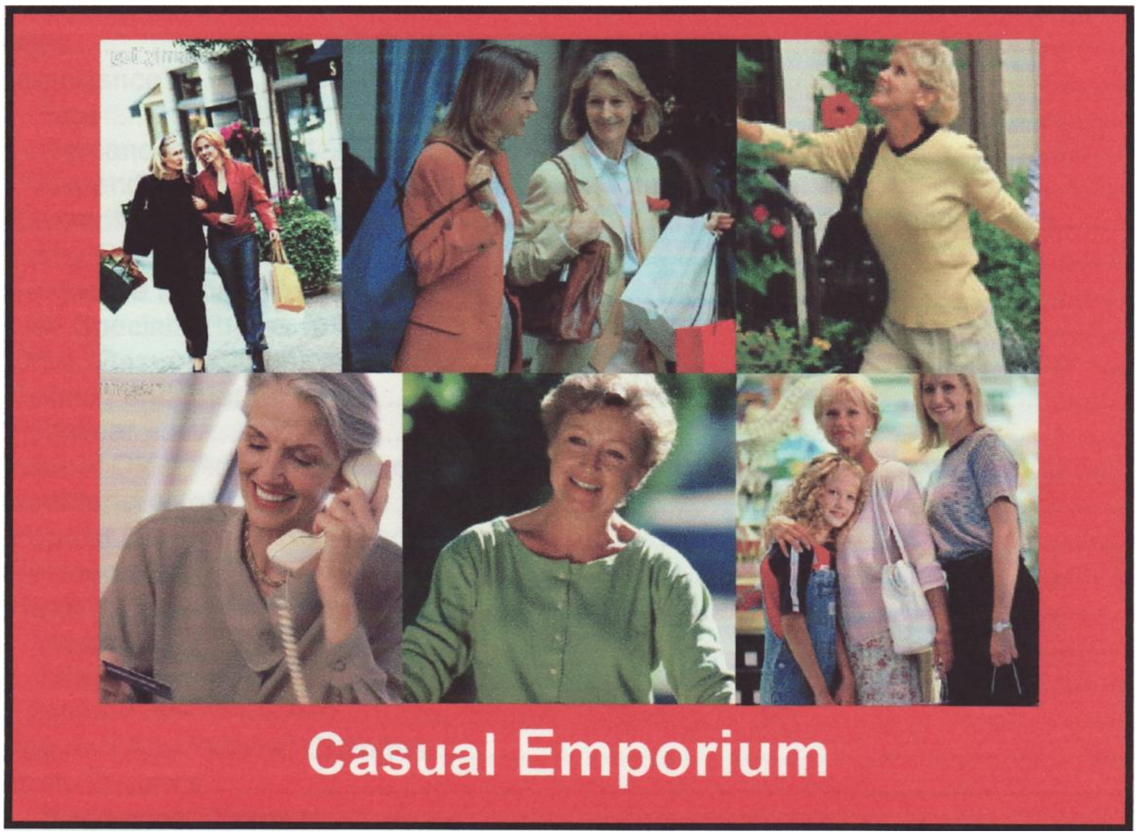
Casual Emporium:
An Apparel Line for Mature Women



Ana M. Diaz

Dr. Moschis
MK 8110
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INTRODUCTION

U.S. Apparel Industry

Overview

The U.S. apparel industry has grown dramatically throughout the years. The average American contributes $1,743 per year—an amount similar to that spent on entertainment and healthcare—to this 182 billion dollar industry [27, 10]. However, despite its apparent growth, the apparel industry's ability to flourish even further and at a faster pace has been dampened by the periods of war and economic recession [6]. In order to fully understand the industry's progression, it is essential to see how it has evolved since the early 1900s.

In 1901, the average annual expenditure per person on apparel was $107 [10]. This figure represented nearly 15% of all consumer expenditures back then and is more than triple the percentage of expenditures devoted to apparel in 1998 [10]. Given the limited amount of merchandise that was available in the early 1900s (e.g. no cars or electronics), it comes as no surprise that consumers opted for apparel over other available options.

The early 1900s, a successful period for the apparel industry, was followed by several ones of striking fluctuations in apparel spending. During the Great Depression (1930s), when the economy suffered a drastic hit, clothing expenditures fell dramatically. However, the post WWII years (1950s) were marked by a better economy which led to an increase in apparel spending. In the years that followed, apparel sales remained stable and then increased considerably (47%), once again, during the 1986-87 period due to the large number of women entering the workforce [10].

During the 1990s, apparel—spending patterns continued to swing back and forth. During the late 1990s, the lack of apparel styles appealing to middle aged women, avid apparel shoppers, drove sales down [10]. Apparel sales were hit, yet another time, during the 2001 recession. However, Margaret Canella, managing director and head of North American credit research at JPMorgan Securities is optimistic and said that growth is expected in the first quarter of 2002 [8].

Consumer Expenditures

During the 1987-1999 time period, annual apparel sales per person suffered a 14.68% downturn as they plummeted from $2,043 to $1,743. However, 1999 saw a 4.1% increase in apparel spending after two consecutive years of decreased spending [6, 10]. This increase was most evident in the following areas [10]:

- Men's and boy's clothing — 5.5% increase
- Women's and girls' clothing — 0.6% increase
- Footwear — 7.8% increase
- Other apparel products and services — 10% increase

Despite this apparent recovery, there was a drop in apparel expenditures in 2001, which offset the 1999 upturn in sales [27]. The drop in sales was most evident in the following areas:

- "Big Menswear" segment — 7% decrease
- Factory outlets — 7% loss
- Direct mail purchases — 3.5% decrease
- Department stores — 3% loss
- National chains — 1.5% decrease

The infant and toddler category was the only one with good news for the apparel industry as **it** saw a 13% gain in sales [27].

The 2001 apparel spending losses extended across three regions of the United States. Nevertheless, the apparel industry remains confident that it will be able to pull up sales in 2002 as the West region demonstrated a 25% increase in sales for all apparel subcomponents except the children under two category [10]. The following list depicts the specific percentage sales increases in each category [10]:

- Men's and boys' clothing – 22%
- Women's and girls' clothing – 21%
- Footwear – 30.5%
- Other apparel product and services – 44.8%

The apparel industry's expectations and hope to increase sales are thus realistic. Needless to say, industry members must be patient. Since numerous lower-priced clothes have made their way into the U.S. apparel market, the number of items sold will be on the rise, but dollar sales will lag behind [12]. As a result, apparel industry members should expect dollar sales to increase but at a slower pace than usual.

Trends

Aging Population

The U.S. population is currently undergoing several demographic changes that will undoubtedly impact the apparel industry. The most salient demographic trend is commonly referred to as, "the graying of America." The 65–plus age group is the fastest growing age group in the nation, and once the first baby boomers turn 65 in 2011, steady growth is expected in this segment [18]. Thus, by the year 2030, it is expected that one out of five Americans will be 65.

Rise of Specialty Stores

Specialty stores in the apparel market are on the rise [5]. One major reason for this trend is the escalating importance of one-to-one marketing. That is, consumers are looking for stores that carry apparel specifically tailored to their needs. The use of specialty stores facilitates manufacturers' and retailers' ability to segment the market based on factors such as: price, size ranges, and career or fashion-driven needs and provide a more targeted offering to the apparel consumer.

