

WHAT A SELECTED GROUP OF WOMEN DESIRES  
IN "SILK" DRESSES

by

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## INTRODUCTION

Certain intrinsic values are sought in the consumption of clothing as in the consumption of other goods. Carver (3) states that the consumer should gain utility, satisfaction or pleasure from the goods which he uses. In precisely what proportion utility or pleasure governs choice is difficult to determine. It is easy to say what he should want as is shown by Carver's (3) definition of Economic Consumption: "Economic Consumption means getting the maximum utility from goods. It includes, of course, choosing useful rather than useless, durable rather than ephemeral, beneficial rather than vicious tastes. If taste is vicious, the more efficiently goods which satisfy them (sic) are produced, the worse it is for society. It is, therefore, fully as important that people should desire the best things as it is that they should use the best methods of production, exchange or distribution." The consumer, however, is influenced somewhat by elements other than the utilitarian. If maximum utility is to be gained from clothing, certain psychological principles must be kept in mind.

It is an inherent characteristic of man to want to adorn himself in some way. During certain periods of history kings and dictators have attempted by sumptuary laws to regulate and suppress clothing excesses. This attempt has met with opposition because man is ever desirous of something new. Rapid changes in fashion among people of the present age are an evidence of this fundamental trait. Desire for the new is evident not only so far as clothing is concerned. There are fads in philosophy, religion, diet and many other fields.

Students of the subject have observed that clothing to be most satisfying must give the wearer a certain amount of prestige among his associates. It is seemingly natural for people to want that which the masses cannot have. Those who are able to indulge themselves are from among the wealthy. Many people whose purchasing power is low seek to emulate this group and place emphasis upon the pecuniary value of clothing. According to Thompson (16) in the two biggest markets, namely, Britain and United States, around \$2,000,000,000 worth of women's raiment became obsolete during the past year. Only a small proportion of the population is directly concerned with this waste, but indirectly the entire population feels the force of it.



During the past few years reduction in income has caused the lowering of expenditures for clothing. Manufacturers realizing this have attempted to imitate the better and more expensive textiles at a much lower cost, thereby in a measure satisfying consumer demand. As a result textiles of poor quality have been placed upon the market. Imitation has been so perfected that the consumer has become confused in the attempt to identify qualities of textiles.

Theories have been advanced for the emphasis placed upon dress by the average consumer. Veblen (18) believes that the greatest influence regulating our choice of dress is that of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure. The theory advanced by Dearborn (6) is that the emphasis placed upon dress is a result of clothes fears. The fear of ridicule, of lack of good taste, and of lack of good judgment are causes of concern when the consumer attempts to make clothing selections. These fears are not always conscious but, no doubt, are the cause for discarding articles of apparel that would otherwise be useful.

The consumer is concerned with maximizing his satisfactions. The producer is primarily concerned with the returns he can realize from goods sold. Industry claims

that consumers wants are being satisfied, as is evident from the volume of purchases made. Andrews (1) states "The economic world is determined by the domestic world in the sense that the retail buyers' continued approval of goods offered by the producer determines the fate of the producer." If there is dissatisfaction on the part of the consumer he himself is responsible, for industry gives him what he wants. Advertisers recognize the importance of the part played by advertisements in the creation of wants, as is indicated by the following statement from Herrold (9): "Create wants which are over and above the true wants of the consumer, new tastes and new demands. Consumers buy for satisfaction, comfort, pleasure, - to satisfy real or fancied wants, although they may not realize their needs until they see the advertisement."

Increased competition among producers has led to the use of labels that are of doubtful value so far as the giving of definite information is concerned. Consumers have realized their inability to recognize qualities, have asked for information, but have been satisfied with the producer's statements that the quality is the "best" or that the article has been "tested". They have not demanded that facts be given them so that they could judge

qualities for themselves. Most of the labels carry little or no guarantee as to quality. This is not fair to retailer or consumer. The withholding of information is to the disadvantage not only of the consumer but likewise of the producer, since it gives the consumer the advantage in claiming adjustment on returned merchandise.

The producer has, however, satisfied some of the consumers' wants in his production of the new and ultra modern in textiles and in fashions. A great variety is offered in every price range. This variety sometimes throws the buyer into a state of confusion when attempting to make a selection, and because a substitute for price as an indication of quality has not been established he buys wastefully and without evaluating quality.

The maladjustment between industry and the ultimate consumer evidences need for consumer education. The advertiser has done much to educate women concerning the purchase of clothing. Advertisers, knowing the wants of women, have worded their advertisements so as to play upon the emotions to such an extent that many times a feeling of inferiority is experienced when selecting clothes because of the inability to buy the "best". A false sophistication has been built up in regard to brands of

dresses. Certain trade names have been given prestige through advertising, and the consumer buys them believing he is obtaining a superior garment. As a rule such garments sell for more than those not bearing such marks of identification. It should be recognized that manufacturers of trade-marked goods are under no compulsion to maintain certain standards of quality.

The producer who has faced over-production has used advertising as a means of moving his stock. He has made women want intensely that which they cannot afford. That the advertising field is becoming aware of the bewilderment and doubt in the minds of consumers was made evident recently when the Association of National Advertisers asked the president of the American Home Economics Association to tell them what home economists think business can do to remove consumer suspicion (14). She told them that they had based their advertising in the past, first, upon practical elements of durability and purity; second, on standards of beauty, social prestige, vanity and snob appeal; last, on fear of social disapproval. She believes that these elements upon which advertising has based its efforts are responsible for the consumers having a definite distrust of all advertising. The suggestion made for

the type of advertising to be used in the future was "an appeal to reason." It can be a definite service to the consumer if it will deal with truth.

Consumers' ignorance of fabric is in itself a proof of the need of education. The transfer of the making of fabric from the home into the factory has lessened women's knowledge of construction of fabric. Science has produced a fiber which has imitated our natural fibers and has put production far beyond the conception of the average consumer. The simple tests which consumers know have become practically useless with our modern fabrics. New finishes, new kinds of fibers, and new methods of combining fibers make identification impossible except by use of chemicals or the microscope, as is stated by O'Brien (12). The manufacturer is not interested in giving quality and durability. This is proved by the following statement of Cox (5): "Products must be developed and made that fill the buyers' desire, or need, with particular stress on color, decoration, and finish, real wear being a minor factor."

The need of consumer education is again brought to mind when considering the serious problem of returned merchandise. According to Boldin (2) four to five billion dollars worth of retail merchandise is returned annually

in the United States. This represents a vast economic waste to both consumers and retailers. Surveys show that the most of this return is in wearing apparel. In an attempt at analyzing the situation it was found that the price paid for the garment was the greatest reason for the returns made. Through the influence of the salesperson and the lack of good judgment on the part of the consumer, a garment is purchased which is beyond the means of the consumer. A realization of this is experienced after the buyer begins to rationalize her choice. If too great a price has been paid the merchandise is returned. Other reasons for returning clothing are inferior quality, workmanship, and fit. The merchandiser surely never hears the complaints made by customers, or he would not say that the consumer is not desirous of facts concerning merchandise which he buys. According to Edwards (8) it is well to recognize that the return of merchandise represents some sort of maladjustment.

There are many evidences of the need for consumer education. The consumer asks of the salespersons various questions such as "Will this waterspot?" "Is this dress pure silk?" "Is this textile heavily weighted?" The salesperson is often unable to give definite information.



Definite information may be given concerning size, color, possibly style, but ignorance of other qualities is shown. The salesperson is more interested in making a sale than in giving information. Many salespersons are hired and retained only if they can meet certain sales quotas set by the merchandiser. The technique of many salespersons is so highly developed and so many buyers are so easily influenced that their resistance is soon overcome and they find themselves possessors of goods that they did not need or could not afford.

As a result of dishonest sales promotion many consumers are becoming skeptical of information given by the merchant. Mack and Cooke (11) in a study found that 47 of 50 clerks misrepresented the amount of weighting present in the fabrics of the dresses. The salesperson is not always responsible for this dishonesty. He has little information to give. Unless the manufacturers pass on to retailers information concerning the product it is impossible for the salesperson to know actual qualities unless he is a technician. Some retailers have met this need by establishing testing laboratories in their stores. On the other hand, some establishments would rather not have the public know what they are offering for sale, their policy

being "Let the buyer beware." Many salespersons are not interested in learning about the goods they sell. Usually when they do become interested, informed, and intelligent they are according to Coles (4) advanced to buyers and the consumer has little contact with them.

This maladjustment between consumer and producer has given impetus to studies of buying problems. The dissatisfaction expressed by many consumers because of their inability to recognize characteristics desired in "silk" fabrics is an important reason for such studies. Attempts to improve buying conditions by means of informative labeling have made it evident that little is known concerning the characteristics that influence consumer demand. Available information gives no basis for determining whether the consumer desires the service qualities recommended by textile specialists or seeks satisfaction not dependent upon these qualities.



## PURPOSE

This study was undertaken (1) to ascertain the extent to which a selected group of women purchased "silk" afternoon dresses ready-made or as yard goods; (2) to study the factors affecting the choice of ready-made and home-constructed "silk" dresses: namely, reasons for choice, qualities desired, extent to which purchases are influenced by informative labeling, difference, if any, in the characteristics of fabrics desired in the two groups of dresses; (3) to ascertain the differences in what is desired by urban and rural women.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Comparatively little work has been done to ascertain the qualities of silk dresses desired by women. None has been reported although several investigations are in progress at the present time. Several studies have been made which relate in some respects to the present one. Results of these are here given.

