

**Bridal Gown Shopping in Relation to Body Size, Image and Satisfaction, and Previous
Experience and Anticipated Pleasure**

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to gain insight into how consumer's body size, image, and satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences relate to views of the bridal gown shopping experience in terms of anticipated pleasure and involvement. It was also of interest to note whether not differences existed between individuals who were considered to be plus size and those who were not. Data was collected from 75 self-identified brides-to-be at a major Southeastern Bridal Exposition via a four page questionnaire. Results indicated that there was a positive relationship body satisfaction, satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences and the anticipated pleasure they associated with bridal gown shopping. Participants indicated that they had positive experiences with apparel shopping in the past and had expected the bridal gown shopping experience to be pleasurable. In particular, participant's previous apparel shopping experiences with dresses was the most significant predictor of anticipated pleasure associated with bridal gown shopping. There were no significant findings in regards to body satisfaction, self-evaluative salience, and anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping. Multiple factors, including the number of participants, questionnaire format, and the nature of the garment itself could have contributed to these findings. The results of this study are valuable in terms of contribution to the industry, to the existing literature and recommendations for future research endeavors. Further, more personalized research is warranted to understand the motivations and reservations of this consumer segment.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Considered to be significant events that indicate progression from one contingency to another, rites of passage are most often recognized for their affiliated rituals in addition to the elements that comprise said ritual (Starr, Alley, Gundlach, & Perritt, 1997). An example of such an element is the specialized apparel donned by an individual who participates in a ritual (Starr et al., 1997). One of the predominant rituals in American culture is the wedding ceremony. Although the ceremony itself has seen little change in terms of the associated symbolism and proceedings, consumerism has become an increasingly important element with a particularly high level of importance being placed on the attire of the participants (Boden, 2003). Consumerism, for the purposes of this research, will be defined as the inclination towards buying consumer goods.

The garment that is most synonymous with the wedding ceremony is the bridal gown (Howard, 2006; Wallace, 2004). It is of such importance that purchases account for nearly 6% of the average total cost of an American wedding, which is \$28,427 (Hicken, 2013). As of 2011, wedding related goods and services constituted a 57 billion dollar a year industry, thus making the market for bridal gowns a 2.1 billion dollar a year industry (“Business: Big Business”, 2011; Wedding Market, 2010). The bridal gown serves not only a practical purpose within the ritual, but provides both the wearer and the observer with a sense of symbolic value while capitalizing on notions of a traditional white wedding (Howard, 2006; Otnes & Lowrey, 1993; Seligson, 1973). Serving as nonverbal indicator of the role that the participant (the bride) plays in the ritual, the bridal gown in traditional American culture has characteristically been identified as a long, white dress, which is a focal point of the ceremony, and is the garment around which all other attire is planned (Howard, 2006; Seligson, 1973).

Considering the high level of importance placed on the bridal gown due to its seemingly integral role in the ritual, it could be posited that the bridal gown is a consumable that is sacred in nature, as based

on Belk's (1989) assessment regarding consumption. Belk theorized that products could be considered in terms of their consumption on the basis of having qualities to be considered either sacred or profane (Belk, 1989). The bridal gown is a product that is consumed in "a magically intense, revelatory fashion...making it different from ordinary, mundane consumables" (Boden, 2003, p. 5). Additionally, the bridal gown has become known (at least in theory) as a garment that is meant to be worn on only one occasion and has design characteristics that make it unique and readily identifiable. Traditions surround the gown in terms of the shopping experience, which is considered to be a communal activity most often undertaken by the bride with close friends and family. This could be seen to contribute to an increased degree of importance and pressure placed on the wearer in selecting it. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that in American culture, the bridal gown is a sacred consumable, and that makes the associated shopping experience unique (Otnes & Lowrey, 1993).

This sacred status, along with the endurance of the wedding as an important rite of passage, has created a highly profitable mass market for ready-to-wear bridal gowns. To better understand the current state of this market and the cultural significance of the gown, it is imperative to understand the bridal gown industry, specifically in relation to retailing, publishing, and advertising. These business sectors helped to instill notions of tradition and emotional significance.

Bridal Gowns and the Retail Experience: A Brief History

The ready-to-wear bridal gown industry as we know it today rose in the years following World War II (Wallace, 2004). This is when the gown, according to Wallace (2004), truly made the transition from a "garment into a symbol" (p. 198). The timing was particularly influenced by the combined effects of textile innovations and an increased number of women getting married. Together, these made the mass manufacturing of gowns a realistic and profitable concept (Howard, 2006; Wallace, 2004). Seeing the potential profits of this market, there was a concerted effort by publishing houses, department stores, and bridal gown manufacturers to create, perpetuate, and inundate the public with the idea and identity of a modern bride (Boden, 2003; Wallace, 2004).

Specialized publications such as *Modern Bride* and *Bride* appeared during this time. They expanded the market in terms of items that should be consumed to correspond with the bridal identity and fostered this bridal identity in their readers, who themselves passed on the ideals (Boden, 2003). The notions of tradition, romanticism, and femininity were utilized, most notably through advertisements for bridal gowns, to set the criterion for a bridal identity that was attainable primarily through consumption (Boden, 2003; Howard, 2006; Wallace, 2004). Publishers, in tandem with their advertisers, targeted their market partly based on the sense of insecurity often held by women faced with the daunting task of planning “the most important day” of their life (Boden, 2003; Howard, 2006; Wallace, 2004). Not only was the consumption of wedding related items important, it was integral to achieving the wedding of the bride’s dreams and meeting the expectations of others. Of course, the bridal gown was the most significant of the items to be consumed by the bride-to-be, and it was the most synonymous with the bridal identity.

Through advertisements and editorials, bridal magazines presented readers with embodiment of the bridal fantasy that most often did and still does center on the seemingly transformative powers of gown on the wearer (Boden, 2003). As an increased level of importance was placed on the gown’s role in the ritual, the shopping experience surrounding it changed as well, with major retailers creating distinct bridal departments in their stores (Wallace, 2004). These were often referred to as “bridal salons.” They were characterized most readily by the physical ambiance and level of service given to consumers, who were assisted by “bridal consultants” rather than a sales associate (Howard, 2006). Shopping for the gown was presented as a communal activity, and a heightened sense of formality was attributed to all aspects of the retail experience (Howard, 2006). In this way, the level of importance associated with the bridal identity was reinforced, and consumerism was thereby encouraged (albeit discreetly) (Boden, 2003; Howard, 2006). Even the manner of displaying and selling bridal gowns set bridal salons apart from other departments in the same store.

Rather than displaying a large quantity of product in a variety of sizes, gowns were most often displayed singularly, denoting a sense of uniqueness despite the fact that the majority of gowns were mass

produced (Howard, 2006; Wallace, 2004). This, along with the alterations that were often required to make the gown fit the individual, helped forge the common belief that the bridal gown would be the most customized (and arguably the most expensive) garment that most consumers would ever own (Boden, 2003; Howard, 2006; Wallace, 2004). This was also the time when the concept of the bridal gown as a garment designed for single-time wear took root (Boden, 2003). Although the department store bridal salon helped shape the American ideal of the bridal gown shopping experience, the bridal salons themselves did not experience the same longevity. By the late twentieth century, discount chains and independent shops devoted primarily to the sale of bridal gowns replaced department store bridal salons as the conventional means for shopping (Boden, 2003). Although the retail format associated with bridal gowns has undergone changes, the manner in which brides are presented with and select their gowns has, for the most part, remained consistent with the experience that was first provided by the department store bridal salon.

Current Nature of the Market: Implications for the Body Size of Brides

Today's bride in search of her gown is faced with a retail experience similar to that presented to brides of the past in terms of the way in which gowns are displayed. *Big box* retailers such as David's Bridal and Alfred Angelo display their gowns in a singular fashion and offer consumers samples that may be either purchased off the rack or ordered in specific sizes. Smaller bridal retailers display their samples in limited numbers. There might be only one of each gown in a size that is selected by the shop buyer based on a variety of factors; these include sample price, affected by the reality that most bridal gown manufacturers include an upcharge fee for gowns over a certain size, and consumer demand. Because gowns are displayed in a singular manner on mannequins, it is also in the retailer's interest to purchase sample gowns that are closest to the mannequin size (usually a 6 to 8). According to the bridal shop trade publication, *VOWS*, the majority of independent bridal shops carry the bulk of their sample gowns in a size 8 or smaller (Keller, 2011). Retailers that operate on a national scale (David's Bridal and Alfred Angelo) offer brides a set number of designs that are displayed in a variety of sample sizes (i.e. one style

of dress may be available to try on in sizes 6 through 16), which may be purchased off the rack or ordered.

While modifications to the wedding ritual in terms of apparel have been relatively minimal over time, the characteristics of the participants who take part in the ritual have changed significantly (Wallace, 2004). One of the most notable changes pertains to the weight of the ritual participants (Starr et al., 1997). In 2003, 58% of Caucasian, 72% of Hispanic, and 78% of African-American women were classified as overweight (Seckler, 2003). In 2010, it was reported that half of the female population in the US wore a size 14 or larger, which places those individuals in the plus size sector of the apparel market (Donnelly et al., 2003). These figures sharply contrast the size 8 worn by the majority of women in 1985 (Stark, 2011). The number of plus size consumers for the bridal gown market have increased; estimates indicate that some 50% of today's brides are plus size (Keller, 2011). Despite these changes in demographics, the sizing system used by most bridal designers is based on anthropometric data gathered during World War II, a time when body shapes were smaller on average than those of today (Critchell, 2011). The measurements used for bridal sizing are smaller than those used for most apparel that a bride would buy because many manufacturers have adjusted their sizing strategies to reflect changes in consumer weight, often employing vanity sizing as a practice to appeal to the consumer (Critchell, 2011).

The discrepancy in sizing between everyday apparel and bridal gowns is so considerable that brides are advised to start trying sample gowns that are at least two sizes larger than what size they would normally wear (Critchell, 2011; Keller, 2011). An additional aspect of sizing to be considered, particularly for the plus size bride, is that when gowns are ordered, the customer's largest measurement is used. For example, a plus size bride may measure to an order size of 16 in the bust and waist, but a 22 in the hips. Therefore, a size 22 would be ordered, probably requiring a size upcharge, and alterations would be made upon arrival to ensure fit (Critchell, 2011). It has been noted within the industry that this discrepancy in sizing has led to frustrations for plus size consumers, who may shop differently than brides not considered to be plus size (Critchell, 2011; Keller, 2011). For instance, plus size brides may shop closer to the wedding date than brides who are not plus size (Critchell, 2011; Keller, 2011). This has been

attributed to factors such as allowing for more time to lose weight before the wedding and to feelings of trepidation regarding the shopping experience (Critchell, 2011; Keller, 2011). These concerns stem from previous experiences with retail, a lack of visual representation of plus sizes in publications directed at brides-to-be, and no knowledge of the possible selection of gowns in extended sizes (Critchell, 2011; Keller, 2011). Because samples are typically ordered in size 8 or smaller, concern about finding sample gowns in plus sizes is not unfounded. Given the minimal or missing representation of plus size models in bridal gown advertisements and editorials, the plus size bride could be justified in anticipating a frustrating shopping experience.