One segment avidly targeted by specialty stores is the "plus-size" market. Between 1994 and 1997, apparel targeted specifically at this segment grew 20% to 23 billion dollars [25, 30]. Two specialty stores currently targeting this market are Dress Barn Woman and Shopko. Dress Barn Woman focuses on private labels for middle and upper-middle income consumers. It carries fashionable career wear in sizes fourteen and up. The company claims to have discovered a niche to which it caters fashion. Shopko, on the other hand, targets conservative mid-western consumers of middle and upper income. It offers a narrow, deep assortment of apparel and concentrates on products such as lingerie, jeans, leggings, and pocket T-shirts [30].

Catalog Shopping

As it pertains to the apparel industry, catalog retailers are outpacing non-catalog retailers in terms of apparel sales growth [6]. From 1998 to 1999, the retailers offering catalogs as a means of purchasing apparel experienced a growth rate seven times higher than that of non-catalogers [6]. One of the key reasons for increased catalog shopping is the time-impoverished consumer. Nowadays, "time is money," and thus, consumers seek more convenient ways of shopping.

Women's apparel is a "hot button" for catalog sales as women's apparel catalog sales account for 70% of total catalog sales [6]. In addition, it is important to note that the catalog shopper is typically a member of the mature market who is seeking convenience. Furthermore, the percentage of those belonging to the 65–plus age group that shop by catalog is twice the percentage of those that opt to go to the store [6].

Casual Attire

Casual attire is an over-riding trend in the apparel industry. A number of firms seem to be loosening their stance towards the use of formalwear, at all times, as being appropriate workplace etiquette. Rather, several firms are encouraging their employees to dress casually throughout the entire workweek or on specific weekdays. For example, some companies have adopted a "Dress Down Friday" policy [11]. Consequently, the demand for casual apparel has increased. Denim, a $16.7 billion category, has become extremely popular. In addition, slacks such as casual Dockers are actively purchased and worn [11].

Target

Importance

Size

As previously mentioned, the mature market is the fastest growing age group in America [18]. As of 2000, the 65–plus age group consisted of an astonishing 35 million members, representing a 12% increase since 1990 [9]. Of these 35 million mature market members, 20.6 million were women and 14.4 million were men. Table 1 provides a breakdown by gender of the mature market's population projections from 2001-2005 [26].

Table 1. Mature market population projections 2001-2005.

AGE GROUP		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
65-74	**Females**	*9,937*	*9,902*	*9,910*	*9,966*	*10,043*
	Males	*8,218*	*8,228*	*8,265*	*8,337*	*8,418*
	Total	*18,155*	*18,489*	*18,176*	*18,303*	*18,461*
65 and **over**	**Females**	*20,455*	*20,554*	*20,705*	*20,868*	*21,052*
	Males	*14,609*	*14,749*	*14,930*	*15,118*	*15,318*
	Total	*35,064*	*30,303*	*35,634*	*35,986*	*36,370*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

Demand for Apparel

In late life, per capita spending on apparel declines faster among men than women due to the latter's greater interest in fashion and clothing [18]. Although overall demand for apparel is said to gradually decline, as people grow older, several plausible explanations have been revealed and should aid apparel manufacturers and retailers in devising strategies to attract older adults.

In other words, manufacturers and retailers should identify the "actionable" causes of decreased apparel demand in an effort to boost apparel sales among mature market members. The possible explanations for decreased demand for apparel are the following: (1) decline in size of household, (2) decline in individuals' social roles and activities, and (3) limited availability of suitable apparel for older people [18].

Expenditure Trends

In general, in the years to come, due to the expected growth of the mature market and its members' rising income, older consumers are expected to account for an increasing share of consumer expenditures [24]. In regards to apparel expenditures, different age groups within the mature market demonstrate differing purchasing patterns. However, the 65-74 age group has shown stable and homogenous expenditure patterns for apparel and services [24]. More specifically, within this age group, single men are likely to spend less than single women. In addition, apparel expenditures increase as level of education among consumers increases, and these purchases are rarely subject to changes in price elasticity [24].

In 1989, older consumers spent $37.3 billion on apparel and related services. The detailed breakdown is as follows:

- Youngest group - $18.9 billion
- 65-74 group - $13.5 billion
- Oldest group - $4.9 billion

In combination, the three groups represented 24.6% of total money spent on clothing by all consumers in the country [18].

Expenditures by Age Group in the Apparel Industry and Product/Service Area

Table 2 summarizes the annual per capita spending on apparel and services by age group in 1999.

Table 2. Annual per capita spending on apparel & services by age group.

All consumers	**Under 25**	**25-34**	**35-44**	**45-54**	**55-64**	**65 &** over	**65-74**	**75 &** over
$1,743	$1,192	$2,047	$2,053	$2,048	$1,722	$1,070	$1,235	**$901**

Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey, 1999

During the 1990 –2000 period, consumers spent more on housing, transportation and healthcare than they did on apparel, food, and entertainment [10]. Table 3 lists the changes in consumer spending on apparel and services by age from 1990 – 2000. Subsequently, Figure 1 graphs the percent changes of all age groups in each apparel category.

Table 3. Changes in consumer spending by age.

	ALL CONSUMERS			25-34			35-44			45-54			55-64		
	1990	2000	% Change	**1990**	2000	% Change	**1990**	2000	**% Change**	**1990**	2000	% Change	**1990**	2000	% Change
Average Annual Expenditure															
	1$28,381	$38,045	1 34.1%	1 $28,117	1 $38,945	1 38.5%	1 $35,594	1 $45,149	126.8%	1 $37,012	1 $46,160	1 24.7%	1 $29,263	1$39,340	34.4%
Dollar Share															
APPAREL & SERVICES	5.7%	4.9%	-14.4%	5.6%	5.3%	-5.4%	6.5%	5.1%	-20.8%	5.9%	5.1%	-12.2%	5.3%	4.3%	-19.2%
Men 16 & over	1.1%	0.9%	-20.8%	1.1%	0.9%	-11.4%	1.2%	0.8%	-31.1%	1.4%	1.0%	-23.2%	1.1%	0.9%	-19.4%
Women 16 & over	2.1%	1.6%	-22.7%	1.7%	1.4%	-14.2%	2.2%	1.5%	-29.8%	2.2%	1.8%	-17.7%	2.3%	1.6%	-29.0%
Footwear	0.8%	0.9%	13.7%	0.7%	1.0%	36.1%	1.0%	0.9%	-8.9%	0.8%	0.9%	21.9%	0.7%	0.8%	2.8%

Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey, 1990 and 2000

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	ALL CONSUMERS			25-34			35-44			45-54			55-64		
	1990	2000	% Change	1990	2000	% Change	1990	2000	% Change	1990	2000	% Change	1990	2000	% Change
Average Annual Expenditure															
	$28,381	$38,045	34.1%	$28,117	$38,945	38.5%	$35,594	$45,149	26.8%	$37,012	$46,160	24.7%	$29,263	$39,340	34.4%
Dollar Share															
APPAREL & SERVICES	5.7%	4.9%	-14.4%	5.6%	5.3%	-5.4%	6.5%	5.1%	-20.8%	5.9%	5.1%	-12.2%	5.3%	4.3%	-19.2%
Men 16 & over	1.1%	0.9%	-20.8%	1.1%	0.9%	-11.4%	1.2%	0.8%	-31.1%	1.4%	1.0%	-23.2%	1.1%	0.9%	-19.4%
Women 16 & over	2.1%	1.6%	-22.7%	1.7%	1.4%	-14.2%	2.2%	1.5%	-29.8%	2.2%	1.8%	-17.7%	2.3%	1.6%	-29.0%
Footwear	0.8%	0.9%	13.7%	0.7%	1.0%	36.1%	1.0%	0.9%	-8.9%	0.8%	0.9%	21.9%	0.7%	0.8%	2.8%

Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey, 1990 and 2000.