The study made by Thor (17) relates directly to consumer buying habits when purchasing dresses. The data

were collected from those purchasing silk dresses in an independent department store in Madison, Wisconsin. Observations were made of 200 dress customers, some of the results of which have direct bearing upon the present investigation. It was found that two-fifths of the 200 women stated price when they asked to look at dresses. Ninety-five per cent asked for \$16.75 garments. Twenty-five per cent of the group wanted to be sure the dresses were of the latest style. One-third of the 200 women examined the garments for workmanship. They did not ask for guarantees on garments as to wearing qualities and color fastness. In finding suitable dresses for themselves it was found that 90 per cent specified color and 65 per cent bought the colors which they called for. One-third of the 200 women refused to buy because of unsatisfactory color. Only 8 per cent analyzed lines of the dress in respect to their own figure. Fifty per cent sought the opinions of others when purchasing. Ninety-two per cent of the 49 buyers purchased dresses of the size called for. Fifty per cent of the 55 dresses purchased needed alterations and 80 per cent of altering was done at the store. One-third of those trying on garments objected to altering. Fifty per cent of the sales were lost because none of the dresses appeared to

suit the customers.

Phillips (13) studied consumers' difficulties in choosing and buying clothing and home furnishings for the purpose of formulating practical suggestions for successful living. She found that the consumer experienced difficulty in making a decision. Snobbery and social prestige were causes of great waste in buying. Confusion and inefficiency in buying resulted from lack of cooperation of family members. The consumer's love for bargains, and special sales prices caused a buying problem according to the author. There was evidence of need for consumer information. She believes that the integration of interests between the consumer and the merchant would make for more efficient buying. Many consumer buying problems arise merely from the inability of consumers to adjust themselves to a limited income. She concludes that consumers who do not buy wisely or according to scientific information are increasing waste in buying.

Mack and Cooke (11) studied 50 silk ready-made dresses ranging in price from \$2.98 to \$59.50. They found that clerks misrepresent to the purchasers the amount of weighting present in silk dresses. All the dresses except three contained tin weighting. Further information gained was

that exposure to light was injurious to weighted silks; 58 per cent of fabrics waterspot; shrinkage by laundering was great in weighted silk; dry cleaning caused almost no loss in strength; price was not indicative of color fastness of the silks. They found also that there was no correlation between the salespersons' statements about wearing quality and the actual wearing qualities which were determined.

Another study was made by Dodson (7) concerning qualities of dress fabrics offered for sale during 1935-36. Tests were made according to methods set up by American Society for Testing Materials. It was found that, regardless of fiber, reasonable service may be obtained from the fabric providing it has been manufactured from the yarn to the finished material according to certain standards. The appearance and price of the garment or yard goods are not indicative of serviceability. She concluded that the consumer should know the kind of fiber in the fabric in order that it may be properly cleaned.

In an attempt at finding out whether buyers want quality Mack (10) made a collection of 100 discarded silk dresses. The dresses were collected from women of varying financial status residing in communities of various sizes. A number of reasons were given for discarding these dresses; 66 were

no longer wearable because of splitting, fading, and shrinkage; 25 were discarded because fabric was no longer wearable; 2 fitted poorly; 7 were out of style. The women desired better fabrics, which might allow them to make over the garments or make them into garments for children. The article as reported gives no indication of the amount of service given by the garments before discarding and is therefore of little value to the present study.

Warschauer (19) made a study of the knowledge of salespersons and customers concerning silk flat crepe. The 10 samples judged ranged from cheapest rayon crepe to the most expensive pure-dye silk. The information was gained from 8 department stores of New York City. One hundred-seven salespersons and 47 customers examined the materials and answered questionnaires. She found that neither salespersons nor customers had a high degree of technical information about fabrics. She also found that customers' knowledge of qualities of fabrics compared favorably with knowledge of salespersons. It was found that salespersons needed particular training in the following: distinguishing silk from rayon, recognition of weighted silk, recognition of acetate rayon, realization of the importance of balanced count of yarn in fabric to prevent slippage and poor wear. The investigator realized

that she did not gain conclusive evidence because of the small number of observations made.

#### METHOD OF PROCEDURE

A questionnaire was prepared dealing with the extent to which "silk"<sup>1</sup> dresses are purchased as yard goods or ready-made, the reasons for the means chosen, and the qualities desired by consumers in "silk" dresses. The questionnaire was given a preliminary try-out with a group of 25 women. Corrections and additions were made to clarify it before copies were made for collecting data. A copy of the questionnaire will be found in the Appendix, page (65).

The corrected questionnaire was presented by the investigator to 400 Kansas women. Two hundred were presented to rural women at a mass meeting during the 1936 Farm and Home Week at Kansas State College. Information was gained from the urban women by the investigator, who met with various Kansas club groups in Osage City, Chapman, Salina, Eskridge, Topeka and Manhattan, Kansas.

It seemed desirable to have certain information con-

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1. The term "silk" when it appears in quotation marks refers to silk materials as well as to those commonly called silk.

cerning the group questioned. The marital status, size of family, age and occupation will influence the purchase of "silk" dresses. This information appears in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Marital Status, Median Age, Average Size of Family, and Occupation Compared for 200 Rural and 200 Urban Women from Whom Data Were Secured.

	Rural Women	Urban Women
Percentage married	88.5	57.0
Median age	40	35
Average size of family	3.7	3.2
Percentage housewives	89.0	65.0
Percentage other occupations	11.0	35.0

Table 2. Occupations of 200 Rural and 200 Urban Women from Whom Data Were Secured, Expressed in Numbers and Percentages.

	Rural Women		Urban Women	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Housewives	169	89.0	130	65.0
Farmers	20	11.0	1	0.5
Teachers			19	9.5
Business			15	7.5
Secretaries			17	8.5
Home Demonstration Agents			9	4.5
Nurse			3	1.5
Bookkeeper			2	1.0
Salesperson			1	0.5
Administrator			1	0.5
Merchant			2	1.0



There has been much discussion concerning the questionnaire method of securing information. Questions have been raised as to the value and reliability of information thus secured. One criticism set forth by the public is that it is too time-consuming. Another criticism offered is that questionnaires have been sent asking for information which was available or could have been obtained otherwise. In collecting data for study it is recognized that the questionnaire method cannot be depended upon entirely because a large percentage of the questionnaires are often unanswered.

The Research Bulletin of the National Education Association (15) upholds the questionnaire method of securing data. The report states that it is the only method of securing certain kinds of information. The abuse of the method by inexperienced and untrained people is responsible for condemnation. The abuse should be condemned rather than the method. Realizing this abuse, the Association has set up requirements which they believe a questionnaire should meet. These are:



1. A minimum of writing should be required, the answer preferably expressed by yes or no. Check marks, underlining, or encircling are other quick methods.
2. Response should lend itself to tabulation.
3. Simply and clearly worded questions are essential.
4. A preliminary try-out will avoid unnecessary questions.
5. The purpose of the investigator should be clearly stated upon the questionnaire.
6. The questions should be objective.
7. A short questionnaire stands a better chance of being answered than a long one.
8. The questionnaire should deal with matter of fact.
9. The respondent should be willing and capable of giving desired information.
10. It should meet standards of mechanical form: that is, form should be written in a business manner, legible, neat, and convenient for checking.

The information obtained in this study was tabulated upon large check sheets, a portion of which is shown in Figure 1. From these check sheets summaries were made. This information is presented in tables and charts which follow.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
1	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	B							✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓						✓			✓
	C											✓													
2	A	✓		✓		✓			✓				✓			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	B	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	C												✓												
	D					✓							✓	✓					✓	✓					
	E		✓				✓				✓				✓										
	F							✓	✓											✓					
	G																			✓					
	H																			✓					
3		6	4	2	2	2	2	1				4	6	1	3	4	0	2	3	4	4		3	5	3
4	A							✓		✓							✓	✓			✓				
	B						✓			✓			✓												✓
	C												✓				✓								✓
	D																								
	E	✓																							
	F																								
	G	✓						✓	✓		✓		✓					✓							
	H						✓	✓		✓		✓					✓							✓	
5		1	1	0			1						2	6		1	0			0	2		1		
6	A			✓	✓			✓			✓				✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	B	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓									✓
7	A				✓																				
	B	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Fig. 1. A part of a check sheet showing the method of tabulating questionnaires. The numbers and letters at the left correspond to those of the questions. The numbers at the top refer to the number given each questionnaire.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The most common method of securing "silk" dresses among the 400 women questioned was to purchase them ready-made, as is shown in Table 3. Of those answering the questionnaire, 68.1 per cent bought "silk" dresses ready-made. Among the 200 rural women, 64.6 per cent purchased "silk" dresses ready-to-wear; among the 200 urban women, 71.7 per cent. Rural women depend upon home construction to a greater extent than urban women. Of those giving information 31.1 per cent of rural women made "silk" dresses for themselves; among urban women but 21.9 per cent. The percentage of "silk" dresses made by dress-makers was comparatively small: 4.3 per cent for rural women and 6.4 per cent for urban.