Although the incidence of overweight and obesity in the US has risen, the cultural standards for beauty in American society have remained relatively constant (Jung et al., 2001). A cornerstone of the beauty standard is thinness (Fallon, 1990; Farrell, 2011; Grogan, 1999). For individuals who do not meet the cultural ideal, feelings of inadequacy may arise that can negatively impact body image (Fallon, 1990). Negative body image has been shown to influence attitudes toward apparel and subsequent attitudes and behaviors associated with apparel (“Business: Big Business,” 2011; Johnson, Koo, Kim, & Lennon, 2007; Kwon & Shim, 1999). Thinness as a qualification for beauty may be used in part to explain the fashion industry’s hesitation to fully embrace the plus size market (“Business: Big Business,” 2011; Farrell, 2011). Although the fashion industry has recognized the potential for the plus size market, it has been slow to adapt, particularly regarding apparel design (Seckler, 2003). When retailers made adjustments to address the plus size consumer, it was more in terms of marketing than design, even though the latter could have better met the unique needs of the market (Chowdhary & Beale, 1988). The industry has made strides in catering to the plus size consumer in the last few decades, but the bridal market lags in comparison to regular apparel. A lack of attention to product development and marketing has contributed to plus size individuals’ frustration with size availability in the retail environment, fit, and level of fashionability of available apparel (Chowdhary & Beale, 1988; Otieno, Harrow, & Lea-Greenwood, 2005; Seckler, 2003). Such frustrations have resulted in plus size consumers becoming what Tatzel (1982) referred to as *anxious consumers*, describing those who feel intimidated by the experience of shopping for

apparel for a variety of reasons, particularly involving issues regarding weight, and are more likely to adopt avoidance behaviors to cope with their dissatisfaction and anxiety (Tatzlel, 1982). Avoidance behaviors may account for the fact that despite the potential market size, plus size apparel sales account for less than a fifth of total apparel sales in the US (“Business: Big Business,” 2011). This phenomenon may also be used to explain the delay that is often seen with plus size brides delaying their search for a bridal gown.

Purpose and Objectives

Research has illustrated that past experiences influence the development of emotions associated with a particular situation, and, in turn, determine future reactions to similar situations (Chaudhuri, 1997; Han, Lerner, & Keltner, 2007). Apparel-related studies on this topic have looked at more generalized forms of apparel than bridal. Researchers have not examined how an individual’s body image and past experiences in retail relate to one another and how these variables influence emotions that can dictate future behaviors, particularly in relation to a specific sector of the apparel market. The bridal gown is a prominent hallmark of the marriage ritual and has become synonymous with bridal identity in American culture. A heightened sense of importance is placed on the gown and the selection process. Therefore, this specific sector of the apparel market is especially befitting for study regarding body image and the emotions associated with previous satisfaction with apparel in general. The purpose of this research was to gain insight into how a plus size consumer’s body image and satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences relate to views of the bridal gown shopping experience in terms of anticipated pleasure and anticipated level of involvement as compared to those individuals who are not considered to be plus size. The specific research objectives follow:

1. To explore the relationship between body satisfaction and
1. Satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experience;
(b) the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping; and
(c) anticipated involvement.

2. To explore the relationship between satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences (general apparel) and the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping.
3. To explore the relationship between brides' body size and
 1. the number of bridal gowns they are willing to try on;
 2. the number of stores they plan to visit in searching for a bridal gown; and
 3. the amount they are willing to spend on the bridal gown.

Significance

This study was the first to focus on understanding plus size bridal gown consumers by attempting to better understand how body image, body size, and past satisfaction with apparel shopping experiences influence the bridal gown shopping experience. Bridal gown sales generate approximately two billion dollars in revenue each year, and statistics show that half of the female population in the US is considered plus size (Donnelly et al., 2003; Farrell, 2011; Odell, 2011; Otieno et al., 2005). In theory, bridal gown consumers represent a one-time customer base for the bridal industry. Therefore, it is important for bridal gown designers, retailers, and companies publishing materials aimed at brides to be aware of the plus size market in light of their buying power and unique needs. It is important to highlight disparities, if any exist, in anticipated involvement between plus size and non-plus size consumers. Although progress has been made in terms of the availability of gowns in larger sizes (Odell, 2011), the industry has made a less visible investment in gown design and display of plus sizes in advertisements. In general, the bridal gown industry lags behind regular apparel in terms of catering to the plus size market. There is evidence, however, of bridal industry recognition of possibly different consumer behaviors. The trade publication for independently owned bridal and formal retailers, *VOWS* (noted that body related issues are likely to be magnified during the bridal gown shopping experience due to the central, visible role that the bride plays in the wedding ceremony. By addressing the concerns of the plus size market, designers, retailers and other players in the industry (e.g., magazine publishers) could make plus size consumers' bridal gown shopping experiences more pleasurable and comparable to their smaller peers, and this could translate into higher revenues.

Besides potentially contributing to the industry, this study could add to the existing literature; especially pertaining to body image and the role emotions stemming from satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences are a motivating or inhibiting factor to anticipated pleasure and planned involvement with apparel. It would be useful to note if the emotions associated with the gravity of the event, due to the cultural significance of the rite of passage, and the importance of consumption as a means to complete the ritual, has any effect on the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping. Even more telling could be the identification of possible differences between those consumers who are plus size and those who are not.

Definition of Terms

Anticipated involvement – The amount of effort an individual anticipates devoting towards a goal.

Attitudinal involvement relates to feelings towards the activity of bridal gown shopping and is measured by the Personal Involvement Inventory scale (Zaichowsky,1985). Behavioral involvement relates to how the individual will approach the activity of bridal gown shopping and was measured using 4 questions developed by the researcher.

Body Satisfaction – The degree to which an individual is satisfied with his or her own body (Dijkstra, Dick & Barelds, 2011).

Body Dissatisfaction: “A person’s negative thoughts or feelings about his or her body” (Grogan, 1999, p. 2). “The subjective negative evaluation of one’s figure or body parts” (Presnell, Bearman, & Stice, 2004, p. 389).

Body Esteem- “A deeply held and generalized like or dislike of the body. It is composed of three correlated factors: physical condition, general (primarily facial) attractiveness, and physique appearance” (Rosa, Garbarino, & Malter, 2006, p. 80).

Body Image- “A person’s perceptions, thoughts and feelings about his or her body” (Grogan, 1999, p. 1).

Body Mass Index (BMI) – A value representing body size that is calculated from an individual’s weight and height. BMI is used to help classify individuals as underweight (less than 18.5), normal (18.5-24.9), overweight, (25.0 to 29.9) or obese (30.0 and above) (CDC, 2013).

Body Size- “ physical characteristics of an individual and include such considerations as physique, general bearing, and body build” (Zinn, 1990, p.380). Factors such as height, weight, and body proportion are considered when determining body size.

Expectations- An individual’s “anticipation of future consequences based on prior experience, current circumstances, or other sources of information” (Oliver, 1997, p. 68).

Anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping- For the purposes of this research, anticipated pleasure refers to the positive feelings that an individual might associate with shopping for a bridal gown.

Involvement- Actions that are taken in pursuit of a goal (MacInnis & de Mello, 2005).

Plus Size- A sizing designation used in industry that is given to any individual that wears a size 14 or above in apparel (Otieno et al., 2005). For the purpose of this research, the operational definition of plus size is any individual with a height and weight that compute to 25.0 or above, making them overweight or obese (CDC, 2013).

Satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experience- The degree to which an individual is satisfied/dissatisfied with previous experiences in shopping for apparel. This is measured using the Chowdhary and Beale (1988) scale that asks participants to indicate how satisfied (never, seldom, sometimes, often, or always) with types of apparel based on the criteria of selection, fashion, available sizes, and fit.

Weight Satisfaction- The degree of satisfaction an individual holds pertaining to his or her weight (Kwon & Shim, 1999).

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Body Image

Body image, as a broad psychological concept, is used to refer to the way in which an individual views and relates to his or her own body. It encompasses more than 16 operationalized definitions that address dimensions such as perceptions, thoughts, and feelings (Grogan, 1999). These dimensions, considered to be conceptual and subjective, affective, and behavioral in nature, can relate to the manner in which an individual estimates the size of his or her body (perceptions); assesses his or her own attractiveness as related to the body (thoughts), and feels corresponding emotions that are directly related to the size and shape of the body (emotions) (Grogan, 1999; Rumsey & Harcourt, 2012). Body image denotes how the individual visualizes his or her own body (conceptual) and how this visualization makes the individual feel (affective) and acts (behavioral) (Rudd & Lennon, 2001). Based on this ability to have agency over thoughts and actions, body image is considered to be an important part of the self-concept and is paramount in the formation of an individual's sense of "personal awareness and psychological development (Kindes, 2006, p. 81). Body image is an inherent element of development. It is a mutable construct that is highly subjective and susceptible to change throughout life. Changes can be influenced by factors such as age, sociocultural environment, ethnicity, appearance, and weight (Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990; Grogan, 1999; Kindes, 2006; Oberg & Tornstam, 1999; Tiemersma, 1989). Body image is a component of personality, personal identity, and self-image, all of which can be utilized to better understand or explain behaviors (Tiemersma, 1989).

From a theoretical perspective, body image research can be identified in the literature for either its cognitive or sociological approach (Jung et al., 2001; Kindes, 2006; Tiemersma, 1989). The cognitive approach to body image research attempts to account for the individual differences that are not necessarily addressed by sociocultural research (Jung et al., 2001). The two primary perspectives in the

cognitive approach are the self-discrepancy theory and the self-schema theory (Jung et al., 2001). For the purposes of this research, the sociocultural perspective will be applied because it is primarily concerned with the influence of the individual's sociocultural surroundings on the development of body image. Cash and Pruzinsky (1990) outlined seven major themes regarding body image as related to sociocultural surroundings. The seven themes are as follows:

1. Body image deals with individuals' thoughts towards their own body and how they experience their own body.
2. Body image is multifaceted.
3. Feelings of the self and body image are linked.
4. Society plays a role in determining one's body image.
5. Body image is not fixed, but changeable.
6. Body image affects how information is processed.
1. Behaviors are influenced by body image.

Body image is a subjective experience that is multifaceted and developed based on multiple domains, including self-evaluations of appearance and weight (Geller, Johnston, & Madsen, 1997; Grogan, 1999). It has been shown that a negative body image based on weight can affect how an individual evaluates his or her appearance and the related level of investment the individual is willing to make in order to maintain appearance (Thompson, 2004). Those individuals with higher BMI are at a higher risk for being dissatisfied with their own body (Van den Berg, et. al, 2007). Thus, it could be argued that among the most prominent elements in the development of body image are the positive or negative perceptions that one holds in regards to weight (Geller et al., 1997). It is important to note that these perceptions are subjective in nature, and therefore are not necessarily objective (Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990). The degree to which an individual is satisfied with his or her own body weight and overall figure, based primarily on self-evaluations of one's own body parts, is referred to as weight satisfaction (Kwon & Shim, 1999).