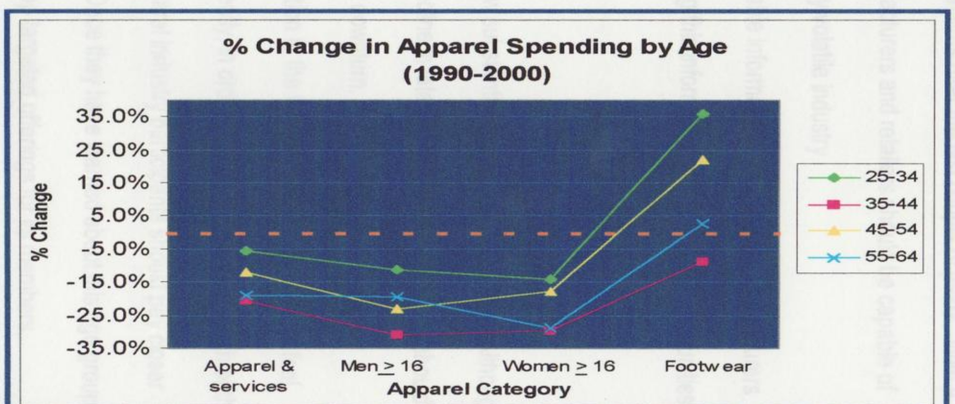

Figure 1. Percent change in apparel spending by age, 1990-2000.

Industry Opportunities

Given the pendulum-like nature of apparel sales, industry members should develop new strategies to proactively deal with periods of declining sales. In doing so, they must carefully consider the various trends affecting the industry today, as well as, the size of the different age groups and their expenditure patterns over the last couple of years. With a clear, sound strategy in mind, apparel manufacturers and retailers should be capable of obtaining long-term profitability in a seemingly volatile industry.

The industry analysis revealed invaluable information that apparel manufacturers and retailers should act upon. After reviewing this information, the following opportunities seem both feasible and attractive:

Target the Mature Market

The mature market is expected to grow substantially in the years to come. Although their overall demand for apparel seems to decline in late life, careful consideration should be given to the reasons behind this apparent downturn. More specifically, apparel manufacturers and retailers should pay attention to the fact that mature consumers feel neglected by the apparel industry. Consequently, in order to capitalize on the growth of the aging population and their rising income, apparel industry participants should pay closer attention to this market's needs and wants. Once they have learned about this age group's preferences, there is an opportunity to develop targeted offerings for its members. *Use Specialty Stores to Target Niches*

Apparel manufacturers and retailers can identify niches whose needs are not currently being met by the apparel industry. Once these niches have been uncovered, apparel industry members should actively pursue their business through the use of specialty stores. That is, instead of trying to satisfy everyone's needs, they should adopt a more focused approach whereby products and services are developed to meet the needs of previously ignored, yet profitable niches.

Offer *"Casual" Clothes*

Apparel manufacturers who are considering clothing line extensions in the near future may want to focus on casual clothing. There is an apparent trend towards casual clothing in the market, and thus, there is an increasing opportunity to manufacture and market affordable, casual clothing. In addition, apparel retailers should evaluate the needs of their target market. In doing so, they should aim to determine whether they are shopping for casual clothes. Based on this information, retailers should, either, offer casual clothes, if they did not do so before, or offer a wider assortment of casual clothes.

Catalog and Internet Sales

The option of purchasing by catalog should be the standard for apparel manufacturers and retailers. As previously mentioned, today's consumers place a significant amount of value on time. Therefore, apparel companies that make themselves more accessible to the consumer are more likely to be patronized. Thus, firms should engage in practices such as catalog sales and Internet sales in an effort to reach the large number of consumers who are actively seeking convenient ways in which to save time.

Footwear

Footwear seems to be a "hot spot" in the apparel industry. Expenditures on footwear have demonstrated an upward trend from 1990-2000. Thus, once again, there may be neglected niches that can be targeted with special footwear features and/or attributes. Consequently, footwear manufacturers and retailers should find those niches, analyze their needs, and develop a product offering that will satisfy their needs.

BEHAVIOR OF OLDER ADULTS IN RESPECT TO THE APPAREL INDUSTRY

Characteristics of Older Adults

Popular Regions of Residence

The United States' older population is not evenly distributed across the country. Nevertheless, throughout the years, older adults have demonstrated a marked preference for living in the state of Florida [9]. This state has the largest concentration of older adults in metropolitan areas, and six of the ten places—consisting of over 100,000 residents— with the highest proportion of their population in the 65—plus age group are in the "Sunshine state" [9]. These ten places are as follows: (1) Clearwater, FL, (2) Cape Coral, FL, (3) Honolulu, HI, (4) St. Petersburg, FL, (5) Hollywood, FL, (6) Warren, MI, (7) Miami, FL, (8) Livonia, MI, (9) Scottsdale, AZ, and (10) Hialeah, FL [9].

Socioeconomic Status

In general, older adults are financially sound. Despite the income reduction experienced upon retirement, the number of responsibilities lessens at this time, and, in turn, expenses decrease as well (e.g. work—related expenses such as apparel and meals purchased away from home) [18]. Therefore, "their lower incomes are offset by reduced demands on those incomes."

Older adults' income has been on the rise throughout the last decade, and their financial status is expected to strengthen, thus, becoming even more favorable in the future [18]. Figure 2 illustrates the upward trend in the 65-74 age group's median income during the 1994-96 period [26].

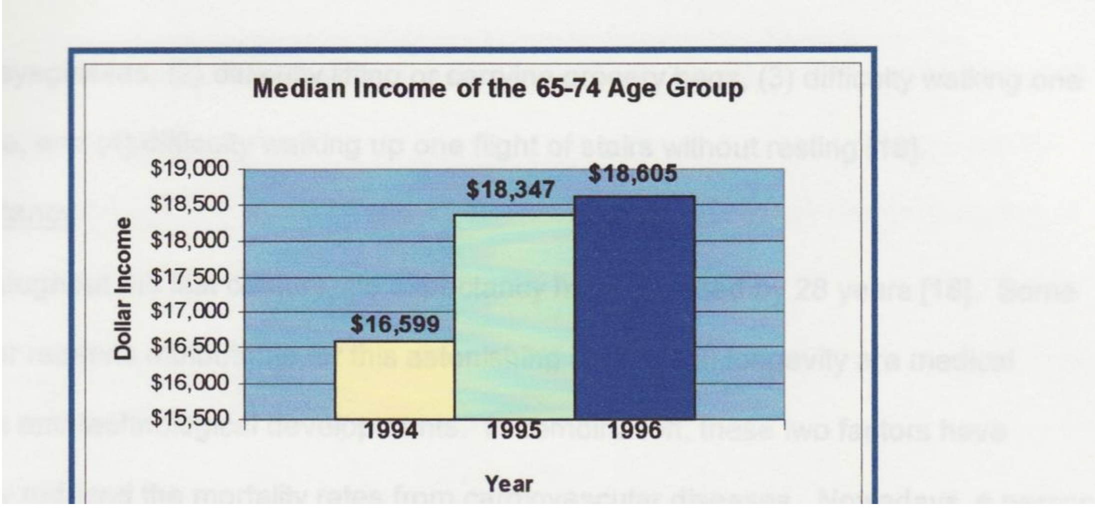

Figure 2. Median income of the 65-74 age group, 1994-96.