### Number of Dresses Purchased During Year

A comparison of the number of "silk" dresses purchased within the last 12 months by rural and urban women shows that rural women purchased on the average 2.0 "silk" dresses and urban women 2.9. The average for the entire 400 women was 2.5. A comparatively large number in both

Table 3. Ready-made Compared with Home Constructed "Silk" Dresses as Regards Individual Satisfaction in Purchasing and the Number within Each Class Purchased in the Last 12 Months by 200 Rural and 200 Urban Women, Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

	Rural Women		Urban Women	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Most satisfactory method of securing "silk" dresses:				
Ready-made	135	64.6	157	71.7
Made by self	65	31.1	48	21.9
Made by dressmaker	9	4.3	14	6.4
	Total- <u>209</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>219</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Number ready-made "silk" dresses purchased in last 12 months:				
0	74	37.0	39	19.5
1	52	26.0	41	20.5
2	48	24.0	45	22.5
3	13	6.5	35	17.5
4	8	4.0	20	10.0
5	2	1.0	10	5.0
6	2	1.0	8	4.0
8	1	0.5	2	1.0
	Total- <u>200</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Number "silk" dresses purchased as yard in the last 12 months:				
0	110	55.0	124	62.0
1	43	21.5	37	18.5
2	32	16.0	24	12.0
3	10	5.0	4	2.0
4	1	0.5	3	1.5
5	1	0.5	2	1.0
6	3	1.5	6	3.0
	Total- <u>200</u>	<u>100.5</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>100.0</u>

groups made no purchases during the year. This applies to more than one-third of the rural women and to approximately one-fifth of the urban.

The number of dresses purchased by individual women ranged from 1 to 8. Information regarding this fact when prepared in the form of a frequency table shows that the largest group of rural women purchased but one dress per year, and that the largest number of urban women bought 2 dresses as is shown in Table 3. It must be recognized that knitted and woolen dresses were popular during the past 12 months. This fact may have affected the purchase of "silk" dresses. The difference in the average number purchased by rural and urban women may be partially explained by the fact that in the urban group 35 per cent were engaged in other occupations than homemaking, as is shown in Table 1. Among these were business women, secretaries, school teachers, and salespersons, all of whom would probably use a larger number of street dresses than the homemaker. No attempt was made to determine the income of those answering the questionnaire; hence the difference in the purchases of the two groups cannot be explained on the basis of income. The median age of rural women was 5 years older than of urban. There were 31.5

per cent more married women in the rural group than in the urban, and the rural group had a somewhat higher average size of family. These factors might all influence the number of "silk" dresses purchased during the year.

The data concerning number of dresses constructed at home show that 55 per cent of rural women and 62 per cent of urban women had no home constructed-dresses in the past 12 months. Twenty-five and five-tenths per cent of rural and 18.5 per cent of urban women had one home-constructed "silk" dress in the past year. A small percentage in both groups of women constructed more than one dress at home, as is shown in Table 3.

Table 4 and Figure 2 show various reasons given by rural and urban women for purchasing ready-made "silk" dresses. Urban women gave as the three most important reasons; saves time, more distinctive style, and unable to fit self. The rural group gave: saves time, more distinctive style, and could secure more satisfactory material, as reasons for purchasing ready-made "silk" dresses.

The most important reasons given by both groups for home constructing "silk" dresses were, less expensive, ability to secure fabrics of better quality, and better fit of garment, according to Figure 3.

Table 4. Reasons Given by 200 Rural and 200 Urban Women for Purchasing "Silk" Dresses Ready-made or as Yard Goods, Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

	Rural Women		Urban Women	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Important reasons for purchasing "silk" dresses ready-made.				
(2 reasons checked by each)				
Saves time	105	25.5	112	30.5
More distinctive style	98	23.6	108	29.5
Secure more satisfactory material	89	21.5	12	3.5
Dislike to construct	17	4.0	30	8.1
Unable to sew	7	1.8	31	8.4
Unable to fit self	49	11.8	49	13.3
Unable to predict becomingness	32	7.8	23	6.2
Other reasons	18	4.0	2	0.3
Total -	<u>415</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>367</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Important reasons for constructing "silk" dresses.				
(2 reasons checked by each)				
Less expensive	61	24.6	55	28.0
Better fit	44	17.8	35	17.8
Desire for individuality	26	10.5	27	13.8
Poor selection of ready-made	10	4.0	4	2.6
Like to sew	23	9.7	14	7.1
Can secure fabric of better design	25	10.0	14	7.1
Can secure fabric of better quality	56	22.2	46	23.0
Other reasons	3	1.2	1	0.6
Total -	<u>248</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>196</u>	<u>100.0</u>



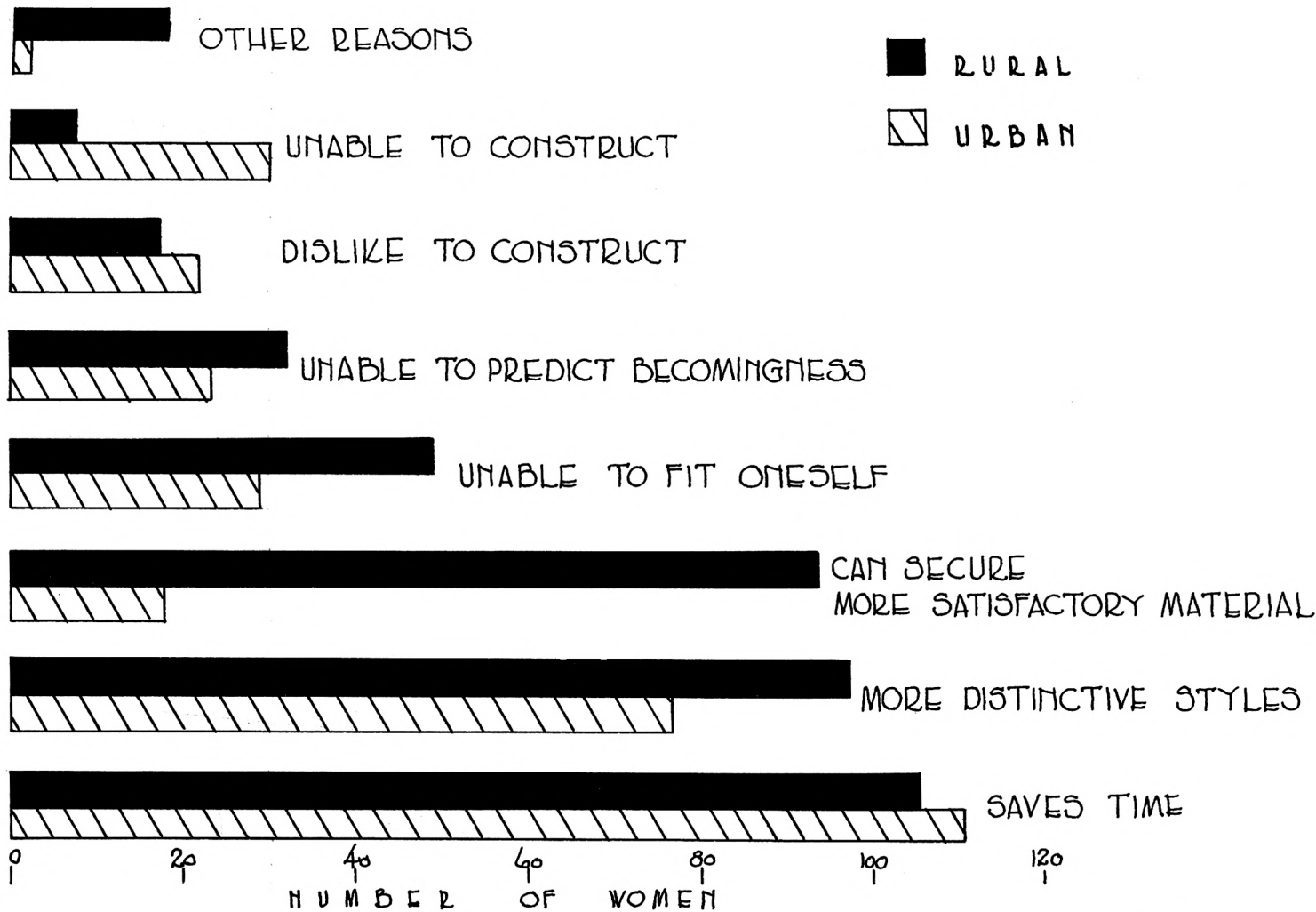


FIG.2. REASONS GIVEN BY RURAL AND URBAN WOMEN FOR PURCHASING "SILK" DRESSES READY-MADE.