Feelings of weight satisfaction or dissatisfaction and associations with apparel have been studied in relation to several variables, including advertisements (Aagerup, 2011; Rudd & Lennon, 2001), shopping orientation (Kwon & Shim, 1999; Park, Nam, Choi, Lee, & Lee, 2009), and purchase intentions (Rosa et al., 2006). Studies on weight dissatisfaction have examined how negative feelings regarding weight can influence feelings of social anxiety and private self-consciousness, as well as how these feelings can shape and are shaped by social interactions (Kwon & Shim, 1999; Tiemersma, 1989). Concerns about weight and body shape have been shown to result in internalized distress, which can manifest in a variety of ways that affect attitudes and behaviors (Tatzel, 1982). In particular, effects on clothing preferences and behaviors have been noted in literature (Chattaraman & Rudd, 2006; Chowdhary & Beale, 1988; Kwon & Parham, 1994; Park et al., 2009; Rosa et al., 2006).

Plus size consumers often have body shapes that can cause difficulty with fitting properly into standard, mass produced apparel items (Park et al., 2009). In two samples of overweight and obese women (108 in sample 1 and 510 in sample 2), Fu (2004) found that approximately one-half of the overweight participants and more than one-half to nearly two-thirds of the obese participants had pear shape bodies (hip width and circumference visibly larger than the upper body). Rectangular (without a clearly defined waist) was the next most common shape, and the fewest participants were hourglass (visually balanced above and below the waist and with a defined waist). Few obese women were hourglass. In sample 1, overweight participants reported fewer fit problems than the obese women, of whom one-third to two-thirds reported fit problems in different body areas. In comparing participants' average bust, waist, and hip measurements to available apparel sizing data, as consumers these women generally could not match to one size and might match to three different sizes, one per circumference measurement (Fu, 2004).

The fit of apparel and an individual's perception of body image, though independent, appear to be intrinsically linked. Negative assessments of body image have been shown to correlate with the degree of satisfaction regarding the fit of apparel; dissatisfaction pertaining to the fit of apparel has been documented in numerous studies (Chowdhary & Beale, 1988; Park et al., 2009; Rosa et al., 2006). In their

2006 study, Chattaraman and Rudd found that individuals with lower body image preferred more body coverage and looser fitting clothing than those individual's with higher body image. Body image has been found to influence consumer attitudes and purchase intentions toward products for which consumption relies heavily on aspects related to the body (Rosa et al., 2006). The apparel product category is directly related to the body; therefore, attitudes and perceptions are likely to have a strong effect on subsequent behaviors (Yates, 2007). It has been shown that weight dissatisfaction and negative body image have a measureable effect on consumer dissatisfaction and shopping behaviors (Chowdhary & Beale, 1988; Park et al., 2009; Tatzel, 1982).

A possible explanation for a consumer's dissatisfaction with apparel could lie in the nature of their prior experiences with apparel shopping. These experiences could be related to the apparel itself, or could relate to the manner in which apparel is displayed. The majority of retailers display apparel on a Size 4 mannequin, which fits with the cultural ideal of a thin body type. However, this can have negative ramifications for individuals who are larger and are at risk of experiencing feelings of discrepancy when comparing their body with that of the mannequin or fashion models (Kim & Damhorst, 2010). For overweight or obese consumers, previous shopping experiences with apparel and subsequent expectations for future experiences with apparel may differ from consumers who are not overweight or obese. Such differences in shopping experiences can be directly correlated to the sociocultural surroundings of overweight and obese individuals. Although body image is based on self-evaluations of the physical nature of one's own body, these views are conscious or subconscious in nature and reflect the individual's perception and self-judgment of the perception in comparison to cultural standards for aesthetic beauty (Cash & Pruzinsky 1990; Jung et al., 2001).

Culture and Self-Evaluative Salience

Sociocultural factors are pivotal in determining an individuals' sense of self and in the development of body image (Cash, 2005). The role of culture in the establishment of body image and social interactions has been the subject of numerous studies (Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990; Ip & Jarry, 2008; Moreira & Canavarro, 2012), all of which stress the importance of how individuals' sociocultural

surroundings impact self-evaluations, especially in relation to appearance. Fallon (1990) describes the importance of the impact as follows:

Culturally bound and consensually validated definitions of what is desirable and attractive play an important part in the development of body image. One's body image includes his/her perceptions of the cultural standards, his/her perceptions of the extent to which he/she match the standard, and the perception of the relative importance that members of the cultural group and the individual place on that match. (p. 80)

An example of a culturally valued standard of beauty for females in many cultures is a thin, proportionately shaped body type, which is most commonly presented through popular media (Aagerup, 2010; Capri, Yam Amiya, Bran nick, & Thompson, 2005; Farrell, 2011; Grogan, 1999). In American and other western cultures, a thin, almost unrealistically achievable body type is associated with positive traits such as self-control and elegance (Grogan, 1999; Broach, 1993). When an individual does not meet the cultural standard of beauty, feelings of discrepancy may arise; these have an effect on beliefs about the self, particularly on feelings of self-esteem and body image (Kwon & Shim, 1999; Lennon, Rudd, Sloan, & Kim, 1999). Research has documented that in Western cultures where thin is ideal, the majority of women are dissatisfied with their bodies in terms of overall weight and body shape (Grogan, 1999). Overweight individuals see themselves as not matching the thin standard of beauty and have been shown to have a more negative body image than their non-overweight counterparts (Farrell, 2011; Grogan, 1999). Cash (1990) observed that the struggle experienced by overweight individuals is "as much a state of mind as it is a state of body" (p. 64).

Two constructs can be utilized in order to better understand how sociocultural factors and the development of body image and body satisfaction relate in regards to media representation of the thin ideal. These are: awareness of the thin ideal and internalization of the thin ideal (Capri et al., 2005). Awareness merely refers to if the individual is conscious of the fact that the thin ideal is present in society (Capri et al., 2005). According to Capri, for a deeper understanding of the effect of the thin ideal on body image, internalization must be noted. Internalization of the thin ideal is defined as "a profound

incorporation or acceptance of the value” and plays an integral role in body image development (p. 422). The internal process by which individuals evaluate themselves based on cultural norms, and the importance of these evaluations to their social and private sense of self can be further explained through the construct of self-evaluative salience.

Self-evaluative salience (SES) is a dimension of appearance investment rooted in psychology that denotes the level of importance that an individual places on his or her physical appearance and how ideas of physical appearance impact the concept of self-worth (Cash, 2005; Prichard & Tiedemann, 2011). Individuals with higher self-evaluative salience measures have a more internalized, deeply rooted belief regarding appearance ideals as perpetuated by popular culture (Prichard & Tiedemann, 2011). Due in part to these deeply rooted beliefs, individuals with high SES scores have been found to have more negative views of their body image, as well as lower self-esteem (Ip & Jarry, 2008). Based on the aforementioned review of literature, and the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: There will be a positive relationship between an individual’s body satisfaction and satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences.

H2: There will be a positive relationship between an individual’s body satisfaction and the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping.

H3: There will be a positive relationship between an individual’s body satisfaction and anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping.

H4: There will be a positive relationship between an individual’s self-evaluative salience and their anticipated involvement for bridal gown shopping.

Experience and Emotions

The degree to which overweight individuals are satisfied or dissatisfied with their previous experiences with apparel in a retail setting may be examined in terms of the following factors: the fit and fashion of apparel that is available in plus sizes, the general availability of apparel in plus sizes, and the manner in which the consumer was treated by customer service personnel (Chowdhary & Beale, 1988; Otieno et al., 2005; Tatzel, 1982). Individuals who struggle with excess weight may be subject to prejudices as there can be “symbolic racism” directed towards overweight people (Crandall, 1994). In their 2006 study, King, Shapiro, Hebl, Singletary, and Turner established that obese individuals faced higher levels of discrimination than non-obese shoppers in a retail setting. Possible shopping complications or stresses encountered by overweight consumers could be paramount in the formation of attitudes that determine whether the shopping behaviors of overweight consumers could be classified as being either approach or avoidance in nature.

The approach-avoidance framework outlines that there will be two basic responses to any stressful situation; either the individual involved in the stressful situation will cope by approaching the situation, or the individual will cope by avoiding the situation (Ferris et al., 2011). The potential benefits and costs of both methods have been noted, as well as the appropriateness of each response to various situations where the individual is either in control or has no control. Regarding behaviors associated with apparel consumption, overweight and obese consumers have been shown to exhibit restricted involvement, as evidenced by the low percentage of plus size revenues for general retailers (those not specifically aimed at plus size consumers); this could be viewed as a possible side effect of avoidance behaviors (Bellafonte, 2010).

The retail store environment is most often unfavorable for overweight consumers as apparel is designed for and marketed to non-overweight individuals (Aagerup, 2010; Otieno et al., 2005). The discrepancy between what an overweight consumer wants and actually available options can produce a stressful situation. In that case, an overweight individual may respond by acting to approach the setting or avoid it (Tatzel, 1982). In some situations, particularly those in which emotions play a major role in the

consumption experience, expectations can affect the way in which information is processed (Chaudhuri, 1997). Expectations are beliefs held by a consumer regarding the anticipated performance of a product (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982). These are directly related to goals that the consumer wishes to achieve (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982). Expectations can be based on prior experience with a product or can be established based on information pertaining to a product; they serve as self-made predictions of the outcome of an impending shopping situation. Considering the link between expectations and planned approach behaviors is key to better predicting behaviors because researchers have identified that individuals often base their choices on what they believe to be the anticipated outcome (Mellers & McGraw, 2001).

For bridal gown consumers, the prior experiences on which they base their expectations for the bridal gown shopping experience logically relate to their prior experiences with apparel in general. How the overweight individual perceives her environment affects subsequent behaviors and involvement. Primarily negative experiences with retail apparel shopping impact her expectations of the bridal market. In turn, these expectations could influence her level of planned involvement. The latter refers to the actions taken by a consumer to achieve a goal (MacInnis & de Mello, 2005). Researchers measure involvement based on the level of importance and interest that an individual feels in regard to obtaining a product (Bearden & Netemeyer, 1999). Body size and satisfaction have been noted to affect involvement related to clothing (Chowdhary & Beale, 1988; Park et al., 2009; Rosa et al., 2006). Kwon and Parham (1994) found that even if the individual believes themselves to be larger than the ideal (as opposed to actually being larger than the ideal) their preferences for coverage and expression change. Based on the aforementioned review of literature, the following hypotheses were developed:

H5: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences and the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping.

H6: Plus and non-plus size individuals will differ in anticipated involvement in terms of money and effort.

H6a. Plus and non-plus size individuals will differ in the amount of money that the bride anticipates spending on her bridal gown.

