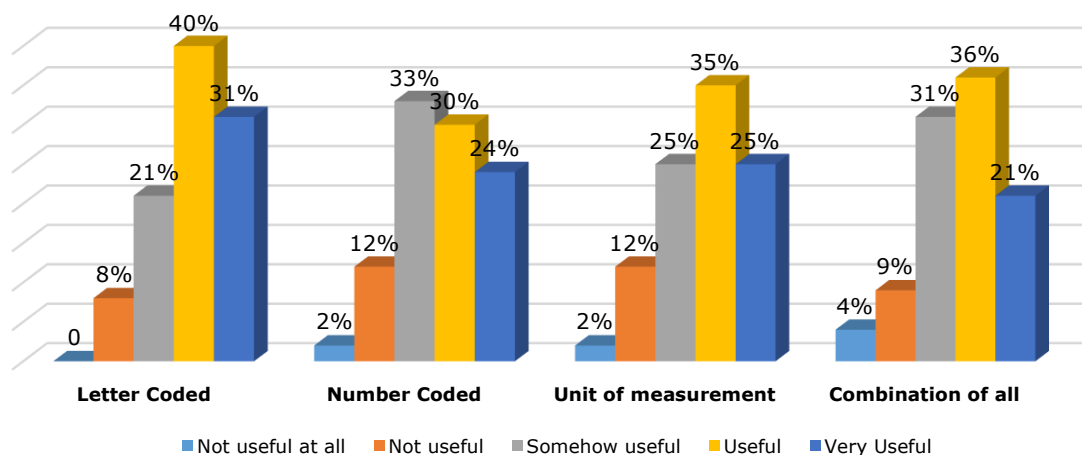
The study indicates that alterations are commonly made to RTW garments by respondents, with 53% occasionally altering their garments, 22% doing so about half of the time, and 15% never making alterations. A small percentage (8%) frequently make alterations, and 4% always do so. While 53% of respondents perform alterations occasionally, 12% do so most or always. Males are more likely to fall into the categories of never altering garments or occasionally making alterations, while females are more likely to perform alterations about half of the time. This frequent need for alterations might negatively impact body image, reinforcing the notion that Ghanaian body shapes do not conform to the standard sizes available in the market. The data suggests that while RTW sizing works for the majority, a significant minority consistently struggles to find garments that fit properly without alterations. This mismatch between standardised sizing and actual body shapes could contribute to body image concerns and feelings of not conforming to industry standards. The findings underscore the need for more inclusive sizing strategies in the RTW market to better accommodate diverse body types and foster a positive body image among Ghanaian consumers.



**Figure 3.** Frequency of Performance of Alteration on RTW Garment  
 Source: Fieldwork, 2023

#### 4.8| Preference for alternative sizing systems

The study evaluated various types of size labels, including letter-coded labels (e.g., S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXX), number-coded labels (e.g., 14, 17, 18), labels using units of measurement for specific garment parts (e.g., Waist: 97cm, Length: 96cm, Hips: 124cm), and a combination of illustrated figures, size codes, and measurement units. Regarding the use of units of measurement, 35% of respondents find them useful, while 25% each regard them as useful and somewhat useful, and 14% consider them not very useful. For the combination of illustrated figures, size codes, and measurements as labels, 36% of respondents found them useful, with 21% finding them very useful. A significant proportion, 31%, are neutral in their stance, and 4% consider them not useful at all in terms of aiding in the selection of ready-to-wear garments.



**Figure 4.** Preference for Alternative Sizing Systems  
 Source: Fieldwork, 2023

#### 4.9| Establishing the Hypotheses

The Chi-square test result indicates a significant association between gender and the choice of ready-to-wear garments (whether local or foreign), with  $\chi^2(2, N = 238) = 8.10, p = .018$ . Therefore, the Null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ), suggesting a significant difference in the gendered perception of self-satisfaction of consumers of RTW garments and their clothing choices, was accepted. In establishing the second hypothesis on whether there is a significant relationship

between body satisfaction (Body Cathexis) and the choice of RTW garments (whether locally made or imported), the Chi-square test result  $\chi^2(2, N = 238) = 25.68, p = .000$ , indicates a significant association between self-satisfaction and the choice of Ready to wear garments (whether local or foreign). Therefore, the H1 stands accepted. The Chi-square test result indicates a significant association between self-satisfaction and the choice of ready-to-wear garments (whether local or foreign). Tables 2 and 3 present the results of the chi-square test of association between gender and the choice of Ready to Wear garments, and between body satisfaction (Body Cathexis) and the choice of RTW garments, respectively.

**Table 2.** Chi-square test between gender and the choice of RTW garments

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	25.683 <sup>a</sup>	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	26.994	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	17.666	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	238		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 31.41

**Table 3.** Chi-square test between body satisfaction and the choice of RTW garments

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.076 <sup>a</sup>	2	.018
Likelihood Ratio	8.149	2	.017
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.638	1	.201
N of Valid Cases	238		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 32.50

## 5 | DISCUSSIONS

The Ghanaian fashion industry and that of many in sub-Saharan Africa are evolving. The gap which this study aimed to fill was to present an empirical study of the impact of body image perception on the consumers' preference for ready-to-wear garments, in relation to preferred body size when purchasing RTWs, whilst also determining the sizing and fit-related problems faced by the Ghanaian consumers, in the Ghanaian context, when they purchase RTW garments. The data from this study revealed significant variations in how well people understand different aspects of their body measurements, with some concerning gaps in self-knowledge. The well-understood measurement was across the back, showing good to very high knowledge, while there were several other crucial measurements concerning knowledge gaps. The finding that many respondents are uncertain about their specific body shape aligns with studies suggesting that body image awareness is often influenced by cultural and media narratives that may not emphasise body shape education (Grogan et al., 2016). However, this contrasts with research in developed markets where body shape knowledge is often higher due to widespread marketing of shape-specific clothing (Mair et al., 2016).