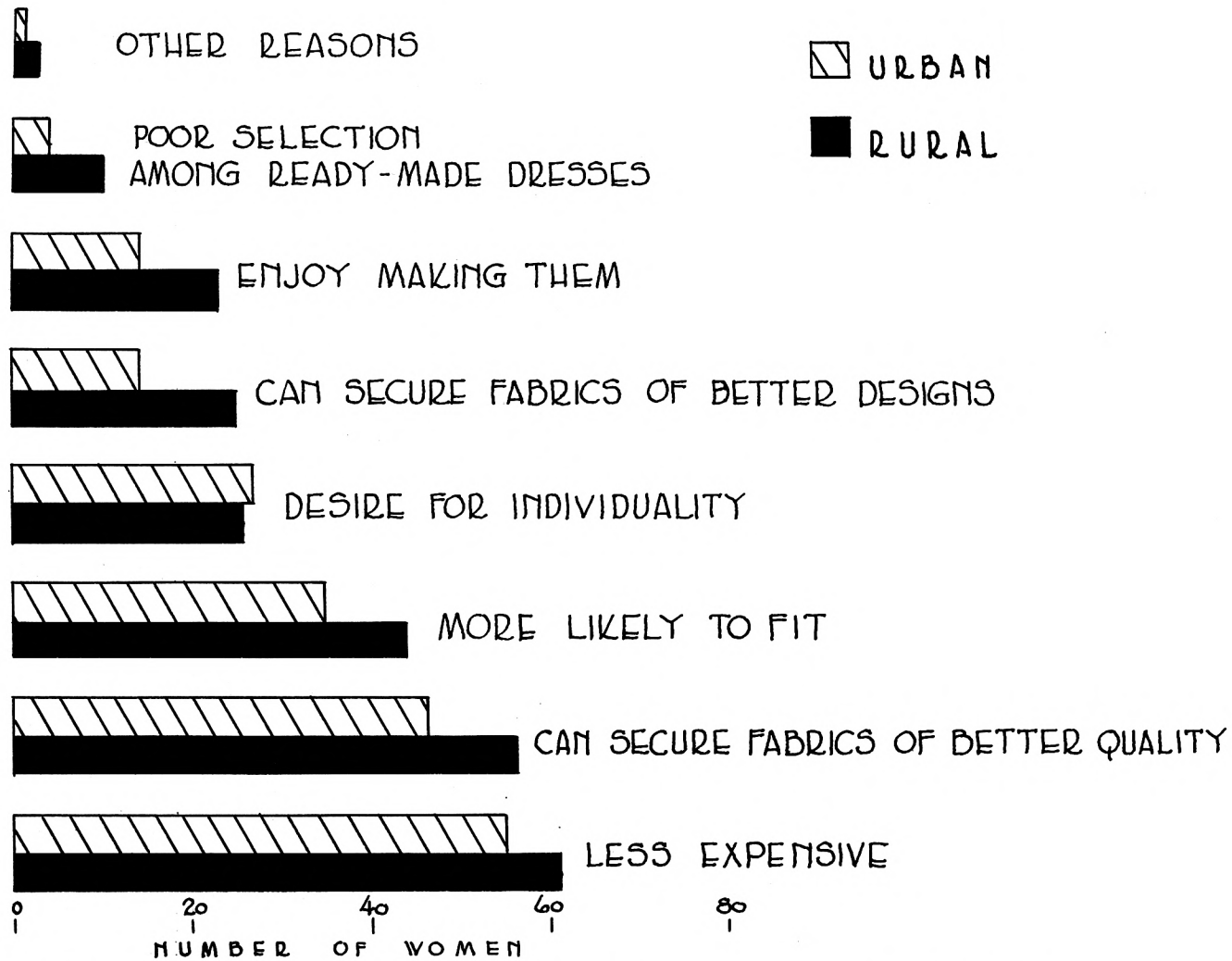


FIG.3. REASONS GIVEN BY RURAL AND URBAN WOMEN FOR CONSTRUCTING "SILK" DRESSES AT HOME.

### Factors Affecting Purchase of "Silk" dresses

Ninety-five and nine-tenths per cent of the rural women and 92.2 per cent of urban women buy all-purpose "silk" dresses, as is shown in Table 5. Fifty-two and nine-tenths per cent of rural women prefer durability to style in "silk" dresses. Urban women are more concerned with the style than durability of ready-made "silk" dresses, as was indicated by the answers of 64 per cent. There was reason for this preference when it was found that 78 per cent rural women desire a fabric durable enough to be made over. Only 56.6 per cent of urban women are concerned with making over a "silk" dress. According to data secured 61 per cent of rural women and 63.8 per cent of urban women desired ready-made "silk" dresses to wear 2 seasons. Fourteen and five-tenths per cent of rural and 20.6 per cent of urban women desired a "silk" dress to wear for 3 seasons. Since urban women pay more for their "silk" dresses it may be that they are desirous that these dresses wear for a slightly longer time, and it is possible that they wear "silk" more frequently than rural women.

Other factors affecting women's choice of "silk" ready-made dresses are alterations, price, trimming, ac-

Table 5. Certain Factors Affecting the Purchase of Ready-made "Silk" Dresses as Reported by 200 Rural and 200 Urban Women, Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

	Rural Women		Urban Women	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
What type of a dress do you most often buy?				
Dress for special occasion	8	4.1	15	7.8
All purpose dress	186	95.9	178	92.2
Total -	194	100.0	193	100.0
Which factor do you consider most important in selecting a "silk" dress?				
Style	99	47.1	122	64.0
Durability	111	52.9	66	36.0
Total -	210	100.0	188	100.0
Do you refuse to buy a garment which must be altered?				
Slightly				
Yes	33	19.3	19	15.0
No	157	82.7	108	85.0
Total -	190	100.0	127	100.0
Extensively				
Yes	106	77.9	57	60.6
No	30	22.1	34	39.4
Total -	136	100.0	91	100.0
Do you desire the fabric to be durable enough to be made over?				
Yes	146	78.0	105	56.6
No	40	22.0	80	43.4
Total -	186	100.0	185	100.0

Table 5. (cont'd)

	Rural Women		Urban Women		
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	
How many seasons do you expect a "silk" dress to wear?	(1)	17	8.5	9	4.5
	(2)	122	61.0	127	63.8
	(3)	29	14.5	41	20.6
	(4)	19	9.5	15	7.6
	More	13	6.5	7	3.5
	Total -	200	100.0	199	100.0
Does combination of two or more fabrics in a dress lead you to decide against its choice?					
When trimming fabric is fragile	Yes	169	91.3	159	85.0
	No	16	8.7	28	15.0
	Total -	185	100.0	187	100.0
When its of poor quality	Yes	178	98.4	177	96.7
	No	3	1.6	6	3.3
	Total -	181	100.0	183	100.0
When light in color and not detachable	Yes	170	93.4	157	88.2
	No	12	6.6	21	11.8
	Total -	182	100.0	178	100.0
When its not in keeping with the fabric of the dress	Yes	176	98.9	175	97.2
	No	2	1.1	5	2.8
	Total -	178	100.0	180	100.0

Table 5. (cont'd)

	Rural Women		Urban Women	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Do you purchase dresses on which trimming accessories are:				
Of quality to improve appearance of the dress?				
Yes	183	97.3	184	97.9
No	5	2.7	4	2.1
Total-	<u>188</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>188</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Of inferior quality to dress?				
Yes	12	8.8	29	19.7
No	125	91.2	118	80.3
Total-	<u>137</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>147</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Will inferior trimming accessories prevent you buying dress?				
Yes	168	91.9	149	79.7
No	17	8.1	38	20.3
Total-	<u>185</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>187</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Will the beauty of trimming accessories lead you to choose a particular dress?				
Yes	119	65.4	139	77.7
No	63	34.6	45	22.3
Total-	<u>182</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>184</u>	<u>100.0</u>

cessories, and construction of the garment. As is shown in Table 3 both groups of women recognize that individual differences in body proportions will make necessary alterations of ready-to-wear garments. However, there must be offered a satisfactory range of standard sizes in garments, since 77.9 per cent of rural women and 60.6 per cent of urban women will refuse to buy if the dress must be altered extensively.

Trimming accessories play a most important part in selection of ready-made "silk" dresses. Ninety-one and nine-tenths per cent of rural women and 79.7 per cent of urban women will not buy dresses on which are found trimming accessories of inferior quality. Both groups desire trimming accessories of a quality to improve the appearance of the dress. This substantiates the claim that during this period of depression many women have depended upon trimming accessories for improvement of the quality of dress. So great was the importance of trimming accessories that 65.4 per cent of rural women and 77.7 per cent of urban women will buy a "silk" dress because of the beauty of the trimming accessories. However, these accessories must be in keeping with the dress. Both groups refuse to buy "silk" dresses with light color trimming

fabrics permanently attached to the dress as is shown in Table 5.

#### Price of Purchase

Table 6 and Figure 4 give the range of prices paid by rural and urban women for ready-made "silk" dresses. Urban women most frequently bought dresses priced at \$10.95 and \$16.95, rural women bought dresses priced at \$7.50 and \$10.95. Both groups purchase ready-made "silk" dresses at sale prices. As is shown in Table 6, 27.6 per cent of rural women frequently purchased "silk" dresses at sales, 47.7 per cent occasionally, 14.4 per cent seldom, and 6.7 per cent never purchase at sales. Urban women show that their buying practices are similar to those of rural women, 53 per cent frequently, 97 per cent occasionally, and 37 per cent never purchase "silk" dresses at special sales prices.

#### Standards of Dress Construction

In making a choice of "silk" ready-made dresses both rural and urban women desired somewhat the same standards of dress construction, as is indicated in Table 7. Rural women desire inside seams satisfactorily finished, but

Table 6. Prices Most Often Paid for Ready-made "Silk" Dresses by 200 Rural and 200 Urban Women, and the Extent to which Sale Price Influences Purchase, Expressed in Numbers and Percentages.