H6b. Plus and non-plus size individuals will differ in the number of bridal gowns the bride anticipates trying on.

H6c: Plus and non-plus size individuals will differ in the number of stores the bride anticipates visiting in the search for a bridal gown.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Data for this research was collected via a self-administered questionnaire that used scales adopted or adapted from previous research as well as questions developed by the researcher. The questionnaire measured the respondents' body image; previous satisfaction in general apparel; expectations for satisfaction with bridal gown shopping experience, and anticipated level of involvement. Demographic information was also gathered with one of the main purposes being classification of respondents as either non-plus size (underweight or normal BMI) or plus size (overweight or obese).

Sample and Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed to participants by the researcher on site at a major Southeastern Bridal Exposition held in Atlanta, Georgia, on July 28th, 2013. This bridal exposition was one of the largest in the Southeast based on the number (more than 800) of brides in attendance. Bridal expositions provide a setting where vendors from a variety of fields (catering, photography, etc.) can come together to display their goods and services to brides with upcoming weddings. Brides paid a \$10 admittance fee to enter the Exposition and are then given a *bride* pin, which helped the researcher identify them as possible participants. The research was conducted in a 10ft by 10ft booth space purchased by the researcher. This served as the point from which the researcher and assistants approached brides and solicited participation.

This bridal exposition setting provided the researcher with a unique opportunity for soliciting participants. It was the researcher's hope that exposition attendees would be representative of a broad spectrum of ethnicities, socio-economic situations, and body shapes and sizes. The only screening criterion for participation was that the individual had to be engaged to be married. Due to the sensitive nature of weight, there was no screening process for questionnaire distribution according to weight. Questionnaires were distributed to any individual who wished to participate, regardless of whether or not

that individual was considered to be plus size based on appearance. Participants were later classified as plus or non-plus size based on responses to weight and height questions.

Those individuals who agreed to participate in the study were instructed to complete the questionnaire on-site at the booth following a brief (both verbal and in the form of an IRB letter of consent – see Appendix A) on the nature of the research and their participation. An incentive, a bridal themed drink koozie that held a bottle of water, was offered to encourage participation in the study. The incentive was given directly to the participant, regardless of whether or not they completed the questionnaire in its entirety.

Participants constituted a purposeful convenience sample consisting of 75 females who identified themselves as being engaged to be married. Ideally, the majority of these respondents would have not yet shopped for bridal gowns in a retail setting so that expectations could be accurately gauged. In reality, just over half (54%) of respondents indicated that they had yet to shop for a bridal gown in a retail setting. Likewise, it was the researcher's hope that a significant portion of these female respondents would exhibit a BMI value that qualified them as overweight or obese according to guidelines provided by the CDC. Responses for both overweight and normal weight respondents were for comparison. By surveying overweight individuals who had not yet participated in the shopping experience, it could have been possible to note their expectations regarding the process. In theory, these expectations should be partly founded on past experiences with apparel.

Instrumentation

The following table (Table 1) illustrates both the independent and dependent variables used in this research, along with the number and nature of measures and the sources for each scale.

Table 1.

Independent and Dependent Variable Measures and Measurement Sources

Variable	Measurement	Source
<i>Independent Variable</i>		
Body Satisfaction	9 questions, 5-point scale	Body Areas Satisfaction Scale (Cash, 2000)
Self-Evaluative Salienc	12 questions, 5 point scale	ASI-R self-evaluative salienc subscale (Cash, 2003)
Satisfaction with Previous Apparel Shopping Experiences	12 questions, 5 point scale	Chowdhary and Beale, 1988
Body Size	Open-ended responses to height and weight used to calculate BMI	Centers for Disease Control, 2013
<i>Dependent Variable</i>		
Satisfaction with Previous Apparel Shopping Experiences	12 questions, 5 point scale	Chowdhary and Beale, 1988
Anticipated Pleasure of Bridal Gown Shopping	12 questions, 7 point scale semantic differential scale	Chowdhary and Beale, 1988
Involvement (Attitudinal)	15 questions, 7 point semantic differential scale	Personal Involvement Inventory (Zaichowsky, 1985)
Involvement (Behavioral)	4 open-ended questions	Developed by researcher

Body satisfaction was measured through the use of Cash's (2000) MBSRQ-AS scale (Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire-Appearance Scales) (See Section 5 of Appendix B). This scale focuses on "discrete aspects of one's appearance" (Cash, 2000, p. 3) by listing body areas such as the upper, mid, and lower torso and then asking participants to indicate how satisfied they are. In the context of this research, the BASS (Body Areas Satisfaction Scale) subscale was used to test participants' satisfaction based on 9 questions answered using a five-point Likert-type scale. Scores were summed and divided by 9 to produce an overall mean score. According to the scale, those individuals who exhibit higher scores are generally more satisfied with most areas of their own body. Conversely, those individuals with low scores will most likely be unsatisfied with most areas of their own body. The average mean score for this scale is 3.23 with a standard deviation of .74. This subscale has documented reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .73 for females (Cash, 2000).

Self-evaluative salience was measured using portions of Cash's (2003) Appearance Schemas Inventory-Revised (ASI-R) short form scale (See Section 6 of Appendix B). This scale measures motivational and self-evaluative salience. For the purpose of this research, only the 12 items that measure self-evaluative salience were included in the questionnaire. The self-evaluative salience subscale was chosen because it measures an individual's self-evaluation in relation to her sociocultural environment. Responses to the 12 items were based on a five-point Likert-type scale. Of the 12 items, 2 were reverse scored. Responses for each were added and divided by 12 for a mean score. Those individuals with higher scores have a level of internalizing the sociocultural ideal standards of beauty. The highest possible mean score would be 5. The normative mean (for women) is 3.47, with a standard deviation of .62. Reliability for the ASI-R self-evaluative salience subscale has been shown with a Cronbach's alpha of .82 for females (Cash, 2003).

Satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences was addressed in terms of satisfaction with particular garments in regards to fashion, fit, selection, and size for three categories (See Section 1 of Appendix B). The apparel shopping satisfaction scale developed by Chowdhary and Beale (1988) originally measured satisfaction for six different articles of apparel and exhibited a reliability of .85.

Responses are based on a five-point Likert scale. Responses were coded to provide measures of high or low satisfaction. The same measure of apparel shopping satisfaction was adapted by the researcher to measure anticipated pleasure of the bridal gown shopping experience by gauging anticipated pleasure with bridal gowns in terms of fit, fashion, size, and selection (See Section 1 of Appendix B).

Attitudinal involvement was measured using the Personal Involvement Inventory (PII), developed by Zaichowsky (1985). This scale was meant to measure involvement in regards to interest and importance for specific product categories. The original scale consisted of 20 semantic differential measures that are evaluated based on a seven-point scale.]. For the purpose of this research, the scale was adapted to reflect the researcher's interest in the subject of bridal gown shopping (See Section 4 of Appendix B). Participants were given the statement "*To me, shopping for a bridal gown _____*" which was followed by 15 semantic differential measures. There were five measures that appeared in the original scale that did not appear in this questionnaire for the lack of relevance to this research and the sake of brevity. Responses were coded to provide a measure of high, medium, or low levels of involvement based on average means which fell within predetermined ranges. These ranges were as follows: 20 to 69 (low), 70 to 110 (medium), and 111 to 140 (high). The validity of this scale has been tested and has exhibited an alpha of .80 or better with reliability of .88.

Behavioral measures of involvement were based on 4 questions developed by the researcher to gauge the following: the amount of money that the individual anticipates spending on a bridal gown; the number of stores that the individual anticipates visiting while shopping for a bridal gown and the number of samples that the individual anticipates she will try on when shopping for her bridal gown. Options for response to these were given in intervals. Participants also were asked to numerically rank the importance of 5 elements associated with the wedding ceremony. These elements included the venue, bridal gown, wedding party attire, flowers and decorations, and photography.

Demographic information regarding gender, age, ethnicity, and estimated household income was collected from each of the participants. Their responses pertaining to their weight and height were of the upmost importance as these were used to determine BMI, the measure by which a person is classified as

underweight, normal weight, overweight, or obese. Participants also were asked to report whether or not this was their first marriage and if they had begun to shop for bridal gowns in a physical retail setting (i.e. a brick and mortar location as opposed to shopping online).

Data Analysis

SPSS software was used to translate the data gathered from responses to the questionnaire. Demographic data were reported as descriptive statistics. These were used to illustrate frequencies for questions developed by the researcher pertaining to involvement. Tests for simple and multiple regression were used to determine the significance for hypotheses 1 through 5, each of which queried a relationship. A MANOVA was run to test for differences between multiple independent variables against the one continuous dependent variable for hypothesis 6, while an ANOVA was used to test for significance between the two independent groups for hypothesis 6a-6c.

H1: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's body satisfaction and satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences.

H2: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's body satisfaction and the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping.

H3: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's body satisfaction and anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping.

H4: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's self-evaluative salience and their anticipated involvement for bridal gown shopping.

H5: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences and the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping.

H6: Plus and non-plus size individuals will differ in anticipated involvement in terms of money and effort.

H6a. There will be a difference between plus and non-plus size individuals in the amount of money that the bride anticipates spending on her bridal gown.

H6b. There will be a difference between plus and non-plus size individuals in the number

of bridal gowns the bride anticipates trying on.

H6c: There will be a difference between plus and non-plus size individuals in the number of stores the bride anticipates visiting in the search for a bridal gown.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSES AND RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to gain insight into how a plus size consumer's body image and prior experiences with apparel shopping relate to views of the bridal gown shopping experience in terms of anticipated pleasure and anticipated level of behavioral and attitudinal involvement as compared to those individuals who are not considered to be plus size. The goal was to explore for differences between those consumers who are considered to be plus size and those who are not.

Sample Demographics

Seventy-five self-identified brides participated in the research which was conducted at a major Southeastern Bridal Exposition held in Atlanta, Georgia, on July 28, 2013. Demographic questions gathered data to record participants' ethnicity, age, height, weight, and average household income. Height and weight were used in order to calculate BMI during data analysis. Questions were included to gauge whether the bride had begun to search for her gown in a retail setting and if this was her first marriage.

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics of Demographics of Respondents

Demographics	Frequency	Percent
<i>Age (n=74; Mean age range =19-25)</i>		
	n	%
19-25	35	47.3%
26-32	28	37.8%
33-39	5	6.7%
40-46	3	4.0%
47 and above	3	4.0%
<i>Ethnicity (n=75)</i>		
	n	%
African American/Black	9	12.2%
Asian Americans	1	1.4%
Caucasian/White	56	75.7%
Hispanic	3	4.1%
Other	4	5.4%
<i>BMI (n=73 ; Mean BMI =Normal Weight)</i>		
	n	%
Underweight	5	6.8%
Normal Weight	35	47.9%
Overweight	19	26.0%
Obese	14	19.2%
<i>Average Income</i>		
<i>(n=74; Mean Income=\$25,000- \$49,000)</i>		
	n	%
Less than \$25,000	11	14.9%
\$25,000 to 49,999	22	29.7%
\$50,000 to 74,999	15	20.3%
More than \$75,000	15	20.3%
Prefer not to answer	11	14.9%

The majority, 75.7% (56 of 75), of the participants identified themselves as Caucasian/White; 12.2% identified as African American/Black. A small proportion of participants were Hispanic (4.1%) and Asian Americans (1.4%). The “Other” category (5.4%) of participants listed Native American, Middle Eastern, or a combination of the listed ethnicities. These percentages are similar to those provided by the U.S. Census Bureau for ethnicity. Age ranged by nearly 40 years, with participants from 19 to 48 years old (See Table 2). The majority of respondents were between the ages of 21 and 31, with a mean age of 27.43.