In terms of discretionary income, the income beyond that needed to maintain a comfortable standard of living, the 65—plus age group enjoys the highest one of all age groups in the U.S. [18]. On a per capita basis, their discretionary income is $6,280 annually; approximately 50% more than the national average [18]. Given their financial stability and a shift in the "leaving your goods behind to your children" mindset, older adults are spending more on themselves and worrying much less about their children's inheritance [18].

Health and Life Expectancy

Health

Most people over the age of 55 suffer from at least one chronic condition. The two most common conditions affecting older adults are arthritis and hypertension [18]. Although these, and other, chronic conditions are likely to impact older adults' abilities in one way or another, most of the time, they do not "handicap" the person. Some of the most commonly reported functional limitations experienced in late life, that may or may not be related to these chronic conditions are the following: (1) trouble seeing ordinary newsprint even with eyeglasses, (2) difficulty lifting or carrying grocery bags, (3) difficulty walking one quarter mile, and (4) difficulty walking up one flight of stairs without resting [18].

Life Expectancy

Throughout the last century, life expectancy has increased by 28 years [18]. Some of the major reasons attributable for this astonishing increase in longevity are medical discoveries and technological developments. In combination, these two factors have significantly reduced the mortality rates from cardiovascular diseases. Nowadays, a person reaching the age of 65 is expected to live past 80, and women age 65 are expected to outlive men by four years [18].

Despite the increase in life expectancy other, more subtle, causes of death among the elderly still warrant significant attention. For example, it has been found that one of the major causes of death for older adults is falling [18]. Thus, the emphasis should not be merely on the longer life expectancy that has been achieved but on ways in which to extend it even further.

Fashion-Consciousness

Mature Americans, especially women, are "as fashionable nowadays as their younger counterparts" [21]. As a matter of fact, research shows that 25-30% of mature market members are fashion-conscious, and those with highest incomes and higher levels of education are the most fashion-conscious [14, 21]. In addition, it has been found that those older adults that qualify as fashion-conscious consumers are characterized as follows: (1) they are socially active and active in the community; (2) they are fashion opinion leaders and exchange relevant information with friends; (3) they enjoy shopping; (4) they spend more on clothing than the elderly who are not interested in fashion; and (5) store regulation is more important to them than brand [14]. Furthermore, fashion-conscious older adults consider newspapers, friends, salespeople, and point-of-purchase displays as the most important sources of information for apparel information, and they prefer shopping at department stores and specialty stores [14].

Aging and Age-Related Changes

Body Systems

Biophysical Changes

Body composition refers to the relative proportion of fat, muscle, bone, and other lean tissue in the human body [2]. As age increases, body composition is altered due to a decrease in muscle mass accompanied by an increase in proportion of body fat [18]. Consequently, body size changes as both weight and shape change [18].

Among the changes–affecting body size and shape—that were reported by the Pennsylvania Department of Aging are the following: height decrease, arm reach/span decrease, pelvic breadth increase, trunk height decrease, thorax size decrease, relative amount of fat increase, and gradual shrinkage of muscle mass [18].

In addition, older adults may experience several joint and skeletal problems as arthritis and other chronic conditions become more common. For example, women suffering of osteoporosis may suffer from calcium deposits on their upper back, which lead to a marked curvature of the spine, commonly known as "dowager's hump" [32]. Furthermore, due to the loss of muscle mass, older adults may lose strength, experience reduced joint mobility, and experience a certain widening of their feet [32].

The skin or epidermis also undergoes various changes with age. It typically is more sensitive to rough textures as it becomes thin and dry [18]. The skin also sags and wrinkles, age spots start to appear, and it suffers from discoloration. Furthermore, sweat glands become less active leading to more brittle skin, which is less able to regulate temperature[18]. Although both genders experience skin changes, women seem to be more affected by them both physiologically and psychologically [18].

In regards to weight, older adults may seem heavier even if they weigh the same amount they did in college or even less. Even though older adults may lose weight during late life, this weight "settles" due to gravity, causing the thickening of the waist and the sagging of the bust line and chest [32]. Ultimately, in late life, the human body undergoes numerous biophysical changes, which undoubtedly alter its appearance.

Psychological Changes

To many older adults, accepting the "old age" status is a difficult task. A way of dealing with the feelings of inferiority that may arise is by engaging in active, creative activities that were not pursued earlier in life. Although unexplored interests may surface, leading to new hobbies, older people's attitudes seem to be engrained. In other words, older adults are more conservative than their younger counterparts and are not likely to change their attitudes at this point in time. As a matter of fact, their attitudes become more accentuated in late life [18].

. Cognition

Perceptual System and Cognitive System

With age, attention span becomes more limited, and motivation to process information based on environmental stimuli (i.e. peripheral route) declines as biophysical and social changes take a toll (e.g. loss of vision or withdrawal from social roles) [18]. In addition, short-term memory capacity declines, and encoding and retrieval speed is also reduced. Consequently, older adults are less able to encode information semantically. Furthermore, their ability to use organizational strategies is hampered, and they find it extremely difficult to make deductive inferences from obtained information [18].

Long-term memory, on the other hand, undergoes very small changes with the aging process [18]. Thus, there are certain ways to tap into older adults' existing knowledge and experiences. For example, although older adults fail to use visual imagery, it has been found that their memory improves when pictures and colors are used instead of, or in combination with words [18]. In addition, memory and information retrieval are enhanced when the person knows, in advance, that retrieval is the objective of them being exposed to the information in the first place [18].

Motor Performance System

It is important to mention that perceptual speed is reduced with age. Thus, reaction time, the time between the onset of a stimulus and the initiation of a contingent response, increases as people grow older [18]. Since it takes longer for thought to be translated into action, physical coordination is affected.

Effects of the Task Environment

The effects of the task environment on older adults warrant special attention as they are many and will further our understanding of the mature market's limitations and preferences. Table 4 lists some of the most important variables of the task environment and summarizes ways in which to manipulate each one in order to effectively reach and target the mature consumer market.

Table 4. Effects of the task environment on older adults.

ENVIORNMENTAL VARIABLE	EFFECTIVE MANIPULATION
Pacing	■ To improve learning proficiency – enable older adults to control the pace of the information
Information Quantity	■ Present small amounts of information
Presentation Format	■ To enhance recall – use visual aids to present information ■ Present only relevant information ■ Use familiar stimuli to present the relevant information
Information Organization	■ To improve recall – present information in a logical, organized fashion
Task Complexity	■ Make tasks less complex (e.g. summarize key points)
Instruction Sets	■ Provide specific instruction to use memory strategies
Response formats	■ When collecting feedback from older adults – use close-ended questions (e.g. multiple choice) instead of open-ended questions that require recall

Source: Moschis, George P. Marketing To Older Consumers: A Handbook of Information for Strategy Development, Quorom Books: Westport, 1992.