	Rural Women		Urban Women	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
At what two prices do you most often purchase "silk" dresses?				
\$ 7.50	101	38.0	76	24.9
10.95	97	36.2	103	33.8
16.95	47	17.5	93	30.5
22.50	12	4.5	27	8.9
29.75	9	3.9	5	1.6
35.00	2	0.8	1	0.3
(Over)	0		0	
	Total - <u>268</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>305</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Do you purchase ready-made "silk" dresses at special sale price?				
a - Always	7	3.6	2	1.0
b - Frequently	54	27.6	53	25.9
c - Occasionally	93	47.7	97	47.3
d - Seldom	28	14.4	37	18.0
e - Never	13	6.7	16	7.8
	Total - <u>195</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>205</u>	<u>100.0</u>



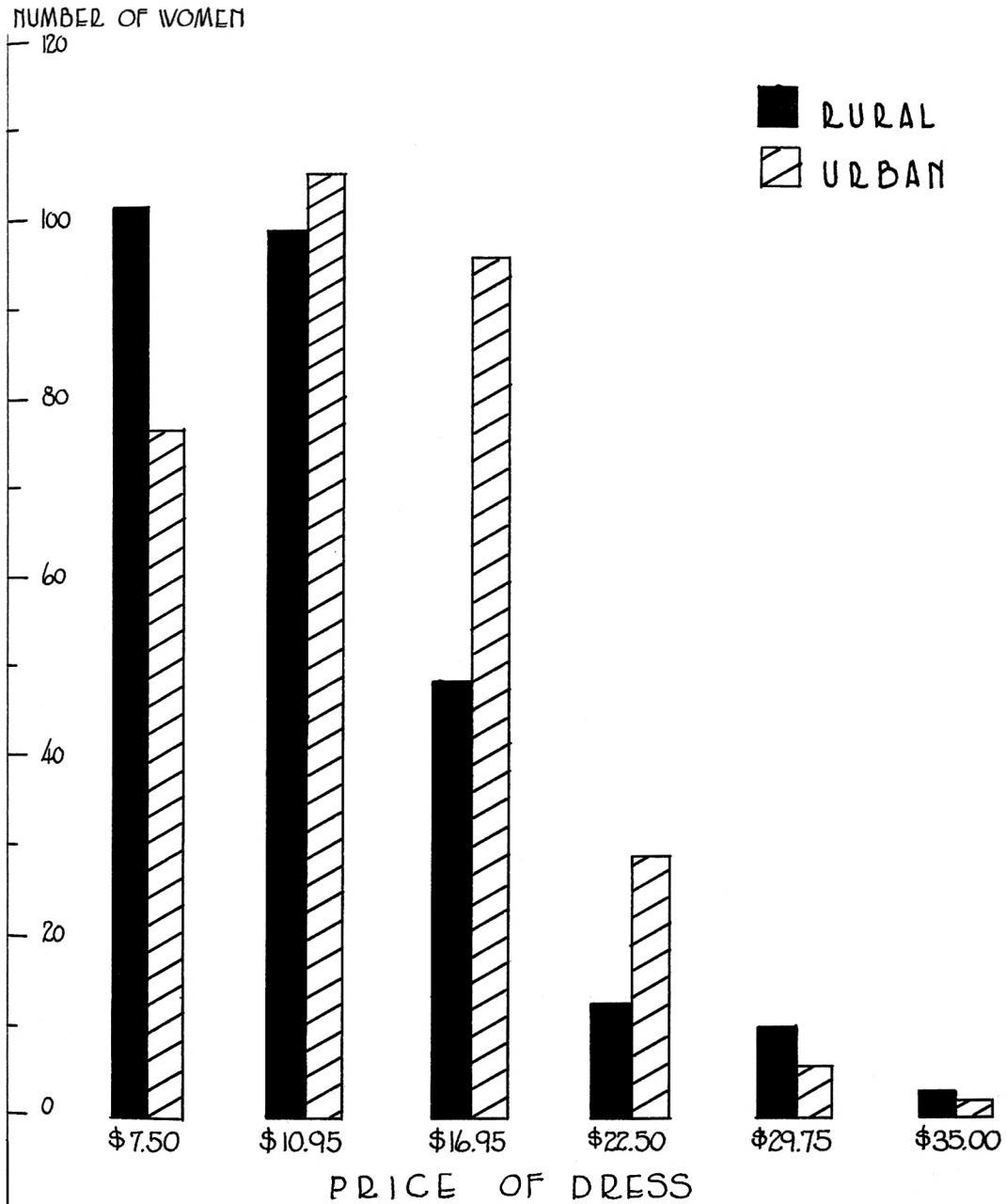


FIG.4. NUMBER OF RURAL AND URBAN WOMEN PURCHASING "SILK" DRESSES AT VARIOUS PRICES.

urban women are not so particular, since 58.9 per cent do not insist upon it. Straight outside stitching is desired by 87.6 per cent of rural women and 77.7 per cent of urban women. A slight preference was given to the use of silk thread by rural women, 58.5 per cent of whom insist upon it. Fifty-two per cent of urban women did not insist upon finding silk sewing thread used. A greater percentage of both groups insisted that small stitches suitable to the texture of the fabric be used. Sixty-two and five tenths per cent of rural women insisted upon hand stitching for edge finishes compared to 56.1 per cent of urban women.

Ample allowance for alterations was also in greater demand by rural women, as shown by a comparison of replies given in Table 7. Ninety-five and four-tenths per cent of rural women and 79.4 per cent of urban women indicate a desire for ample allowances for alteration. The lower price paid for "silk" dresses by rural women as indicated in Table 6 would necessitate greater allowance for alteration since many of the dresses would probably shrink excessively in dry cleaning or laundering.

Both groups are desirous that garment pieces be cut the right way of the material. According to these sta-

Table 7. Standards of Dress Construction Desired by 200 Rural and 200 Urban Women, Expressed in Numbers and Percentages.

Do you insist upon finding the following in ready-made dresses:		Rural Women		Urban Women	
		<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Inside seams finished?	Yes	110	63.9	75	41.1
	No	62	36.1	105	58.9
	Total -	<u>172</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>180</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Straight outside stitching?	Yes	114	87.6	133	49.0
	No	16	12.4	88	51.0
	Total -	<u>130</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>221</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Use of silk sewing thread?	Yes	96	58.5	80	48.0
	No	68	41.5	85	52.0
	Total -	<u>164</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>165</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Small stitches in relation to texture of the fabric?	Yes	129	78.2	109	66.9
	No	36	21.8	54	33.1
	Total -	<u>165</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>163</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Hand stitching for edge finishes?	Yes	100	62.5	68	43.9
	No	60	37.5	87	56.1
	Total -	<u>160</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>155</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Ample allowance for alteration?	Yes	169	95.4	140	79.4
	No	8	4.6	36	20.6
	Total -	<u>177</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>176</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Pieces cut the right way of the material?	Yes	165	95.3	134	74.9
	No	8	4.7	45	25.1
	Total -	<u>173</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>179</u>	<u>100.0</u>

tistice it might be said that rural women have set higher standards for construction than urban women. This might be explained by the fact that many in this rural group have had some training in clothing construction through the Extension Division and may be placing greater emphasis upon construction details than upon design.

#### Salesperson's Influence

The urban woman evidently feels unable to make her own choices in purchasing ready-made "silk" dresses, as is indicated in Table 8. Sixty-four and two-tenths per cent of women giving information depend upon the judgment of the salesperson as to becomingness of style, 66.7 per cent as to quality of material, and 53.6 per cent are influenced in their purchase by the statement of the clerk as to special price. Urban women are not as much influenced by remarks concerning latest style since only 44.6 per cent depend upon salesperson information in this regard. The rural woman does not as readily accept the statement of the salesperson as is indicated in Table 8. Seventy-four and six-tenths per cent are not influenced by statements concerning latest style and 51.3 per cent are not influenced by remarks concerning special price. Seventy-

Table 8. The Extent to Which the Salesperson Influences Choice in the Purchase of "Silk" Ready-made Dresses, Compared for 200 Rural and 200 Urban Women, Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

Are you influenced to buy a "silk" dress by the favorable remarks of salesperson concerning:		Rural Woman		Urban Women	
		<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Latest style?	Yes	41	25.4	96	44.6
	No	121	74.6	119	55.4
	Total -	<u>162</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>215</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Becoming style?	Yes	123	71.5	115	64.2
	No	49	28.5	64	35.8
	Total -	<u>172</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>179</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Quality of material?	Yes	137	76.9	125	66.7
	No	41	23.1	62	33.3
	Total -	<u>178</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>187</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Special price?	Yes	81	48.7	88	53.6
	No	85	51.3	78	46.4
	Total -	<u>166</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>166</u>	<u>100.0</u>

one and five-tenths per cent are dependent upon the salesperson for her judgment concerning the becomingness of style and 76.9 per cent for her judgment as to quality of material. It is possible that the high percentage of rural women not influenced by statements of the salesperson concerning style may be accounted for by the fact that they are less interested in style than in durability, as is indicated in Table 5.

If consumers are so largely dependent upon salespersons for most of their information it would seem that salespersons should be better informed. Warschauer (19) found that clerks know little more than consumers concerning qualities of materials.

A majority of rural women, according to Table 9, were most satisfactorily fitted in women's sizes, which varied from 34 to 46. The urban women were best fitted in misses' sizes, which ranged from 12 to 20. The majority of both groups do not experience serious difficulty in finding suitable styles in their sizes. Forty-one and five-tenths per cent of rural women declared that they had difficulty in finding suitable styles, and 34.4 per cent of urban women experienced this difficulty. The median number of women of the rural group wore size 38; of the urban group,

Table 9. Size Range within Which 200 Rural and 200 Urban Women Are Most Satisfactorily Fitted, and Extent to Which Each Group Had Difficulty in Finding Satisfactory Style in the Size Needed, Expressed in Numbers and Percentages.

		Rural Women		Urban Women	
		Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
In which classification of size are you most satisfactorily fitted?					
Misses sizes	(12-20)	55	27.8	92	46.9
Women sizes	(34-46)	101	57.0	65	33.2
Half-sizes	(16 $\frac{1}{2}$ -24 $\frac{1}{2}$ )	32	16.2	36	18.4
"Stouts"	(48-56)	10	5.0	3	1.5
Total -		198	100.0	196	100.0
Do you have difficulty in finding suitable styles in your size?					
Yes		79	41.5	66	34.4
No		109	58.5	126	65.6
Total -		188	100.0	192	100.0
What size of a "silk" dress do you purchase?					
Misses sizes	12	1		4	
	14	7		25	
	16	30		43	
	18	24		34	
Women sizes	38	45		27	
	40	7		7	
	42	16		6	
	44	11		3	
	46	9		3	
	48	4		0	
"Stout" sizes	48	4		0	
	16 $\frac{1}{2}$	7		6	
	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	0		1	
	20 $\frac{1}{2}$	7		0	
	22 $\frac{1}{2}$	0		4	
Half-sizes	24 $\frac{1}{2}$	1		0	
	Total -	165		163	



size 16. This difference can be partially explained by the fact that on the average the rural women were 5 years older than the urban women. It is an established fact that with added years weight may increase.