Height and weight were self-reported to calculate a BMI value and classify each participant as to body size (See Table 2). Weight ranged from 97 to 300 pounds, and height ranged from 4 feet, 11 inches to 6 feet. Participants’ mean weight was 155 pounds, and mean height was 5.43 inches. If these mean measurements were considered together, the individual would have a BMI of 26.6, making her overweight. Measures of BMI ranged from 17.0 (underweight) to over 44 (obese). The mean BMI for participants was 25.49, which is just within the cut-off for being considered normal weight. Overall, 47.9% of the participants were considered normal weight (including underweight), and 45.2% were considered overweight or obese. Within the latter 45.2%, the split between overweight and obese was almost even (24.7% overweight in comparison to 20.5 obese). The BMI demographics indicate a sufficient sampling of all plus and non-plus size classifications.

The mean average household income (see Table 3) of participants (representing 29.3% of them) fell between the \$25,000 to 49,999; 14.7% of participants opted not to answer or indicated less than \$25,000. Just over half the participants (54.7%) had not yet begun to search for a bridal gown in a retail setting, and the vast majority (91.9%) indicated that this would be their first marriage. In order to assess views of importance of the bridal gown, participants were asked to rank elements of the wedding (venue, bridal gown, wedding party attire, flowers and decorations, and photography) from 1 to 5 wherein 1 was most important and 5 least important. Venue ranked the highest, representing 48% of the first place rankings. The bridal gown was a close second, with 41.3% of brides selecting it as the most important element. The overall mean score for the bridal gown was $M=1.98$. Plus size participants had a mean of

$M=2.03$, compared to non-plus $M=1.90$. Flowers and decorations and photography tied for a distant third (9.3% respectively), and wedding party attire was considered the least important, with only 4% of brides ranking it first.

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics of Average Household Income and the Mean Amount a Bride Is Willing to Spend on Her Bridal Gown

Average Income	N	M
Less than \$25,000	11	\$2,454.55
\$25,000 to 49,999	22	\$2,004.55
\$50,000 to 74,999	15	\$1,873.33
More than \$75,000	15	\$1,266.67
Prefer not to answer	11	\$1,650.00

Preliminary Analysis

Preliminary factor analyses were run on all measurement items for each variable in order to group individual scale items into meaningful clusters that could be used to explain relationships between variables (Salkind, 2004). By performing this analysis, multiple items can be paired down into one explanatory category (Salkind, 2004).

Involvement

Attitudinal involvement was measured using a scale comprised of 15 items (See Table 4). Based on a preliminary factor analysis of the items, 8 were eliminated. These items were eliminated due to low factor loading and cross loading. Additionally, these factors were not found to be conceptually related to the items that did load; 7 items from the original 15 loaded, grouping into 2 factors (See Table 9). These factors were identified as relating to the concept of relevance and value in relation to what the bridal gown shopping meant to participants. The preliminary analysis yielded an eigenvalue of 4.803. The 15

items explained 32.01% of the variance in involvement with bridal gown shopping. Cronbach's *alpha* of the involvement scales was .823.

Table 4.

Preliminary Factor Loading for Involvement Variable

Measurement Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
<i>Involvement</i>				
Is important-Is not important		.646		
Is of no concern-Is of concern	.798			
Is irrelevant-Is relevant	.764			
Is useless-Is useful				
Is valuable- Is worthless		.750		
Is beneficial-Is not beneficial		.823		
Matters-Does not matter		.789		
Is significant-Is insignificant				.845
Is boring-Is not boring			.453	
Is undesirable-Is desirable		.739		
Is not needed-Is needed		.717		
Is mundane-Is fascinating		.766		

Satisfaction with Previous Apparel Shopping Experiences

Satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences was measured using a scale comprised of 12 items (See Table 5). The analysis yielded an eigenvalue of 4.487. The 12 items explained 37.39% of the variance in satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences. Cronbach's *alpha* of the scale was .834. Following a preliminary factor analysis of the items, 6 were eliminated. These items were eliminated due to low factor loading and cross loading. Six items from the original 12 loaded, grouping

into 3 factors (See Table 9). These factors were identified as relating to particular items of apparel and issues of size, fit, selection and fashion pertaining to these items.

Table 5.

Preliminary Factor Loading for Satisfaction with Previous Apparel Shopping Experiences

Measurement Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
<i>Satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences</i>			
Dresses			
Selection	.653		
Fashion	.729		
Sizes			.805
Fit			.781
Blouses and Tops			
Selection		.849	
Fashion		.788	
Fit		.801	
Skirts			
Selection	.838		
Sizes	.653		
Fit	.636		

Body Satisfaction

Body satisfaction was measured using a scale comprised of 9 items (See Table 6). The analysis yielded an eigenvalue of 2.96. The 9 items explained 32.96% of the variance in body satisfaction. Cronbach's *alpha* of the scale was .708. Following a preliminary factor analysis of the items, 5 were eliminated. These items were eliminated due to low factor loading and cross loading. The item meant to measure participant satisfaction had a sufficient factor loading score; however, this factor was dropped since it did not conceptually fit with the other factors. 4 items from the original 9 loaded, grouping into 1 factor (See Table 9). This factor was identified as relating to satisfaction with upper body and musculature.

Table 6.

Preliminary Factor Loading for Body Satisfaction

Measurement Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
<i>Body Satisfaction</i>		
Face		.457
Hair		.682
Lower Torso	.838	
Mid Torso	.847	
Upper Torso	.669	
Muscle	.832	
Weight	.411	
Height		.484
Overall	.479	

Anticipated Pleasure of Bridal Gown Shopping

Anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping was measured using a scale comprised of 12 items (See Table 7). The analysis yielded an eigenvalue of 7.253. The 12 items explained 60.41% of the variance the anticipated pleasure associated with bridal gown shopping. Cronbach's *alpha* of the scale was .934. Following a preliminary factor analysis of the items, none of the items were eliminated, as they all had high factor loadings. The 12 items were grouped into 1 factor (See Table 9). The factor was identified as relating to size and fit.

Table 7.

Preliminary Factor Loading for Anticipated Pleasure of Bridal Gown Shopping

Measurement Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
<i>Anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping</i>		
Selection of bridal gowns		
Happy-Unhappy	.365	
Pleased-Annoyed	.333	
Satisfied-Unsatisfied	.348	
Fashion of bridal gowns		
Happy-Unhappy		.485
Pleased-Annoyed		.469
Satisfied-Unsatisfied		.424
Sizes of bridal gowns		
Happy-Unhappy	.924	
Pleased-Annoyed	.933	
Satisfied-Unsatisfied	.936	
Fit of bridal gowns		
Happy-Unhappy	.910	
Pleased-Annoyed	.925	
Satisfied-Unsatisfied	.932	

Self-Evaluative Salience

Self-evaluative salience was measured using a scale comprised of 12 items (See Table 8). The analysis yielded an eigenvalue of 3.51. The 12 items explained 29.25% of the variance in self-evaluative salience. Cronbach's *alpha* of the scale was .818. Following a preliminary factor analysis of the items, 7 were eliminated. These items were eliminated due to low factor loading and cross loading. Items were also eliminated because they did not fit conceptually with the other loaded factors; 5 items from the original 12 loaded, grouping into 1 factor (See Table 9).

Table 8.

Primary Factor Loading Analysis for Self-Evaluative Salience

Measurement Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
<i>Self-evaluative salience</i>		
If somebody had a negative reaction to what I look like, it wouldn't bother me	.379	
When I meet people for the first time, I wonder what they think about how I look	.676	
In my everyday life, lots of things happen that make me think about what I look like	.549	
If I dislike how I look on a given day, it's hard to feel happy about other things	.632	
I fantasize about what it would like to be better looking than I am	.635	
By controlling my appearance, I can control many of the social and emotional events in my life		.821
My appearance is responsible for much of what's happened in my life		.232

Factor Analysis and Reliability

The reliability and validity of the scales used for this research were assessed using factor analysis and Cronbach's *alpha*. Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was used in order to maximize the squared loading of variance across all the factors, which better summarized any correlations amongst variables (Salkind, 2004; Tabchnick & Fiddell, 2007). In order to understand the reliability of the factors, Cronbach's *alpha* was used. Cronbach's *alpha* allowed for the correlation of each item in order to understand how related the group of items is to one another (Salkind, 2004). A Cronbach *alpha* of .70 indicates sufficient reliability (Salkind, 2004). Table 4 shows the results of the factor analysis and reliability tests for the variables. The factor loading for each variable was higher than .5, meaning that all Cronbach's *alpha* figures were higher than .70, indicating consistency for the scales.

As a result of exploratory factor analysis, 7 items used to measure attitudinal anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping exhibited an eigenvalue of 2.53. The 7 items explained 50.67% of the variance in involvement with bridal gown shopping. Cronbach's *alpha* of the involvement scales

was .733. As a result of exploratory factor analysis, 6 items used to measure satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences exhibited an eigenvalue of 4.20. The 6 items explained 42.04% of the variance for satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences. Cronbach's *alpha* for the satisfaction scale was .846. As a result of factor analysis for body satisfaction, 4 items used to measure body satisfaction exhibited an eigenvalue of 2.70. The 4 items explained 67.49% of the variance in body satisfaction. Cronbach's *alpha* of the body satisfaction scales was .834. As a result of exploratory factor analysis, 9 items used to measure the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping exhibited an eigenvalue of 7.91. The 9 items explained 43.97% of the variance in anticipated pleasure. Cronbach's *alpha* for the anticipated pleasure scale was .914. As a result of exploratory factor analysis, 5 items used to measure self-evaluative salience exhibited an eigenvalue of 2.71. These 5 items explained 54.35% of the variance for self-evaluative salience. Cronbach's *alpha* for the self-evaluative salience scale was .767.

Table 9.