Lifestyles

Activities and Interests

Given the greater amount of available discretionary time, older adults spend a smaller portion of their waking hours on obligatory activities. Rather, they prefer to engage in discretionary activities such as socializing. Not surprisingly, another popular discretionary activity among older adults is the use of mass media [18]. Since they spend approximately 75% of their waking hours at home, older adults devote 20% of their time to watching television, and they also dedicate a significant amount of time to newspaper and magazine reading [18].

In addition, the 65—plus age group is as likely to exercise regularly than their younger counterparts, and they prefer to either, go for walks or exercise at home [18]. Since they feel a strong need for social contact, older adults actively participate in community and religious activities, as evidenced by the fact that 34% engage in charitable or social service activities (e.g. helping the poor, sick, or elderly) [18]. Furthermore, it has been found that shopping represents a "major outlet" for social interaction because older adults can go shopping with family and/or friends, and they can also chat with salespeople or other people they encounter [18].

Attitudes and Values

Older adults are more resistant to change than their younger counterparts. They are likely to have traditional values ranging from old-fashioned tastes to opinions about gender roles. Despite their "conservative" views, members of the mature market resist the idea of growing old. Thus, they tend to think they look younger and act younger than their age. Furthermore, since members of this group "attempt to live their lives for their own fulfillment and to indulge themselves with products and services that keep them more active and healthier," they have often been labeled as the "me generation" [18].

Media Use

Television

Television is the most widely used medium among older adults [18]. As a matter of fact, older people devote more time to watching TV than to any other activity except sleeping, and their preferred time for watching television is during prime-time hours (8:00-11:00p.m.) [18]. Nevertheless, older adults also watch more TV than any other age group earlier in the day than in the evening [18].

One of the major reasons for their heavy usage of this medium is to fulfill various needs that may arise in late life as a result of biophysical and psychosocial changes. As stated by Moschis, several functions of TV viewing are the following: (1) it helps older people obtain information that is missed due to sensory decline; (2) it serves as a substitute for loss of companionship; (3) it is a convenient way for marking time; (4) it fills spare time after retirement; (5) it helps relay the message to the consumer who may not be able to read print due to deteriorating visibility or listen to the radio due to hearing impairment; (6) it serves as a substitute for interpersonal contact; and (7) it is a time filler [18]. Thus, television provides the older person with up-to-date information that serves as a topic of conversation with family and peers.

Throughout the years, older adults have demonstrated a preference for nonfictional programs such as: news, public affairs broadcasts, quiz shows, and talk shows, thus, revealing a higher interest for information than for entertainment [18]. They are more likely to watch news programs featuring anchors that are shown close up and have accurate and clear pronunciation. In regards to other programs, they prefer ones featuring older characters such as "Murder She Wrote" and "Golden Girls" [18].

Radio

Older adults primarily use radio to obtain early morning news and weather forecasts. Thus, the best time to reach the mature market via radio is during the morning hours, between 6 a.m. to noon. Although radio is not the most heavily used medium, older consumers still listen to it because of its portability [18].

Newspapers and Magazines

Undoubtedly, newspapers are the most popular print media among older consumers. 79% of those 65 or over read newspapers on a daily basis [18]. They demonstrate a particular interest in editorial content and use newspapers to obtain information about social events and local news (e.g. local meetings and shopping sales) [18]. Moreover, newspapers are deemed as the most influential medium for buying decisions by 65% of the elder population [18].

Magazines are not as popular as newspapers among the older population. Nevertheless, older adults commonly patronize several magazines including Reader's Digest, TV Guide, and Modern Maturity. However, not all magazines have been found to be equally effective in reaching the mature market because some enjoy high subscription levels but not high readership levels [18].

Consumer Behavior of Older versus Younger Adults

Shopping Patterns

The Great Depression tremendously impacted older adults' views, attitudes, and shopping habits. During those times of hardship, "clothes were something to be worn, repaired and passed on to siblings" [31]. Thus, price and durability were far more important than fashion back then. Consequently, when compared to younger adults, older consumers have more conservative fashion tastes. For example, many older consumers see jeans as being "strictly work-wear," thus typically wearing them for certain occasions but not for social gatherings. In addition, this consumer group sees white athletic socks as "too casual". Therefore, women opt for knee-highs and men for nonwhite acrylic socks [31]. Furthermore, older men and women are the number one purchasers of plain-white underwear. More specifically, men have indicated a preference for Fruit of the Loom white briefs and women for basic or control top products [31].

As it pertains to the selection of clothing and shoe stores, the five major reasons for store patronage among older adults are: (1) personnel assistance, (2) ease of returning merchandise, (3) availability of familiar brands, (4) frequent advertisement of items "on sale," and (5) located near their homes [18]. Some other important reasons for clothing and shoe store selection include: accessibility, parking, sales promotions, prices, and credit availability [18].

In regards to the type of store preferred for making these purchases, 62% said they typically patronize major department stores, and 12% expressed a preference for specialty stores, catalog/mail order, and discount stores. In addition, 85% of older consumers indicated that they preferred being able to shop at the store, and 20% said they preferred ordering from catalogs [18]. Overall, older female consumers are more likely to buy clothes and shoes through mail, and more educated older adults show a greater tendency to buy clothing and shoes [18].

In comparison to their younger counterparts, older consumers place a greater amount of importance on the following characteristics or attributes of clothing and shoe stores [18].

- Discounts for senior citizens
- In-store rest area
- Variety of stores close together
- Convenient entrance/exit
- Small stores so items can be found easily
- Wide aisles
- Well-known label/brand of products
- Limited variety of items can be found easily
- Comfortable physical environment
- Package carry-out services
- Salesperson of own age
- Transportation to store

- Convenient fast checkout
- Credit availability
- Readable labels/tags
- Knowledgeable salesperson
- Assistance in finding items
- Store reputation

Patterns of Product Acquisition and Consumption

Information Acquisition

Older adults explain that the most reliable and accessible source of information they use is their own experience. In addition, personal sources of information are of paramount importance to this consumer group, as well as, newspapers and magazines. However, in general, television is considered to be the most influential medium and the most trusted one, too. It is important to note that, for clothing purchases, older consumers opt for informal sources such as family and friends instead of salespeople and ads [18].

Product Evaluation and Selection

<u>General Criteria</u>

The 65—plus market seeks more store specials than any other age group. However, price is a salient criterion only when quality is standardized [18]. Information in ads is also extremely important for the evaluation and selection of a particular product or service. In addition, older adults prefer products "made in America" and prefer manufacturers with local service centers and safe locations [18]. Furthermore, senior discount programs are increasingly attractive in almost every industry. However, many older consumers are not even aware of these discounts, and thus, fail to reap their benefits [18].

Criteria for the Selection of Clothes and Shoes

Older consumers base their clothes and shoe purchases on several criteria, some of which are more important than others. Some of the most widely used criteria by which mature market members decide to carry out specific clothing and shoe purchases are the bowing: (1) advertising appeal, (2) senior discounts, (3) availability of products for those with certain physical (size & shape) requirements, (4) others' opinions, and (5) salesperson's opinions [18].

