

Clothing Size - UK - July 2012

Report Price: £1750 / \$2723 / €2181

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“Unless the mainstream fashion market becomes more sympathetic to big and tall consumers’ needs, it runs the risk of becoming ostracised from this increasingly united group on a permanent basis, and given the changing shape of the global marketplace, may run the risk of damaging brands and designer names in fashion for the long term among the ‘growing’ majority.”

– Neil Mason, Head of Retail Research

In this report we answer the key questions:

- Is fashion becoming more inclusive?
- Are men still marginalised?
- Can the damage be undone?
- Can plus size retailers capitalise on the grey market?
- Is online retailing the saviour of non-standard-sized consumers?

The concept of specialist clothing sizes was initially introduced to the clothing market in the 1970s and early 1980s during a period of stagnation in order to revive sales and add interest to a flagging market. With the UK market still struggling to come out of recession, and continued emphasis being placed on the growing size of the UK population, the issue of specialist sizing, and more importantly the concept of customer-oriented merchandising, once again promises to deliver growth opportunities in an otherwise difficult trading period.

This report examines the extent to which the UK fashion industry has embraced the concept of non-standard fashion and asks whether the recent interest in plus size by not just the specialists, but the mainstream fashion industry, is a serious attempt to drive growth in a flagging market and whether fashion that increasingly represents the reality of the UK body shape has finally fought its way into the mainstream market for good.

This report covers the non-standard-sized fashion market, which is defined as:

- Clothing for women in sizes 18 or over
- Clothing specifically designed as petite or tall ranges and other garments bought by women under 5’3” or over 5’9”
- Menswear in sizes XL or larger
- Childrenswear may be mentioned in passing but is not included in market sizes.

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