Final Factor Analysis Results for Variables (n=75)

Measurement Item	Factor Loading		
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
<i>Involvement</i>			
Is irrelevant – Is relevant	.776		
Is of no concern- Is of concern to me	.824		
Is undesirable- Is desirable	.714		
Is not needed- Is needed	.740		
Is mundane- Is fascinating	.751		
Is valuable – Is worthless		.873	
Is beneficial – Is not beneficial		.856	
Eigenvalue	3.00	1.60	
Variance Explained	60.00%	80.11%	
Cronbach's <i>alpha</i>	.830	.750	
<i>Body Satisfaction</i>			
Upper Torso	.758		
Lower Torso	.819		
Mid-Torso	.857		
Muscle	.814		
Eigenvalue	2.70		
Variance Explained	67.49%		
Cronbach's <i>alpha</i>	.834		
<i>Satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences</i>			
Sizes of dresses	.877		
Fit of dresses	.871		
Selection of blouses and tops		.728	
Fashion of blouses and tops		.788	
Sizes of skirts			.873
Fit of skirts			.916
Eigenvalue	1.72	1.61	1.77
Variance explained	86.19%	80.75%	88.78%
Cronbach's <i>alpha</i>	.839	.760	.873
<i>Anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping</i>			
Happy with sizes of bridal gowns	.922		
Pleased with sizes of bridal gowns	.929		
Satisfied with sizes of bridal gowns	.952		
Happy with the fit of bridal gowns	.904		
Pleased with the fit of bridal gowns	.916		
Satisfied with the fit of bridal gowns	.925		
Eigenvalue	7.91		
Variance explained	43.97%		
Cronbach's <i>alpha</i>	.914		
<i>Self-Evaluative Salience</i>			
When I meet people for the first time, I wonder what they think about how I	.627		

look	
In my everyday life, lots of things happen that make me think about what I look like.	.808
If I dislike how I look on a given day, it's hard to feel happy about other things.	.822
I fantasize about what it would be like to be better looking than I am.	.732
By controlling my appearance, I can control many of the social and emotional events in my life.	.673
Eigenvalue	2.71
Variance explained	54.35%
Cronbach's <i>alpha</i>	.767

Hypothesis Testing

H1: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's body satisfaction and satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences.

Cash's (2000) BASS scale (part of the MBSRQ-AS) was used to measure body satisfaction and Chowdhary and Beale's (1988) scale was used for satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences. For the Chowdhary and Beale scale, three factors were found relating to: dresses, blouses and tops, and skirts. Because three factors were found for satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences, three sub-hypotheses (H1a, H1b, and H1c) were created. Simple regressions were performed for each sub-hypothesis.

H1a: There will be a positive relationship between and individual's body satisfaction and satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences related to dresses.

A test of simple regression was performed with body satisfaction as an independent variable and satisfaction with previous apparel shopping related to dresses as the dependent variable. As a result, body satisfaction was a significant predictor of how satisfied participants were with previous apparel shopping experiences related to dresses (Std. $\beta^* = .385$, $F=12.456$, $p=.001$, adj $r^2=.137$) making the nature of the relationships positive. Thus, H1a was supported.

H1b: There will be a positive relationship between and individual's body satisfaction and satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences related to blouses and tops.

A test of simple regression was performed with body satisfaction as an independent variable and satisfaction with previous apparel shopping related to blouses and tops as the dependent variable. As a result, body satisfaction was a significant predictor of how satisfied participants were with previous apparel shopping experiences related to blouses and tops (Std. $\beta^* = .405$, $F=14.101$, $p=.000$, adj $r^2=.152$) making the nature of the relationships positive. Thus, H1b was supported.

H1c: There will be a positive relationship between and individual's body satisfaction and satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences related to skirts.

A test of simple regression was performed with body satisfaction as an independent variable and satisfaction with previous apparel shopping related to skirts as the dependent variable. As a result, body satisfaction was a significant predictor of how satisfied participants were with previous apparel shopping experiences related to skirts (Std. $\beta^* = .332$, $F=8.912$, $p=.004$, adj $r^2=.098$) making the nature of the relationships positive. Thus, H1c was supported.

H2: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's body satisfaction and the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping.

Cash's (2000) BASS scale was used to measure body satisfaction. Chowdhary and Beale's (1988) scale was adapted to measure the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping. One factor was found for the adapted Chowdhary and Beale (1988) scale, therefore one sub-hypothesis (H2a) was created. A test of simple regression was performed for the sub-hypothesis.

H2a: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's body satisfaction and the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown in terms in terms of available selection, sizes and fit.

A test of simple regression was performed with body satisfaction as the independent variable and the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping as related to the available sizes and the fit of bridal gowns. As a result, body satisfaction was a significant predictor of the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping for available sizes and fit (Std. $\beta^* = .350$, $F=9.779$, $p=.003$, adj $r^2=.110$) making the nature of the relationships positive. Thus, H2a was supported.

H3: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's body satisfaction and anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping.

The relationship between an individual's body satisfaction and the anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping was not statistically significant. Cash's (2000) BASS scale was used to measure body satisfaction. Anticipated involvement was measured using the Personal Involvement Inventory (Zaichowsky, 1985). Mean scores of involvement could be classified as low, medium, or high (as based on an ordinal scale). With a mean score of 93.50, the respondents for this research fell within the range (70 to 110) of medium involvement. Two factors were found for the Personal Involvement Inventory

relating to: perceived relevance and perceived value for bridal gown shopping. Because two factors were found, two sub-hypotheses (H3a and H3b) were created. Tests of simple regression were performed on each of the sub-hypotheses

H3a: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's body satisfaction and anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping in terms of how relevant the individual believes bridal gown shopping to be.

A test of simple regression was performed with body satisfaction as the independent variable and the anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping as related to perceived relevance. As a result, body satisfaction was not a significant predictor of the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping based on perceived relevance (Std. $\beta^* = .070$, $F = .265$, $p = .09$, adj $r^2 = .014$). H3a was not supported.

H3b: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's body satisfaction and anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping in terms of how valuable the individual believes bridal gown shopping to be.

A test of simple regression was performed with body satisfaction as the independent variable and the anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping as related to perceived value. As a result, body satisfaction was not a significant predictor of the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping based on perceived value (Std. $\beta^* = .192$, $F = 2.067$, $p = .156$, adj $r^2 = .019$). Therefore, H3b was not supported.

H4: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's self-evaluative salience and their anticipated involvement for bridal gown shopping.

Self-evaluative salience was measured using portions of Cash's (2003) Appearance Schemas Inventory-Revised (ASI-R) short form scale, with anticipated involvement measured with the Personal Involvement Inventory (Zaichowsky, 1985). Two factors were found for the Personal Involvement Inventory relating to: perceived relevance and perceived value for bridal gown shopping. Because two factors were found, two sub-hypotheses (H4a and H4b) were created. Tests of simple regression were performed on each of the sub-hypotheses

H4a: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's self-evaluative salience and their anticipated involvement for bridal gown shopping as determined by perceived relevance.

A test of simple regression was performed with self-evaluative salience as the independent variable and the anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping as related to perceived relevance. As a result, body satisfaction was not a significant predictor of the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping based on perceived relevance (Std. $\beta^* = .014$, $F = .011$, $p = .916$, adj $r^2 = .018$). H4a was not supported.

H4b: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's self-evaluative salience and their anticipated involvement for bridal gown shopping as determined by perceived value.

A test of simple regression was performed with self-evaluative salience as the independent variable and the anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping as related to perceived value. As a result, body satisfaction was not a significant predictor of the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping based on perceived value (Std. $\beta^* = .118$, $F = .758$, $p = .388$, adj $r^2 = .040$). H4b was not supported.

H5: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences and the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping.

The relationship between an individual's satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences and the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping was statistically significant. Therefore, H5 was supported. Satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences was measured using the Chowdhary and Beale (1985) scale. The same scale was adapted to measure the anticipated pleasure associated with bridal gown shopping. After preliminary factor loading, three factors were found for satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences relating to: dresses, blouses and tops, and skirts. One factor was found for anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping. Multiple regression was run to predict anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping from satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences with dresses, blouses and tops, and skirts. Satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences with dresses significantly predicted anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping, $F(1, 71) = 18.35$, $p = .000$, $R^2 = .194$. Satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences relating to blouses and tops, and skirts

did not significantly predict anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping. However, satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences for dresses did significantly predict anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping. Table 10 below illustrates the results.

Table 10.

Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis for a Relationship between Satisfaction with Previous Apparel Shopping Experiences for Dresses, Blouses and Tops, Skirts, and Anticipated Pleasure of Bridal Gown Shopping

	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Regression	287.206	1	287.67	18.315	.000
Residual	111.335	71	156.81		
Total	398.541	72			

Note, *SS*= sum of square; *MS*= mean square

Coefficients

	β	<i>SE</i>	Std. β^*	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Tops and Blouses	.478	.053	.453	2.75	.784
Skirts	.345	.080	.302	2.61	.795

Note. Std. β^* : Standardized regression coefficient, β : Unstandardized regression coefficient

H6: Plus and non-plus size individuals will differ in anticipated involvement in terms of money and effort.

A MANOVA was run to determine whether being plus size or non-plus size may influence involvement in terms of money and effort. MANOVA results revealed that the effect of body size (plus and non plus as designated through BMI) on the dependent variables was not statistically significant [$F(3,64.00)= 1.102, p= .355; Wilk's \Lambda =.951; \text{partial } \eta^2=.049$]. Thus, this research did not find there was a difference between plus and non-plus size individuals in anticipated involvement in terms of money and effort. Therefore, H6 was not supported.

H6a. There will be a difference between plus and non-plus size individuals in the amount of money that the bride anticipates spending on her bridal gown.

There was no statistically significant difference between plus and non-plus size individuals in regard to the amount of money that the participants anticipated spending on their bridal gown as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F(1, 70) = .113, p=.737$). Therefore, H6a was not supported.

In SPSS, frequencies were run to measure behavioral involvement with bridal gown shopping in terms of: how much the bride was willing to spend on her bridal gown; how many different stores she anticipated visiting before purchasing a bridal gown; and how many samples she anticipated trying on before purchasing her bridal gown. Responses were open-ended, with brides listing their own figures in a blank space for each question. When asked how much money they anticipated spending on their bridal gown, brides provided prices that ranged from \$200 to \$15,000. The mean amount that brides anticipated spending was \$1,842.57. In 2013, the average wedding cost \$28,427 (Chicken, 2013); 6% of the overall budget was allocated to purchasing a bridal gown, making the average gown expenditure \$1,694.82. The brides surveyed in this research were willing to spend almost \$150 more than the average American bride. When plus and non-plus participants were compared through t-tests, plus size brides reported they were willing to spend an average of \$1,771.21 on their gown, compared to the \$1,960.26 that non-plus brides reported. This represents a difference of almost \$190 between the two groups. Brides with lower average household incomes indicated a willingness to spend more on their bridal gown than brides in higher income ranges (see Table 3).

H6b. There will be a difference between plus and non-plus size individuals in the number of bridal gowns the bride anticipates trying on.

There was no statistically significant difference between plus and non-plus size individuals in regard to the number of bridal gowns that the bride anticipates trying on as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F(1, 67) = 2.32, p=.132$). Therefore, H6b was not supported.