The following criteria were denominated as being the most important considerations for the purchase of specific clothing items (listed in order of importance): (1) fit, (2) durability, (3) washability, (4) price, (5) cut, and (6) color [18]. Whereas these attributes were of major importance, fashion and brand were not as important. Moreover, women indicated that they liked garments because of style, comfort, fit, and appearance, and the main reasons for disliking clothes were appearance and fit [18].

Post–Purchase Behavior

Although older consumers are less likely to complain than their younger counterparts, when they do complain, it can be quite detrimental to the firm that caused their dissatisfaction. That is, older consumers engage in private action (e.g. negative word-of-mouth) to express dissatisfaction [18]. Since they are likely to tell seven to ten other people about their negative experience, this action functions as negative publicity for a company.

Dissatisfaction may result from various sources, and some of the most commonly mentioned ones are item unavailability, products requiring the older adults' use of bodily systems, and utilization of age stereotypes in ads. For those companies engaging in the later, older consumers may go as far as boycotting their products [18].

Summary of Opportunities

In view of the behavior that typifies the mature market and the biophysical, psychological, and social changes they undergo in late life, this market should be seemingly more and more attractive to apparel manufacturers and retailers. More specifically, the wide array of unmet needs displayed by the mature market should serve as a signal to apparel industry members that they are missing out on the benefits of a sizable and profitable market. Thus, they should realize that older adults' consumer behavior—as it relates to the apparel industry—holds numerous opportunities such as the following:

Modification of Apparel Features

Given the numerous biophysical changes older adults undergo in late life, apparel manufacturers should modify specific apparel features (e.g. necklines) in order to meet the varying needs of older consumers. By developing products that enable them to better cope with these changes, unnecessary feelings (e.g. demoralization) among mature market members who do not find anything that "fits right" should be alleviated. Therefore, older consumers would demonstrate loyalty to those apparel manufacturers who are looking out for their needs.

Fabric Selection

With age, the human body loses its ability to regulate its own temperature. Therefore, it is hard for older adults to stay warm or cool down. In addition, as their skin dries and becomes more brittle, older adults are sensitive to rough textures. Consequently, apparel manufacturers should carefully select fabric materials for clothing manufactured for mature market consumers. For example, for winter clothes, they should use fabric that will keep the person warm (e.g. flannel).

Shopping Apparel: A Social Experience

Since older consumers demonstrate a strong need for social contact, apparel retailers should market shopping for apparel as a "social experience." That is, aside from carrying apparel products that meet older consumers' needs, apparel retailers should create an in-store ambience that will make the shopping experience a pleasant social experience as well, thus, luring mature consumers into their shops. In doing so, apparel retailers should pay close attention to the criteria utilized by older consumers for clothing and shoe store selection. Empowered with this information, they should be able to combine all these features under one roof. Thus, older consumers are likely to share their positive experience with peers by engaging in positive word-of-mouth.

Targeted Promotions and High Service Quality

There is a definite opportunity in targeting the mature market with specific promotional activities such as senior discounts. Another means of attracting this market is by frequently advertising "on sale" items and providing high levels of service-quality in apparel retail stores. Furthermore, it is important for apparel retailers to know which mass mediums are more heavily used by older adults and for what purposes. For example, TV enjoys a great deal of popularity and newspapers rank second, but many older consumers consider newspapers as the most influential source for clothing purchases [18].

STRATEGY

Analysis of Macro and Micro Market Opportunities

Consumer Needs

Based on their market size, growth, disposable income, and fashion-consciousness, older consumers are a viable and extremely attractive market for apparel. Nevertheless, apparel manufacturers have focused their efforts on the younger population, and thus, have neglected the older markets' apparel needs. Since the "aging of America" is creeping up on the apparel industry, the following are some of the key considerations that should be lingering in apparel manufacturers' and retailers' minds as they take their first step in catering to the mature market: (1) offer comfortable garments that reflect the casual lifestyle of today's consumers; (2) provide various purchasing options (e.g. catalogs) that will allow for convenient shopping; (3) modify apparel features and carefully select fabric to meet their biophysical needs; (4) consider their media preferences; (5) consider their need for social engagement; and (6) recognize that their need for quality overrides the importance of price.

Technology

The Internet has revolutionized the entire world as it provides easy access to a vast amount of information in an amazingly timely fashion. In business, the Internet has been adopted as a new channel of distribution, and thus, has impacted the way companies do business. Today, numerous apparel sales take place over the Internet, allowing apparel manufacturers and retailers to be more far-reaching. Thus, it holds numerous opportunities for the apparel industry.

Contrary to wide-held belief, mature adults are not technology averse. Instead, they welcome products that offer convenience and save time [20]. Although older adults currently make up less than 10% of the total Internet population, they are the second fastest growing group online, following teenagers [28]. According to Nielsen Net Ratings, 65% of the 55–plus age group had made at least one online purchase as of 2000, and according to Rickert of Media Metrix, "women are really driving the growth of this demographic group online" [28]. Thus, the Internet poses an incredible opportunity for reaching the mature market.

Legal/Economic Developments

The apparel industry has been undergoing consolidation and restructuring in the recent past [23]. Since more and more apparel is being manufactured overseas, at lower rates, U.S.-based apparel manufacturers are suffering significantly reduced profit margins as retailers demand lower and lower prices and ask for shorter delivery times in order to reduce inventory-holding costs [23]. Therefore, apparel manufacturers must explore new horizons in an attempt to alleviate their losses. For example, one opportunity is to focus on new product development to meet the needs of the mature market. Once new apparel lines have been developed, apparel manufacturers and retailers should engage in intensive marketing practices, targeting members of this consumer group.

Other Developments

Several other developments should be considered when developing a strategy to succeed in the apparel industry. One key development is the recognition of older women's apparel as "ripe for new thinking and creative ideas" [16]. That is, apparel manufacturers are starting to understand that older women no longer use self-adornment and fashion as major criteria for clothing purchases. Rather, they are looking for clothes that will make them feel good and comfortable. In other words, clothing is no longer just "about appearances.-

An existing opportunity for apparel manufacturers is to develop new apparel that will meet the needs of older women. In addition, apparel retailers should revise the advertising and selling tactics currently geared towards them, which are deemed by many as "incompatible with the interests of today's more experienced women" (16]. Thus, it is evident that the opportunities are out there, and it is just a matter of knowing how and when to pursue them.

Competitive Analysis

Haband

Haband is a family-owned apparel company that was founded in 1925 [34]. Its target market is the 55–plus age group, and the average age of its customers is 60 [31]. Although the company targets both males and females of the mature market, 60% of its purchasers are men [31].

Product and Price

Haband offers a variety of products to the mature market. Pants, shorts, and tops are among its hottest items. The company's main focus is on the following: (1) garment's comfort, (2) low prices, (3) wide ranges of sizes and colors, and (4) ease of care of available products [31].

Distribution

Haband owns and operates seventeen retail stores in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Georgia. However, the company conducts 95% of its business via direct mail and has served over 5 million customers through this medium since its existence [34]. Recently, the company launched "Haband Online" which has proven to be a success. Haband Online offers a convenient shopping alternative for current customers and has also attracted new customers (20% of online orders are from new customers) [34]. Furthermore, the site has experienced monthly revenue growth of over 25% for over a year. In order to meet the high level of demand, Haband has two distribution facilities that ship approximately 30,000 packages per day [34].