#### Selection of "Silk" Dress Fabrics

Table 10 and Figure 5 show the range of prices paid for "silk" fabric. The two prices most commonly paid by both groups of women was \$1.00 and \$1.50. Thirty-eight and four-tenths per cent of the rural group purchased fabric priced at \$1.00, 23.7 per cent at \$1.50, and 21.9 per cent at \$1.79. Of the urban women, 31 per cent bought material priced at \$1.00, 29.8 per cent at \$1.50, and 21.5 per cent at \$1.95.

The rural group desire that "silk" fabric which they make into dresses be durable enough to be made over, as is expressed by 83.4 per cent of the women. Only 62.9 per cent of the urban group are concerned with making over a garment. The number of seasons' wear demanded by both groups is approximately the same. Slightly over one-half of each group desire "silk" fabric to wear 2 seasons. Approximately 25 per cent of both groups desire "silk" fabric to wear 3 seasons. A season was defined as spring

Table 10. Factors Affecting the Purchase of "Silk" Dress Fabrics as Reported by 200 Rural and 200 Urban Women, Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

		Rural Women		Urban Women		
		Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	
Will you purchase "silk" dress fabrics which you recognize to be weighted?	Yes	62	40.3	51	32.2	
	No	92	59.7	107	67.8	
	Total -	<u>154</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>158</u>	<u>100.0</u>	
Do you accept rayon fabric interchangeably with pure-dye silk?	Yes	46	30.9	44	27.2	
	No	103	69.1	118	72.8	
	Total -	<u>149</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>162</u>	<u>100.0</u>	
Upon what authority do you accept fabric as rayon or silk?	Salesperson	47	21.0	57	26.5	
	Label	62	27.8	66	30.7	
	Your knowledge of fabrics	85	38.2	77	35.8	
	Test made of fabric	29	13.0	15	7.0	
	Total -	<u>223</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>215</u>	<u>100.0</u>	
Do you refuse to purchase a dress fabric labeled rayon?	Yes	53	30.5	59	26.1	
	No	121	69.5	168	73.9	
	Total -	<u>174</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>227</u>	<u>100.0</u>	
In selecting a "silk" dress fabric is your choice influenced by:	Fashionable weave?	Yes	115	81.0	121	75.7
		No	27	19.0	39	24.3
		Total -	<u>142</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>160</u>	<u>100.0</u>
	Fashionable color?	Yes	95	64.6	112	73.1
		No	52	35.4	40	26.9
Total -	<u>147</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>152</u>	<u>100.0</u>		

Table 10. (cont'd)

	Rural Women		Urban Women	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Do you desire "silk" dress fabric durable enough for making over?				
Yes	145	83.4	105	62.9
No	29	16.6	62	37.1
Total	- 174	100.0	167	100.0
How many seasons do you expect "silk" fabric to wear?				
(1)	11	6.4	12	6.6
(2)	97	56.0	100	55.5
(3)	44	25.4	42	23.4
(4)	15	8.7	19	10.6
More	6	3.5	7	3.9
Total	- 173	100.0	180	100.0
Do you desire "silk" dress fabric that will:				
Dry clean?				
Yes	142	97.9	160	100.0
No	3	2.1	0	0.0
Total	- 145	100.0	160	100.0
Launder?				
Yes	122	93.1	104	78.7
No	9	6.9	28	21.3
Total	- 131	100.0	132	100.0
At what two prices do you most often purchase "silk" dress fabrics?				
\$0.79	48	21.9	31	12.8
1.00	84	38.4	75	31.0
1.50	52	23.7	72	29.8
1.95	23	10.5	52	21.5
2.95	9	4.1	8	3.3
3.50	2	0.9	2	0.8
More	1	0.5	2	0.8
Total	- 219	100.0	242	100.0

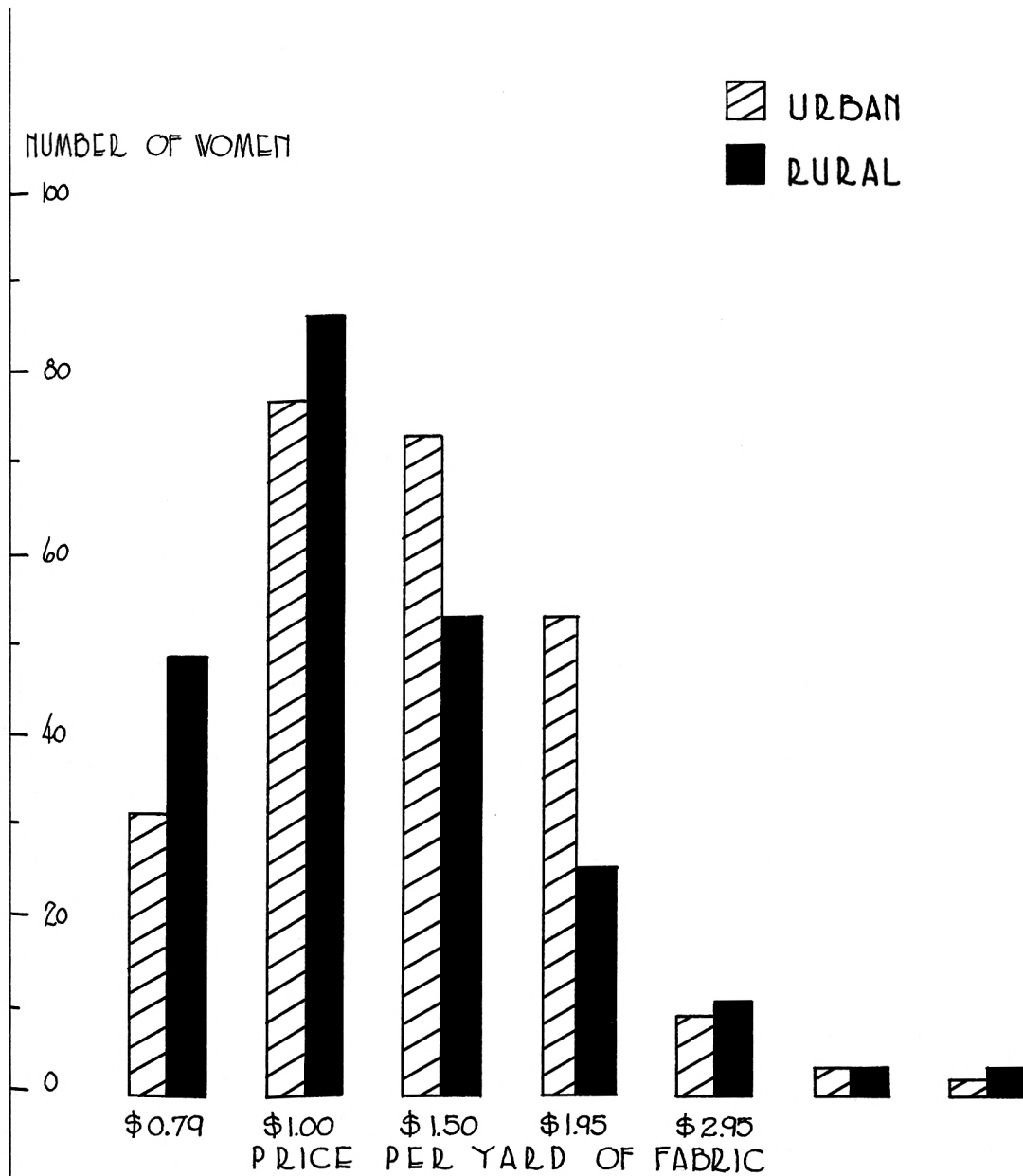


FIG. 5. NUMBER OF RURAL AND URBAN WOMEN PURCHASING "SILK" DRESSES AT VARIOUS PRICES PER YARD.

through summer, and fall through winter.

In selection of "silk" fabrics it was found that fashionable weave and fashionable color greatly influences the choice of fabric, as is reported in Table 10.

Both groups are most desirous that "silk" dress fabrics which they buy withstand dry cleaning. Ninety-three and one-tenth per cent of the rural women would like to buy fabric which would withstand laundering and 78.7 per cent of the urban group desire this satisfaction. Fifty-nine and seven-tenths of rural women and 67.8 per cent of urban women will not purchase "silk" dress fabric which they recognize to be weighted. According to Table 11, 58.1 per cent of rural women and 67.8 per cent of urban women cannot always recognize weighted silks. The investigator doubts this ability. Sixty-nine and one-tenth per cent of rural women will not knowingly accept rayon interchangeably with pure-dye "silk" fabric. More urban women desire pure-dye "silk" than rural since 75.8 per cent will not accept rayon for "silk". Both groups depend largely upon their own knowledge concerning fabric for the identification of rayon. The two groups, however, will not refuse to buy rayon fabric providing that it carries a rayon label. This is information given by 69.1 per

Table 11. Extent to Which Purchasers Are Able to Recognize the Content of Fabric Sold as Silk, Based upon the Replies of 200 Rural and 200 Urban Women, Expressed in Numbers and Percentages.