To find their gown, brides anticipated that they would visit an average of three stores and try on an average of 19 samples. Plus size participants anticipated trying on 15 samples, as compared to non-plus participants who anticipated trying on close to 22.

H6c: There will be a difference between plus and non-plus size individuals in the number of stores the bride anticipates visiting in the search for a bridal gown.

There was no statistically significant difference between plus and non-plus size individuals in regards to the number of stores that the bride anticipated visiting in her search for a bridal gown as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F(1, 67) = .211, p = .647$). Therefore, H6c was not supported. To find their gown, brides anticipated that they would visit an average of three stores. This number did not differ significantly between plus and non-plus size participants.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to gain insights into how body satisfaction and satisfaction with prior experiences with apparel relate to views of the bridal gown shopping experience in terms of anticipated satisfaction and anticipated level of involvement. This chapter discusses the findings reported in Chapter 4 in relation to literature on body satisfaction, satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences, anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping, anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping, and self-evaluative salience. This chapter also addresses the limitations in the study design and data collection experience, implications of this research, and recommendations for any future research.

Body Satisfaction and Satisfaction with Previous Apparel Shopping Experiences

It was hypothesized and proved that an individuals' body satisfaction would positively relate to their satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences. Body satisfaction was found to be a significant predictor of satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences in relation to 3 factors: dresses, blouses and tops, and skirts. The positive relationship found between the variables indicates a positive correlation, meaning that as body satisfaction scores increased, scores for satisfaction with previous apparel shopping increased as well. The inverse is also possible (with scores for both variables decreasing). Scores for body satisfaction were above the average mean for the scale ($M=3.51$ for this research, $M=3.23$ for Cash, 2000), as were scores for satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences. Participants indicated high satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences in relation to the selection, fashion, size and fit of dresses, blouses and tops, and skirts. This positive relationship is in accordance with the literature, specifically the 1988 study by Chowdhary and Beale queried plus size individuals in order to better understand their frustrations with apparel shopping. Results

indicated a positive relationship. The larger the individual was, the less satisfied she was with her body, and the lower her satisfaction with the apparel shopping experience was as it related to fit, fashion, sizes and selection. Likewise, Tatzel (1982) found that individuals with lower body satisfaction could be classified as what he dubbed, anxious consumers, due to their attitudes towards shopping and subsequent shopping behaviors. The results of this research indicates a similar positive relationship, only one in which scores for both variables were above the mean and in which participants seemed to be satisfied with their bodies as well as satisfied with previous apparel shopping experiences.

Body Satisfaction and Anticipated Pleasure of Bridal Gown Shopping

It was hypothesized and proved that an individuals' body satisfaction would positively relate to the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping . Body satisfaction was found to be a significant predictor of the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping in relation to the available selection of gowns, the sizes of gowns, and the fit of gowns. The positive relationship found between the variables indicates a positive correlation, meaning that as body satisfaction scores increased, scores for anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping increased as well. The inverse is also possible (with scores for both variables decreasing). Participant scores for body satisfaction were above the mean, as were scores for anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping. While body size was not expressly used to test this hypothesis, t-test were run after the fact to search for possible differences in body satisfaction based on BMI classification(underweight, normal weight, overweight, and obese). No statistically significant differences were found between groups in relation to body satisfaction. This is in contrast to the majority of literature on body satisfaction that find body weight to be directly related to body dissatisfaction, especially in western cultures where the ideal of beauty is a thin, proportional body shape (Grogran, 1999; Thompson, 2004; Van den Berg et al., 2007). No statistically significant differences were found between groups in relation to anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping. Rather, scores were high across all BMI classifications for anticipated pleasure. This is in contrast to the literature, which indicates that individuals with larger body size (and subsequently lower body satisfaction), will feel more apprehension when shopping for apparel, as it is an item that is closely related to the body (Chowdhary & Beale, 1988;

Otieno et al., 2005; Tatzel, 1982). While these studies paint a grim picture of the shopping environment for, and shopping habits of plus size individuals, this study did not find any such link. However, these studies all indicated a positive relationship between body satisfaction (primarily in comparison to body size) and shopping attitudes and behaviors. In this regard, this research supports what has been found in existing literature.

Body Satisfaction and Anticipated Involvement with Bridal Gown Shopping

It was hypothesized but not proven that an individuals' body satisfaction would positively relate to anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping. Body satisfaction was not found to be a significant predictor of anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping. Rather, anticipated involvement scores were high regardless of body satisfaction scores. An individual could exhibit a lower body satisfaction score but score high for anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping. T-tests were run to distinguish possible differences between plus and non-plus participant scores, but no significant difference was found. Literature pertaining to satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences and body size and satisfaction has yielded different results, indicating a far more hostile environment for those consumers who are overweight or obese (Otieno et al., 2005; Tatzel, 1982). It was this assumption that guided the development of this research, with the idea being that plus size individuals had most likely experienced difficulties with shopping for apparel in the past, leading to dissatisfaction. It was assumed that this dissatisfaction would carry over to the bridal gown shopping experience. However, results of this research are in contrast to previous studies pertaining to experiences in apparel and body image, and participants indicated that they anticipated the bridal gown shopping experience to be a pleasurable one, regardless of their body size and body satisfaction scores.

Self-Evaluative-Salience and Anticipated Involvement with Bridal Gown Shopping

It was hypothesized but not proven that an individuals' self-evaluative salience would positively relate to anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping. Self-evaluative salience was not found to be a significant predictor of anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping. Rather, anticipated involvement scores were high regardless of self-evaluative salience scores. An individual could exhibit a

lower self-evaluative salience score but score high for anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping. Participants showed high scores for self-evaluative salience ($M=3.07$ for this sample, as compared to the average mean of 3.47 found by Cash in 2005), meaning that they had a more internalized, strongly rooted view of cultural ideas of beauty that could possibly impact their satisfaction with their bodies. It is of interest to note that those participants with higher BMI's had higher mean self-evaluative salience scores. The literature would lead to the expectation that individuals with higher BMI's would exhibit lower body satisfaction and higher self-evaluative salience scores (Cash, 2005; Ip & Jarry, 2008; Prichard & Tiggermann, 2011). While these individuals had higher self-evaluative salience scores, body satisfaction scores were not lower.

Satisfaction with Previous Apparel Shopping Experiences and the Anticipated Pleasure of Bridal Gown Shopping

It was hypothesized and proven that satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences would positively relate to anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping. Satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences relating to dresses was found to be a significant predictor of the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping. Participants indicated a positive experience in relation to the selection, fashion, size, and fit of dresses, blouses and skirts. Tests of multiple regression indicated that satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences related to dresses was a significant predictor of the anticipated pleasure associated with bridal gown shopping. Participants' means were high for expected pleasure in relation to the same variables (selection, fashion, size and fit) when applied to bridal gowns. Factor loading indicated that the anticipated sizes and fit of bridal gowns were the most significant predictors of expected pleasure for bridal gown shopping. Literature pertaining to satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences and body size and satisfaction indicated a far more hostile environment for those consumers who are overweight or obese (Otieno et al., 2005; Tatzel, 1982). It was this assumption that guided the development of this research, with the idea being that plus size individuals had most likely experienced difficulties with shopping for apparel in the past, leading feelings of discrepancy and to dissatisfaction. It was assumed that this dissatisfaction would carry over to the bridal

gown shopping experience. However, results of this research are in contrast to previous studies pertaining to experiences in apparel and body satisfaction. Participants indicated that they anticipated the bridal gown shopping experience to be a pleasurable one, regardless of their body size and body satisfaction scores. Participants also indicated that they were satisfied with previous apparel shopping experiences, regardless of their body size and satisfaction.

Importance of the Bridal Gown

No hypothesis was posed to address the level of importance that the bride places on the bridal gown, but the questionnaire afforded the opportunity to address the issue. Participants ranked the five elements that are most commonly listed as being critical to the success of a wedding ritual. Venue was the most important to them, but the bridal gown was nearly as important. Flowers and decorations tied with photography for third, and the wedding party attire was last. Although there is no scholarly, peer reviewed literature on the subject of bridal gowns in relation to consumer behavior, the majority of popular publications (Howard, 2006; Wallace 2004) posit the bridal gown as one of or the most crucial element in the ritual. This held true for this sample of brides. In relation to the gown, a curious finding of the research was that brides with lower average household income anticipated spending more on a bridal gown than did those with higher income. However, this is just a measure of anticipated expenditure, and does not accurately indicate the amount the bride will actually spend on her gown.

Limitations

The limitations of this research can be discussed in relation to the survey and the participants. The four page, self-administered questionnaire did not allow for probing the opinions and motivations of bridal gown consumers beyond the provided questions. Both individuals who had and had not yet shopped for bridal gowns in a retail setting were questioned. Responses from those who had not yet shopped would yield expectations, whereas those from participants who had done some shopping could better reflect the realities of the shopping experience. For example, a bride-to-be might expect that shopping for bridal gowns would be pleasant, but could then have some unpleasant experiences. Additionally, this study could not take into account that some individuals could have participated in the

bridal gown shopping experience for a previous marriage or with another individual as part of the communal activity of bridal gown shopping, thereby making them more familiar with the process. Due to the four page length of the questionnaire, items that were exploratory in nature (not used to answer a hypothesis) were omitted for brevity. Possible questions that could be used to determine how long the bride-to-be had been engaged and whether or not she anticipated her wedding prior to the engagement would have been useful. The impact of these answers could influence how familiar a bride might be with the market. Even if she had not yet shopped for gowns in a retail setting, she might have done research via the internet or through other forms of bridal themed media. The number of participants could also be cited as a limitation. Show promoters reported that 800 brides attended the exposition. However, only 75 brides participated in this research, with a 74.66% response rate. Having more participants could have impacted the results by decreasing the margin of error.

The length of the survey was dictated by the setting (bridal exposition) and the small incentive offered to participants. In regards to the setting, limitations included the physical amount of space available for the research and the high energy nature of the bridal exposition. Data collection took place in a 10 by 10 foot area. The majority of this area was taken up by 3 tables (2 tall bar tables and one standard 6 foot folding table) at which brides completed the survey. At multiple points during data collection, there was little to no room for the brides to freely move about or spread out their belongings. This created a traffic jam that might have dissuaded more possible participants. The bridal exposition featured a variety of vendors as well as two fashion shows taking place at the beginning and end of the expo. One limitation was that some brides seemed overwhelmed by the number of vendors and activities and as a result might not have taken the time necessary to read and comprehend the directions and survey questions.

Possible issues with thoughtfully completing the questionnaire were most evidenced by the lack of responses to measures in the Personal Involvement Inventory segment. This portion of the survey had 15 semantic differential items answered on a seven- point scale. The lack of responses (just 56 of 75 respondents completed this portion) to this scale suggested either confusion or lack of effort on a participant's part as it appeared to be the most tedious part. This scale is about 35 years old and stimulated

participant questions about how to complete, particularly to younger participants who are used to completing online surveys. Only 56 of 75 participants actually completed it.