Promotion

Haband uses a variety of promotional tactics to reach the mature market. Annually, the company places 6 million color inserts in Sunday newspapers and runs several magazine ads, each featuring just a handful of items [31]. In addition, the company has built an 11.5 million-name database of Haband purchasers. By recording their information after each purchase, the company is able to mail customized advertising packages to each one. Furthermore, the company actively seeks its customers' repeat business by mailing approximately 2.2 million advertising circulars per week and by periodically sending them mail order catalogs [34].

Blair Process

Blair Process is headquartered in Warren, Pennsylvania, and has been in operation for 91 years. In 1984, Forbes labeled the company as "the largest U.S. publicly held direct mail business–without a penny of debt" [35]. The company currently employs over 2,300 people and has a customer base of approximately 12 million people [35]. Today, it is the 9th largest consumer apparel cataloger in the U.S., and it enjoys annual sales of over $570 million [35].

Blair Process has a broad customer base. It targets the "mature, value-conscious segment" but also targets a younger and more upscale group of consumers.

Product and Price

Blair Process sells fashion apparel for, both men and women, as well as, a number of home products (e.g. comforters and kitchen appliances). Various suppliers manufacture the company's merchandise to company specifications. Since the company is targeting a broad range of customers, its prices are wide-ranging.

Distribution

Blair Process has a multi-channel marketing strategy. Although primarily a direct mail company, Blair Process has several retail stores. The company has five retail outlet stores which: (1) accept most major credit cards; (2) provide free car and bus parking; (3) are handicapped accessible; and (4) offer tax-free shopping for clothing [35]. Like Haband, the company conducts the majority of its sales through mail-order catalogs, and it has its own shopping website.

Promotion

The company reaches its customers through targeted catalogs and letter-style promotions. These publications feature a wide variety of women's and men's apparel and home products and are mailed on a periodic basis to both current and prospective customers. In addition, the company continuously offers "on sale" items.

Levi Strauss

Levi Strauss's product offering for the mature market is more limited than the full-operation approach utilized by both Haband and Blair Process. Nevertheless, its line, especially designed for the mature market, has enjoyed enormous success. This product line consists of fuller cut, lightweight clothing. For example, Levi offers slack-like jeans with elastic waists, which have been a big hit with older consumers [14].

<u>New Balance</u>

New Balance has demonstrated a growing interest in older consumers' needs for athletic footwear. In doing so, the company has developed an extensive collection of sizes and widths to attract older consumers looking for a comfortable shoe. After conducting some research, New Balance discovered that typically, older consumes find a shoe they Ike, and they "stick with it for years" [15]. In response to this finding, the company has kept many older styles in production.

In terms of promoting their shoes to older consumers, New Balance has developed an advertising campaign aimed at the 55–plus market. This targeted advertising campaign consists of both TV and print ads. In addition, they have paired up with podiatrists, who often suggest New Balance shoes to their patients [15].

Market Segmentation

Given the heterogeneity of the mature market, it is imperative to segment the market even further. As consumers grow older, they become increasingly dissimilar in terms of needs, lifestyles, and consumption habits [19]. Thus, the apparel line that will be developed cannot and will not aim to appeal to the entire mature market. In an effort to reach and effectively cater to the desired target, the Gerontographics Life-Stages Model proposed by Moschis will be utilized to segment the market.

This model is based on the idea that older adults go through different life stages in late life, which mold their consumption patterns [19]. As they experience different physiological, social, and psychosocial life events, they become more or less receptive to various marketing offerings. Consequently, older adults who go through similar situations in late life are likely to behave in similar ways [19]. Table 5 summarizes the different characteristics of each one of the four segments identified by the Life-Stage model. According to this model's proponent, the two most feasible segments for apparel products are the Ailing Outgoers and the Healthy Hermits, the two most sizable groups.

SEGMENT	DESCRIPTION
Healthy Indulgers	■ Make up 18% of the 55+ population ■ Have experienced the fewest number of life events that contribute to psychological and social aging (e.g. retirement & chronic illnesses) ■ Most likely to behave like younger consumers ■ Financially better off & more settled in their careers than baby boomers ■ Main focus --> enjoying life rather than trying to "make it"
Healthy Hermits	■ Represent *36%* of the mature market ■ Likely to have experienced life events that have affected their self-concept & self-worth (e.g. widowhood) ■ Become socially & psychologically withdrawn ■ Resent isolation & fact that are expected to behave as old people
Ailing Outgoers	■ Account for 29% of the mature market ■ Maintain positive self-esteem and self-concept despite troubling life events health problems) ■ Accept their "old age" status and acknowledge their limitations ■ Are still interested in getting the most out of life
Frail Recluses	■ Make up 17% of today's mature population ■ Like outgoers, are likely to have accepted "old age" status ■ Have adjusted their lifestyles to reflect physical declines & social role ■ In contrast to outgoers – have chosen to cope with detrimental changes by becoming spiritually stronger ■ May have been Healthy Indulgers in the past ■ May have also been Healthy Hermits or Ailing Outgoers (probably not both)

Source: Moschis, George P. (1996), "Life stages of the mature market, "American Demographics, (September), 44-50

Target Market Selection

After reviewing the overall analysis that has been conducted throughout this paper, the following facts were utilized to guide the selection of a target market for the new apparel line: (1) the 6"us age group is the fastest growing age group in the United States; (2) in thepast couple of years, the 65-74 age group has shown stable and homogeneous expenditure patterns for apparel and services; (3) the 65-74 age group spent approximately $13.5 billion on apparel in 1989; (4) there is an upward trend in the 65-74 age group's median income; (5) population projections indicated that older women will outnumber older men-, (6) women are likely to outlive men by four years; (7) women are more fashion-conscious than men; and (8) per capita spending on apparel declines faster among men than women.

After considering the aforementioned facts and the suggestions of the Life-Stages model, a target market was selected for the new apparel line. The target market will consist of: women between the ages of 65-74 that form part of the "Ailing Outgoer" segment. With this target market in mind, the new apparel line will be manufactured to meet the needs of this consumer group, and it will be positioned in a manner that will appeal to this market. Furthermore, an appropriate marketing offering will be developed to effectively reach the target market.

Positioning

Ailing Outgoers are especially interested in finding functional clothing and looking socially acceptable. Thus, the new apparel line will be positioned on apparel functionality (e.g. low neck lines, appropriate fit, etc.) and social acceptability. In other words, even though the new apparel line will have modified features to better meet the biophysical needs of the target market, it will also be fashionable. In addition, the overall idea of shopping for apparel will be positioned as a "social experience."

Marketing Mix Decisions

Product

Based on the various biophysical changes members of the target market undergo, table 6 summarizes the specifications that will be utilized for the Casual Emporium apparel line in order to meet the target market's needs.

Table 6. Casual Emporium apparel manufacturing specifications.