Also, although the majority of respondents expressed general contentment with their bodies, a modest gender discrepancy exists in body dissatisfaction. The high level of body satisfaction, particularly among males, reflects existing literature that highlights gender differences in body image. Research consistently shows that males report higher body satisfaction, while females are more influenced by societal beauty standards, leading to lower self-satisfaction (Gao et al., 2019; Awad et al., 2015;

Tiggemann, 2011; Cash & Smolak, 2011). The study found that body satisfaction and choice of RTW garments/RTW garments size selection are closely interrelated, influencing fashion choices and self-esteem. The link between body satisfaction and garment choice reflects research suggesting that individuals confident in their appearance are more deliberate in their clothing preferences, emphasising quality, brand, and aesthetics (Dewayanti & Andhini, 2023; Shetty & Kotian, 2023; Peters, 2014). Moreover, the significant association between gender and RTW garment choice corroborates literature emphasising gendered consumption patterns (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2006). Women, for instance, are often reported to prioritise style and fit more than men, consistent with the finding that females value factors like country of origin, brand, and design more (O'Cass, 2004). The prioritisation of price over design and style by a majority of respondents aligns with findings from developing markets where affordability often outweighs aesthetic and other considerations such as country of origin (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2022). However, the higher female preference for brand and design contrasts with male tendencies to prioritise functionality over aesthetics (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2006). Female consumers tend to consider multiple factors more comprehensively than male consumers when making RTW purchase decisions. Moreover, the lack of a significant effect of self-knowledge on purchasing decisions contrasts with findings from developed markets, where body awareness is associated with informed purchasing (Grogan, 2016). This divergence suggests a need for education and targeted marketing in the context of Ghana's fashion industry.

Fit issues are the predominant concern across both genders, with the different body parts presenting different challenges for males and females. Both genders share common concerns and prioritise specific fit areas (Jeon & Lee, 2024). Fit-related challenges are consistent with other reports that identified apparel fit as a prominent and recurring concern for consumers (Alexander, Connell & Presley, 2005; Gaur & Purohit, 2021). Moreover, this position reflects a supposed widespread dissatisfaction with the fit of RTW garments, particularly imported ones, due to the fact that standard sizing in global fashion often fails to accommodate diverse body types (Ashdown & Loker, 2010). Moreover, dissatisfaction with Ghanaian-made garments may reflect inconsistencies in sizing standards and limited diversity in designs.

## 6 | IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The findings have significant implications for the Ghanaian fashion industry. Gender discrepancies in body image suggest the need for targeted interventions, particularly for women, who report higher dissatisfaction due to societal pressures and cultural narratives. Addressing the underlying issues, including media representation, is critical. Satisfaction levels vary across different body parts, with respondents showing high satisfaction with their skin, buttocks, and thighs, while dissatisfaction is more common among females, particularly regarding their stomachs and muscles. Age and education also influence satisfaction, with younger and more educated individuals reporting greater contentment. Despite some experiencing anxiety, the majority are content with their bodies, highlighting the complexity of body image perceptions and the importance of demographic factors. Body image satisfaction significantly affects clothing choices, with interventions aimed at improving body image potentially reducing anxiety and promoting healthier fashion decisions. Additionally, manufacturers could focus on reducing production of less-used garment types while retailers prioritise popular styles to ensure sustainability. This study underscores the critical role of body satisfaction in shaping the choice of RTW garments/RTW garments size selection and highlights significant fit-related challenges for Ghanaian RTW consumers. While affordability remains a dominant factor in purchase decisions, gender differences and body satisfaction significantly influence preferences. The findings revealed a pressing need for targeted

consumer education, improvements in sizing systems, and greater diversity in garment design to address dissatisfaction. These insights provide valuable implications for the evolving Ghanaian fashion industry, emphasising the importance of aligning product offerings with consumer expectations to foster growth and competitiveness in the local and global markets.

## **7 | LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Challenges in precisely assessing body image perception arise from its subjective character, coupled with a potential bias in self-reporting about size preference. The difficulties in standardising size measurements across various brands hinder participants from locating size equivalents. The results may not be generalisable across diverse populations and cultures, perhaps leading to participant response bias due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter. Also, body image opinions evolve with time, and fashion trends affect size choices, which may influence consumer purchasing patterns since they also adapt and respond to technological advancements.

## **8 | CONCLUSION AND FUTURE STUDIES**

The study concludes that while body satisfaction is generally high, there is a notable lack of awareness and understanding regarding body form and shape among RTW garments consumers. Prevalent concerns on RTW garments are related to poor fit, garments do not cater for the Ghanaian body shapes, and issues with the poor quality and durability of RTW garments. Various factors, including cultural identity, perceived garment quality, pricing, environmental considerations, and gender differences, interact with body satisfaction to influence consumer choices. The relationship between body satisfaction, gender, and clothing preferences is complex and multifaceted, requiring careful consideration in the fashion industry's approach to design and marketing.

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## **ETHICS APPROVAL STATEMENT**

The paper is part of the MPhil research. The Ethics Committee at Akenten Appiah Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development (AAMUSTED) approved the set of questions prior to data collection. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study; therefore, their consent was obtained before they proceeded to answer both the interview questions and the questionnaire. Also, the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were assured.

## **DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT**

This article has a dataset that was generated and analysed during the current study, and the authors are ready to share it where necessary.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## **DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS**

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used Claude (OpenAI) as a language-support tool to gain a clearer understanding of concepts, refine grammar, improve clarity of expression, and strengthen academic writing structure. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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