The sample size of 75 was probably affected by the availability of the small incentive (the bridal themed koozie and bottle of water). Because the researcher and assistants were busy administering the questionnaire, it was observed that some bottles were simply taken by passers-by without asking. In some cases, multiple incentives were taken by a single individual. The data collection began with more 100 bottles and koozies, with the hopes that there would be 100 participants. Once the researcher ran out of the koozies to serve as an incentive, brides were no longer interested in participating if there would be no compensative for their time.

Truthfulness of answers pertaining to weight is a possible limitation. Participants were asked to self-report weight and height in order to calculate BMI. As weight is a sensitive issue, participants might not have been accurate when completing self-reports (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010), or could have been accurate (Stunkard & Albaum, 1981). Almost half of the participants reported weights that (when combined with height to calculate BMI) categorized them as being overweight or obese. In 2010, it was reported that half of the female population in the US wore a size 14 or larger, which places those individuals in the plus size sector of the apparel market (Donnelly et al., 2003). This, along with the almost even split between those individuals who indicated that they would be considered normal weight and those considered to be overweight and obese, participants could have been truthful in their self-reports.

Industry Implications

The research objectives and hypotheses used in this research were developed based on a review of literature and first-hand experience in the bridal industry. Both categories of information led to the belief that larger body sizes and anticipated lower body satisfaction would have an impact on experiences, expectations, and involvement in the bridal gown search. Only the relationships between body satisfaction and previous apparel shopping experiences and body satisfaction and anticipated pleasure associated with bridal gown shopping were found to be significant. In both cases, participants exhibited positive feelings

of body satisfaction and positive experiences and medium levels of anticipated involvement. These results can have implications for the industry and for academia in regards to future research endeavors.

For those in industry, this study has provided insights on the target consumers of bridal gowns. Participants in this study indicated that they were satisfied with their bodies, and that this satisfaction was positively related to satisfaction with previous apparel shopping experiences and the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping. However, body satisfaction was not related to anticipated involvement with bridal gown shopping. Even if an individual had a low body satisfaction score, she was still above the mean for anticipated involvement. All individuals were well above the mean, showing a high desire to be involved in the activity of shopping for a bridal gown. There were also high scores in terms of the anticipated pleasure of bridal gown shopping. Considering this, it would appear that manufacturers and retailers alike have an eager target market, which (seemingly) have a preconceived notion of how pleasurable they expect the shopping experience to be.

Descriptive information from this research gives further insight into the target consumers. For example, results indicated that lower income brides were willing to spend more on a bridal gown than those brides who identified a higher average household income. Also, brides in this study indicated that they were willing to spend almost \$200 dollars more on their bridal gown than average. Differences in anticipated expenditure were also noted between plus size and non-plus size brides. Although this difference was small (and therefore not statistically significant), there are still implications for manufacturers and retailers in terms of pricing. Plus size brides were willing to spend around 200 dollars less and try on 6 fewer samples than non-plus size brides. Along these lines, plus size brides exhibited lower means(though not statistically significant) for anticipated involvement in regards to bridal gown shopping. However, plus size brides did not differ significantly from non-plus size brides in terms of how pleasurable they anticipated bridal gown shopping to be. So, although they expect to be less involved, they anticipate the experience to be pleasurable. This could be useful for manufacturers and retailers alike, as it appears there might need to be extra effort exerted to attract this segment of the market.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was the first academic research of its kind to examine bridal gown shopping by looking at body image, body size, body satisfaction and past experiences with apparel and how these factors influence the bridal gown shopping experience in terms of associated satisfaction and anticipated involvement. A larger sample size and scales that were directly related to bridal gown shopping (rather than existing scales which were adapted) could have yielded different results. Therefore, it would be beneficial to develop scales that address the variety of social and psychological factors that come into play when shopping for the primary garment that is associated with the wedding ritual. The psychological impact of ideal images of beauty (as perpetuated by media outlets) has been studied in more general applications. Additional research could be applied to bridal gowns and those overweight and obese brides who do not fit with the cultural ideal forms of beauty. Could the importance associated with, and excitement over the wedding ritual influence the way the bride sees herself and potential influence her sense of body image? As the bride wants and expects the ritual and all associated elements to be sacred in nature, does this effectively block any realistic aspects that would clash with this ideal? In their 2005 article, MacInnis and Mello discussed hope as a concept that is relevant to the evaluation of products in the marketplace and subsequent behaviors. This article was conceptual in nature and highlighted the beauty industry in particular as a purveyor of hope. The bridal industry is similar in its goal to illicit positive emotions from consumers who are already highly emotionally invested in the product category. Brides not only have hope for their wedding day, but for their future. It might also be possible that the excitement surrounding the wedding leads the bride to believe that she won't experience dissatisfaction, as she is one of, if not the primary participant in the ritual.

Additional research could also explore the role of media in the bridal gown shopping experience and how idealized visions of brides impact the average consumer. Whether brides to be are regular readers of bridal magazines, or watch bridal themed television programming could help indicate factors such as involvement and could be studied in terms of the impact on self-image. Does viewing the bridal gown shopping experience on television influence brides who have yet to shop in a retail setting?

Whether or not the impact would be positive (such as a bride being educated on the process through bridal related media) or negative could be explored. Also, the value placed in the opinions of others would be a topic for further research.

Since bridal gown shopping is itself viewed as a more communal ritual, it would be useful to note who the bride intends to take with her to shop for her gown and the degree to which these people would likely influence her purchase decision. Questions to probe for possible regional differences would also give industry greater insight. Ultimately, it is the recommendation of this researcher that all future endeavors on the matter of body image, body satisfaction, body size and the bridal gown shopping experience be conducted on a more personal level through one on one interview. However, considering the cultural significance and excitement surrounding the event, honest responses may not be achievable. The opinion of industry professionals at all levels of production and retail could be more telling of overall attitudes. Personal interviews and focus groups with bridal gown retailers could shed more light on the current nature of the market. Do they witness first-hand differences in shopping behaviors for consumers based on their body size? Are bridal gown manufacturers providing options for plus size brides that are more than just satisfactory? Are there differences in sales for retailers who are independently owned versus a chain store such as David's Bridal or Alfred Angelo? Answering such questions could be especially useful for manufacturers in better understanding their retailers and their ultimate consumer.

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Appendix A. Informed Consent

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Appendix B. Questionnaire

Three clothing categories are listed below with factors you may consider when shopping.
 Circle the **response** that best identifies how satisfied have been in the **past** when shopping for these types of clothing.

Dresses

<i>Selection of dresses</i>	Never Satisfied	Seldom Satisfied	Sometimes Satisfied	Often Satisfied	Always Satisfied
<i>Fashion of dresses</i>	Never Satisfied	Seldom Satisfied	Sometimes Satisfied	Often Satisfied	Always Satisfied
<i>Sizes of dresses</i>	Never Satisfied	Seldom Satisfied	Sometimes Satisfied	Often Satisfied	Always Satisfied
<i>Fit of dresses</i>	Never Satisfied	Seldom Satisfied	Sometimes Satisfied	Often Satisfied	Always Satisfied

Blouses & Tops

<i>Selection of blouses/tops</i>	Never Satisfied	Seldom Satisfied	Sometimes Satisfied	Often Satisfied	Always Satisfied
<i>Fashion of blouses/tops</i>	Never Satisfied	Seldom Satisfied	Sometimes Satisfied	Often Satisfied	Always Satisfied
<i>Sizes of blouses/tops</i>	Never Satisfied	Seldom Satisfied	Sometimes Satisfied	Often Satisfied	Always Satisfied
<i>Fit of blouses/tops</i>	Never Satisfied	Seldom Satisfied	Sometimes Satisfied	Often Satisfied	Always Satisfied

Skirts

<i>Selection of skirts</i>	Never Satisfied	Seldom Satisfied	Sometimes Satisfied	Often Satisfied	Always Satisfied
<i>Fashion of skirts</i>	Never Satisfied	Seldom Satisfied	Sometimes Satisfied	Often Satisfied	Always Satisfied
<i>Sizes of skirts</i>	Never Satisfied	Seldom Satisfied	Sometimes Satisfied	Often Satisfied	Always Satisfied
<i>Fit of skirts</i>	Never Satisfied	Seldom Satisfied	Sometimes Satisfied	Often Satisfied	Always Satisfied

Rank the following five elements of the wedding ceremony based on how important they are to you.
Place a number in the blank beside each element to indicate how important you consider it to be in your wedding.

How many different stores do you anticipate visiting before you purchase a bridal gown? _____(number of stores)

How many bridal gown samples do you anticipate trying on before you make a purchase? _____(samples)

Each of the following pairs of words describes feelings that you may have when shopping for bridal gown.

Check the line that best describes how you expect to feel about the *selection of bridal gowns*.
Happy Unhappy
Pleased Annoyed
Satisfied Unsatisfied

Check the line that best describes how you expect to feel about the *fashion of bridal gowns*.
Happy Unhappy
Pleased Annoyed
Satisfied Unsatisfied

Check the line that best describes how you expect to feel about the *sizes of bridal gowns*.
Happy Unhappy
Pleased Annoyed
Satisfied Unsatisfied

Check the line that best describes how you expect to feel about the *fit of bridal gown*.
Happy Unhappy
Pleased Annoyed
Satisfied Unsatisfied

There is a statement below about bridal gown shopping that is followed by a list of paired, opposite responses.

For each pair, check on the line that is closest to the response that you most agree with.

To me, shopping for a bridal gown — — — — —

Is important	Is unimportant
Is of no concern	Is of concern to me
Is irrelevant	Is relevant
Means a lot to me	Means nothing to me
Is useless	Is useful
Is valuable	Is worthless
Is beneficial	Is not beneficial
Matters to me	Doesn't matter
Is significant	Is insignificant
Is boring	Is interesting
Is unexciting	Is exciting
Is appealing	Is unappealing
Is undesirable	Is desirable
Is not needed	Is needed
Is mundane	Is fascinating

Indicate how dissatisfied or satisfied you are with the following areas or aspects of your body that are listed.
 Indicate your satisfaction by circling the option you most identify with.

Face (facial features, complexion)	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Hair (color, thickness, texture)	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Lower torso (buttocks, hips, thighs, legs)	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Mid torso (waist, stomach)	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Upper torso (chest, shoulders, arms)	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Muscle tone	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Weight	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Height	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Overall appearance	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Very Satisfied

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the response you most identify with.

	Strongly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Neither	Mostly Agree	Strongly Disagree
When I see good-looking people, I wonder how my own looks measure up.		2	3	4	5
I seldom compare my appearance to that of other people I see.		2	3	4	5
When something makes me feel good or bad about my looks, I tend to dwell on it.		2	3	4	5
If I like how I look on a given day, its easy to feel happy about other things.		2	3	4	5
If somebody had a negative reaction to what I look like, it wouldn't bother me.		2	3	4	5