		<u>Rural Women</u>		<u>Urban Women</u>	
		<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Are you always able to recognize:					
Pure silk?	Yes	53	30.6	51	28.5
	No	120	69.4	121	71.5
	Total -	<u>173</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>172</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Weighted silk?	Yes	65	41.9	50	32.2
	No	90	58.1	105	67.8
	Total -	<u>155</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>155</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Silk and rayon mixture?	Yes	96	60.7	89	52.9
	No	62	39.3	79	47.1
	Total -	<u>158</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>168</u>	<u>100.0</u>
All rayon?	Yes	109	69.0	98	61.3
	No	49	31.0	62	38.7
	Total -	<u>158</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>160</u>	<u>100.0</u>

cent of rural women and 72.8 per cent of urban women.

In making purchases of "silk" dress fabric 38.2 per cent of rural women depend upon their own knowledge in their decision as to whether the fabric is silk or rayon. Twenty-seven and eight-tenths per cent depend upon the label and 21.0 per cent upon information given by the salesperson. In the urban group 35.8 per cent are dependent upon their own knowledge of fabric, 30.7 per cent upon the label, and 26.5 per cent upon the salesperson's information concerning the fabrics.

Table 11 reveals that according to their own statement, 69.4 per cent of the rural women were unable to recognize pure-dye "silk" compared to 71.5 per cent of the urban group who recognize their inability to identify silk. However, they believe they can detect silk and rayon mixtures. Also 69 per cent of rural women and 61.3 per cent of urban women think they are able to detect all rayon fabrics. These are rather contradictory statements, probably the only explanation being that a large number of consumers believe all rayon fabrics to be those which are highly lustrous, as was characteristic of rayon fabrics produced some years ago.

One great rayon industry has perfected rayon fabric



to the place that specialists are unable to detect it except by technical analysis as is stated by O'Brien (12). According to this author the old tests for rayon fabrics are of little value, and it is possible that consumers' knowledge is inadequate when making selections. The label is as yet valueless in guiding the consumer because false statements are made, such as "all silk" or "pure silk", which merely mean that only one type of textile fiber has been used in the construction, and that fiber may be pure-dye silk or any one of the rayon fibers. The salesperson is uninformed many times and his information of little value.

#### Improvements in Quality Desired

The two groups of women cooperating were asked if they would be willing to pay more than the average price for ready-made "silk" dresses if certain qualities were guaranteed them. Table 12 shows that 81.4 per cent of rural women and 88.6 per cent of urban women would pay more than the average price for a dress labeled pure-dye "silk". A great majority of both groups are also desirous that the label bear information as to color-fastness, treatment against water spotting, resistance to wrinkling, and fabric construction that will prevent pulling out at

Table 12. Qualities Desired by 200 Rural and 200 Urban Purchasers of Ready-made "Silk" Dresses and "Silk" Dress Fabrics as Indicated by Willingness to Pay More Than the Average Price, Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

		Rural Women		Urban Women	
		<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Are you willing to pay more for a "silk" dress bearing:					
A trade name?	Yes	96	58.5	116	62.7
	No	68	41.5	69	37.3
	Total -	<u>164</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>185</u>	<u>100.0</u>
A label stating the dress is an original design?	Yes	51	40.8	59	60.6
	No	74	59.2	91	39.4
	Total -	<u>125</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>150</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Would you be willing to pay more for a "silk" dress that bears a label stating that:					
The fabric is pure silk?	Yes	114	81.4	164	88.6
	No	26	18.5	24	11.4
	Total -	<u>140</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>188</u>	<u>100.0</u>
The color is fast to light and crocking?	Yes	181	96.2	182	98.3
	No	7	3.8	3	1.7
	Total -	<u>188</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>185</u>	<u>100.0</u>
The fabric will not water spot?	Yes	186	98.9	189	98.4
	No	2	1.1	3	1.6
	Total -	<u>188</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>192</u>	<u>100.0</u>
The fabric will not wrinkle?	Yes	185	97.3	184	96.8
	No	5	2.7	6	3.2
	Total -	<u>190</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>190</u>	<u>100.0</u>
The fabric will not stretch or pull out at the seams?	Yes	188	97.4	186	98.9
	No	5	2.6	2	1.1
	Total -	<u>193</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>188</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Table 12. (cont'd)

	Rural Women		Urban Women	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Would you be willing to pay more for "silk" fabrics guaranteed as to the following qualities than for those not guaranteed?				
That will not shrink in dry cleaning	169	14.5	173	15.4
That are color fast	172	14.8	178	15.9
That will not become limp or sleazy in dry cleaning	147	12.6	152	13.5
That are guaranteed pure silk	126	10.8	135	12.0
That are free from weighting	115	9.9	110	9.8
That will not water spot	146	12.6	65	5.8
That will not wrinkle or crush readily	146	12.6	151	13.4
That will not show perspiration stains	138	11.8	155	13.8
Total-	<u>1160</u>	<u>99.6</u>	<u>1119</u>	<u>99.6</u>
Are you willing to pay more for a "silk" fabric that bears a trade mark?				
Yes	128	76.0	114	70.2
No	40	24.0	44	29.8
Total-	<u>168</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>158</u>	<u>100.0</u>

seams. It would be of interest to know how much more the two groups would be willing to pay for this assurance, but no attempt was made to secure this information.

In buying "silk" fabrics, as is stated in Table 12, a very high per cent of each group are desirous of fabric guaranteed for color fastness, purity of silk, and freedom from weighting, and against water spotting, wrinkling, and staining from perspiration.

The reliability of certain firms and their trade-marked dresses and fabrics are the consumers' only guarantee as to qualities at the present time. Fifty-eight and five-tenths per cent of rural women and 62.7 per cent of urban women are willing to pay more for "silk" dresses bearing a trade name. Seventy-six per cent of rural and 70.2 per cent of urban women are willing to pay more for "silk" fabric bearing a trade name.

In reality there probably exists a larger percentage of both groups of women than here admit their inability to recognize the presence of weighting in silk or rayon and silk combinations. A solution for such a difficulty is the giving of definite information by the producer as to the content of the fabric. It is possible at the present time to secure definite information as to fabric content

from some mail order houses and through mail order departments of some department stores.

#### Mail Order Purchases

In the rural group of women, 5.6 per cent frequently purchase ready-made "silk" dresses by mail, 15 per cent purchase occasionally, 16.2 per cent seldom, and 61.5 per cent never purchase by mail. Of the urban women 1.6 per cent frequently purchase "silk" ready-made dresses by mail, 7.0 per cent, occasionally, 9.8 per cent, seldom, and 81.6 per cent never purchase by mail, according to Table 13. When purchases are made by mail, 73.3 per cent of rural purchasers patronize large department stores, and 26.7 per cent purchase from large mail order houses. Ninety-two and seven-tenths per cent of urban women purchase "silk" dresses by mail from large department stores, and 7.3 per cent purchase from large mail order houses.

"Silk" fabrics are purchased more often by mail by urban women than ready-made dresses. Three and two-tenths per cent of urban women always purchase "silk" fabric by mail, 6.7 per cent frequently, 14.4 per cent occasionally, 13.4 per cent seldom, and 62.3 never purchase by mail. Their selections, according to information given, are

Table 13. Extent of Mail Order Purchase of Ready-made "Silk" Dresses and "Silk" Dress Fabrics, Where Purchased, and Manner of Selection, Compared for Rural and Urban Women, Expressed in Numbers and Percentages.

	Rural Women		Urban Women	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Do you purchase "silk" fabric by mail?				
Always	2	1.5	5	3.2
Frequently	16	9.2	13	6.7
Occasionally	28	16.2	28	14.4
Seldom	34	19.7	27	13.4
Never	92	53.4	121	62.3
Total -	<u>172</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>194</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Do you most frequently make your selection:				
From samples?				
Yes	59	71.0	74	74.0
No	24	29.0	26	26.0
Total -	<u>83</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100.0</u>
From description?				
Yes	36	64.3	16	31.2
No	20	35.7	37	69.8
Total -	<u>56</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Are your mail order purchases of "silk" fabrics most often from:				
Large department stores?				
Yes	54	78.2	43	72.8
No	15	21.8	16	27.2
Total -	<u>69</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Large mail order houses?				
Yes	41	75.9	20	41.7
No	13	24.1	28	58.3
Total -	<u>54</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Table 13. (cont'd)

	Rural Woman		Urban Women	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Do you purchase ready-made "silk" dresses by mail?				
Always	3	1.7	0	0.0
Frequently	10	5.6	3	1.6
Occasionally	27	15.0	13	7.0
Seldom	29	16.2	18	9.8
Never	110	61.5	151	81.6
Total -	<u>179</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>185</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Are your purchases made from:				
Large department store?	99	73.3	103	92.7
Large mail order house?	36	26.7	8	7.3
Total -	<u>135</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>111</u>	<u>100.0</u>



median 74 per cent from samples of the fabric. Seventy-two and eight-tenths per cent most often make their purchase from large department stores and 27.2 per cent order "silk" fabrics from large mail order houses. In the rural group 9.2 per cent frequently, 16.2 per cent occasionally, 19.7 per cent seldom and 53.4 per cent never make purchases of "silk" fabric by mail. Seventy-one per cent most frequently make their selections from samples of the fabrics sent out by the firm. Sixty-four and three-tenths per cent select from description which is probably offered by the advertisement or catalogue. Seventy-eight and two-tenths per cent order from large department stores and 75.9 per cent order from large mail order houses.

#### Summary of Findings

1. Of those urban women giving information 61 per cent were married; of rural women 93 per cent. The average size of urban family represented was 3.2 persons, and of rural 3.5. The greater percentage of both groups were housewives, whose median ages were, for urban women, 35 years, and for rural, 40 years.