CHANGE	APPAREL FEATURE/MODIFICATION
Curvature of spine – (Dowager's hump)	■ Lower/wider necklines ■ Shirts with wider backs ■ Wider sleeves
Chronic diseases (e.g. arthritis)	■ Use Velcro straps (camouflaged under fashionable finishing) ■ Avoid using small buttons ■ Zippers in the front-side of apparel only ■ Large tabs on zippers
Decrease in Height	■ Petite sizes available ■ Shorter pants/trousers ■ Shorter skirts & dresses
Sagging/wrinkling of skin	■ Mid-length sleeves and long sleeves
Loss in strength & reduced joint mobility	■ Use flexible fabric ■ Do not make fit "too tight" – loose fit ■ Skirts should not be too long (mid-length preferred)
Changing hair/skin tones	■ Avoid using colors that will make person look more pale ■ Use fashionable fabric prints (e.g. floral prints) and bright
Skin thins and dries – becomes more sensitive to rough textures, heat, and cold	■ Comfortable fabrics that are not stiff and do not wrinkle easily ■ Layered outfits for the winter ■ Light-weight fabric for the summer ■ Washable fabric
Waist thickens	■ Semi-elastic waists (pants & skirts) ■ Purely elastic waists (pants and skirts)
Bust line & chest sag	■ Use designs, cuts that will reduce visibility of bust line (e.g. ■ tailored blazers)

These product specifications will serve as guidelines to manufacture the Casual Emporium apparel line. The company's product offering will include a wide assortment of casual clothes, ranging from jeans to tailored suits that are both functional and fashionable. For one, sizes will be wide-ranging and modified to meet the needs of the target market. For example, waistlines will be slightly widened, and all skirt and pant waistlines will be semi-elastic or fully elastic. Given that 90% of all pants purchased by older consumers have fully elastic waists, this should be an attractive feature to the target consumer [31].

In addition, a standard will be set regarding the size of buttons that will be used, as well as the size of the tab that should be used for zippers. In order to determine this standard, research will be conducted with target market members. In addition, select apparel items such as, button-up shirts and blazers will be available with, button, zipper, or Velcro fastenings. Therefore, target market members can still be fashionable while selecting the product that better suits their specific needs. Since Ailing Outgoers expressed a need for social acceptance, this "varying fastening feature" will appeal to them, as they will be able to wear the same prints and designs as their peers. For example, one lady can be wearing the exact same shirt with the same design and pattern as her friend except that hers has a zipper instead of buttons.

In addition, the fabric utilized for the apparel products will be carefully selected for each season. For example, during the winter, pants and skirts will have linings to keep the consumer warm. During the summer, lightweight, twill fabric will be used in order to help the consumer remain "cooled off" during the hot season. Furthermore, fashionable prints and colors will be used. The company will stay away from using any colors that will make the consumer look paler.

It is important to note that, as of now, the company will refrain from creating any type of footwear for the target market. Some great ideas are under consideration but do not seem feasible at this time. Manufacturing footwear at this point in time would be too far- leeching for the Casual Emporium brand, as it will be trying to create brand awareness and OxIluce trial. Once consumers develop a liking for the brand, the company will consider developing a footwear line as a brand extension.

Pride

The Casual Emporium will use a skimming pricing tactic during its introductory phase. Since it will offer numerous sales and discounts to its customers, the apparel items must be highly priced during the launch period. Once consumers have gotten a grasp of Vie initial prices, when select items go "on sale," the lower prices will surpass the customers' just-noticeable-difference threshold, and thus, they will be lured by the "store specials.' Items will continuously be going on sale, and there will be an "on sale" section at al times in retail stores, the company's website, and its catalogs. The "on sale" items at the store will be the same ones featured on the company website. However, the "on sale" items in catalogs will not be the exact same ones featured at the store and website due to the time needed to print catalogs.

Cash and credit cards will be accepted. In addition, the company will offer a store credit card with a low interest rate. In addition, there will be a preferred member program. This will be a "senior discount" type program tied to a purchase-tracking program. This program will resemble the miles programs offered by airlines.

If the consumer decides to become a preferred customer, she will be given a card with a bar code that will be scanned every time she makes a purchase, and she will be awarded a specific number of points for every dollar spent. Once she reaches a certain amount of points, she will receive a discount for any store purchase. In addition, the recorded information will be used for targeted promotions.

Distribution

Existing competitors have focused on direct-mail sales. Casual Emporium, on the other hand, recognizes its target market's need for social contact. Therefore, its distribution strategy involves focusing on retail stores that will provide its consumers with a pleasurable ambience and an opportunity for social contact. With this in mind, Casual Emporium's retail outlets will feature a caf6-style area inside the apparel store. This will allow consumers to enjoy the shopping experience with family and friends rather than just going into the store, purchasing the desired item, and running out.

Since target market members are likely to do grocery shopping, Casual Emporium stores will be located close to supermarkets. In addition, they will be in safe neighborhoods with direct access to public transportation. The first retail stores will be opened in the state of Florida where numerous target market members are likely to reside, and after the initial launch period, stores will be opened throughout the country in strategically selected locations.

Among the convenient features and services that these retail stores will offer are the following: (1) automatic doors, (2) carefully stacked and organized apparel sections, (3) wide aisles, (4) adequate lighting, (5) plain floor patterns and no carpeting, (6) knowledgeable salespeople, (6) assistance in finding items, (7) easy return policies (e.g. pick-up service for returns), (8) special service whereby a salesperson will take the consumers' measurements, enter them into a computer, and hand the customer a print-out of suggested items with their listed prices.

Although the company's focus will be on retail stores, it will not ignore the immense potential of catalog sales and Internet sales. Therefore, the company will mail out a catalog to current and potential customers on a monthly basis and will also set up a website to allow for convenience of purchases. Furthermore, the company will have a 24-hour toll-free numbers to aid consumers aid consumers with adequate apparel selection or simply to provide them with needed information.

Promotion

The Casual Emporium will offer a monthly fashion show in its caf6-style in-store areas where consumers will learn about the store's "latest and greatest." These fashion shows will be held during mid-morning hours, and complementary coffee will be served. The company feels there is a need for these educational-type sessions in order to promote the social acceptance of its new products and innovations to promote positive word-of-mouth.

In addition, "on sale" items, as well as, apparel's varying functional features will be advertised inside the stores via point-of-purchase displays. Furthermore, through the aforementioned preferred customer program, the company will be able to develop a customer database and track each person's purchases. Thus, direct-mail campaigns and coupons will be sent out and customized based on consumers' previous purchases. Furthermore, the company will utilize Sunday newspaper inserts every other week to advertise its "on sale" items.

Evaluation

Measure *of Effectiveness of Marketing Activities*

Needless to say, customer feedback is essential when starting out a business. Measuring customer satisfaction is essential, so when customers are ready to pay for their purchases, they will be asked to fill out a short survey (only with close-ended questions) to evaluate their purchasing experience. For products that are mailed out, the survey card will come inside the package. In addition, after each purchase, customers' data will be entered into a database in order to keep track of their preferences. This system will allow company members to see what medium is most heavily patronized. In addition, it will enable the company to record sales volume.

CONCLUSION

The apparel market for mature consumers holds numerous opportunities. Up to this point in time, most apparel companies have neglected this market and have not yet realized its incredible potential. Those companies that choose to continue to ignore the graying of America by keeping it "on–hold" will suffer the consequences. On the other hand, those companies that carefully analyze this market's needs and tailor apparel products and services to these specific needs will gain a "first-mover" advantage. Given the numerous benefits this market has to offer, apparel manufacturers and retailers should wait no longer. They should "step up to the plate" and realize that the time to act is now.

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