2. A majority of the women cooperating in this study bought "silk" dresses ready-made; 68.1 per cent purchased

ready-made, 25.5 constructed dresses at home, and 5.4 employed dressmakers.

3. The reasons given for purchasing ready-made dresses, in the order of importance, were (1) time was saved, (2) more distinctive styles were obtained, (3) more satisfactory material could be secured. Both groups of women gave these as their most important reasons.

4. The average number of "silk" dresses per person added to the wardrobe within the last 12 months was 2.5; urban women purchased on the average 2.9 and rural women 2.0. For ready-made "silk" dresses the average per person for 12 months was 1.7; for urban women 2.1, and rural women 1.2.

5. A large majority of the women desired informative labeling since they would be willing to pay more for a garment the fabric of which is labeled pure silk, which is color fast to light and crocking, which will not water-spot, wrinkle, stretch or pull out at the seams. Approximately 70 per cent of the group were dependent upon the salesperson for information concerning the qualities of fabrics.

6. Emphasis upon style and durability differed for urban and rural women in the purchase of ready-made "silk"

dresses. Sixty-four per cent of urban women placed first emphasis upon style and 36 per cent upon durability, 53 per cent of rural women placed durability first and style second.

7. The two prices most commonly paid by the two groups for ready-to-wear "silk" dresses were for urban women \$10.95 and \$16.96, for rural women \$7.50 and \$10.95. For "silk" dress fabrics both groups most commonly purchase material selling at \$1.00 and \$1.50 per yard.

8. In buying fabrics neither group accepted knowingly rayon interchangeably with silk. A few more than half of the group indicate that they would not knowingly purchase weighted silk.

9. "Silk" fabrics are more often purchased by mail order than "silk" ready-to-wear. These purchases are most often made from samples. A greater percentage of the rural group purchased ready-to-wear by mail than of the urban group.

## CONCLUSIONS

Since this study deals with information from only 400 women definite conclusions cannot be drawn. However, from the data presented in this study the following is evident:

1. Consumers are uninformed concerning fiber identification.

2. Since a majority of both rural and urban women buy ready-to-wear "silk" dresses, there is need for more emphasis to be placed upon selection rather than construction of garments.

3. There is a desire on the part of the consumer for more definite information concerning the qualities of garments and fabrics which he buys.

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**APPENDIX**

Kansas State College  
Division of Home Economics  
Department of Clothing and Textiles

QUALITIES DESIRED IN SILK DRESS FABRICS AND READY-MADE SILK DRESSES

Basis for Choice Between Commercially Made and Home  
Constructed Dresses

1. Indicate by check the method most satisfactory to you for securing silk dresses for afternoon or street wear. (Hereafter all questions refer to this type of dress made from material commonly called silk)
  - (a)  Purchase ready-made
  - (b)  Made by self or members of family
  - (c)  Have them made by a dressmaker
  
2. If you purchase silk dresses ready-made what are your reasons? (Check the two most important)
  - (a)  Saves time
  - (b)  More distinctive style
  - (c)  Can secure more satisfactory materials
  - (d)  Dislike to construct
  - (e)  Unable to sew
  - (f)  Unable to fit oneself
  - (g)  Unable to predict becomingness
  - (h)  Other reasons \_\_\_\_\_ (name) \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. How many silk dresses did you purchase ready-made in the last 12 months? \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If your silk dresses are not purchased ready-made what are your reasons? (Check two most important)
  - (a)  Less expensive
  - (b)  More likely to fit
  - (c)  Desire for individuality
  - (d)  Poor selection among ready-made silk dresses
  - (e)  Enjoy making them
  - (f)  Can secure fabric of better designs
  - (g)  Can secure fabric of better quality
  - (h)  Other (name) \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. How many silk dresses did you make or have made during the last 12 months? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you demand better qualities in fabric
- (a) \_\_\_ When you buy ready-made silk dresses?
  - (b) \_\_\_ When you purchase the fabric for silk dresses?
- (check one)

When You Buy Commercially Made Silk Dresses

7. Check the type of silk dress you more often buy.
- (a) \_\_\_ Dress for special occasion (as dinner dress or party dress)
  - (b) \_\_\_ All purpose dress
8. Check the factor which you consider the more important in selecting a silk dress.
- (a) \_\_\_ Style and color
  - (b) \_\_\_ Durability
9. Do you refuse to buy a garment which must be altered
- (a) Slightly? (Such as changing hem, length of belt, sleeve length)  
Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (b) Extensively? (Such as refitting waist line, shoulder and armscye)  
Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
10. Do you desire the fabric in the silk dress to be durable enough to be used in making over the garment? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
11. Check the number of seasons you expect a silk dress to wear.  
(Season meaning spring through summer, or fall through winter)
- (a) \_\_\_ 1 season
  - (b) \_\_\_ 2 seasons
  - (c) \_\_\_ 3 seasons
  - (d) \_\_\_ 4 seasons
  - (e) \_\_\_ More
12. Are you willing to pay more for a silk dress bearing
- (a) A trade name? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (b) A label stating the dress is an original design?  
Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
13. Would you be willing to pay more for a silk dress that bears a label stating that
- (a) The fabric is pure silk? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (b) The color is fast to light and crocking (rubbing off)  
Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (c) The fabric will not water spot? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (d) The fabric will not wrinkle? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (e) The fabric will not stretch or pull out at seams?  
Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_

14. Are you influenced to buy a silk dress by the favorable remarks of the saleswoman concerning
- (a) The latest style? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (b) The becomingness of style? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (c) The quality of the material? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (d) Special price? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
15. Do you insist upon finding the following in the ready-made dress which you purchase:
- (a) Inside seams finished? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (b) Straight outside stitching? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (c) Silk sewing thread used for stitching? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (d) Stitches small in relation to texture of the fabric? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (e) Hand stitches for edge finishes? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (f) Ample allowances for alteration? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (g) All pieces cut the correct way of the material? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
16. Does the combination of two or more fabrics in a dress lead you to decide against its choice?
- (a) When the trimming fabric is fragile? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (b) When the trimming fabric is of poor quality? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (c) When the trimming is light in color and not detachable? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (d) When the trimming is not in keeping with the fabric of the dress? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
17. Do you purchase dresses on which the trimming accessories such as belts, buttons, buckles, and clips are
- (a) Of a quality to improve the appearance of the dress? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (b) Of a quality inferior to the dress? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
18. Will inferior trimming accessories prevent you buying the dress? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
19. Will the beauty of trimmings accessories lead you to choose a particular dress? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
20. Check the classification of size in which you are the most satisfactorily fitted:
- (a) \_\_\_ Misses sizes (12-20)
  - (b) \_\_\_ Women sizes (34-46)
  - (c) \_\_\_ Half-sizes ( $16\frac{1}{2}$ - $24\frac{1}{2}$ )
  - (d) \_\_\_ Stouts (48-56)
21. Do you have difficulty in finding suitable styles in your size? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_  
What size do you purchase? \_\_\_

22. Check the two prices of silk dresses you most often purchase:

- (a) \_\_\_\$7.50
- (b) \_\_\_\$10.95
- (c) \_\_\_\$16.95
- (d) \_\_\_\$22.50
- (e) \_\_\_\$29.75
- (f) \_\_\_\$35.00
- (g) \_\_\_ Over \$35.00

23. Do you purchase ready-made dresses at special sale price (Check)

- (a) \_\_\_ Always
- (b) \_\_\_ Frequently
- (c) \_\_\_ Occasionally
- (d) \_\_\_ Seldom
- (e) \_\_\_ Never

24. Do you purchase ready-made dresses by mail? (Check)

- (a) \_\_\_ Always
- (b) \_\_\_ Frequently
- (c) \_\_\_ Occasionally
- (d) \_\_\_ Seldom
- (e) \_\_\_ Never

25. Are your order purchases of dresses more often made from

- (a) \_\_\_ Large department stores?
- (b) \_\_\_ Large mail order houses?  
(Check)

When You Buy Silk Dress Fabric

26. In the purchase of silk dress fabrics are you always able to recognize?

- (a) Pure silk? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
- (b) Weighted silk? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
- (c) Silk and rayon mixture? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
- (d) All rayon? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_

27. Will you purchase a silk fabric that you recognize to be weighted? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_

28. Do you accept rayon dress fabrics interchangeably with pure silk? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_

29. Upon what authority do you accept a fabric as rayon or silk?  
(Check)  
(a) \_\_\_ Salesperson  
(b) \_\_\_ Label  
(c) \_\_\_ Your knowledge of fabrics  
(d) \_\_\_ Test made of the fabric
30. Do you refuse to purchase a dress fabric labeled rayon?  
Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
31. Would you be willing to pay more for fabrics guaranteed as to the following qualities than for those not so guaranteed: (Check)
- (a) \_\_\_ That will not shrink in dry cleaning?
  - (b) \_\_\_ That are color fast?
  - (c) \_\_\_ That will not become limp or sleazy in dry cleaning?
  - (d) \_\_\_ That are guaranteed pure silk?
  - (e) \_\_\_ That are free from weighting?
  - (f) \_\_\_ That will not water spot?
  - (g) \_\_\_ That will not wrinkle or crush readily?
  - (h) \_\_\_ That will not show perspiration stains?
32. In selecting a dress fabric is your choice influenced by
- (a) Fashionable weave? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (b) Fashionable color? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
33. Are you willing to pay more for a silk fabric that bears a trade mark? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
34. Do you desire the fabric to be durable enough for making over?  
Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
35. Check the number of seasons you expect silk fabric to wear.
- (a) \_\_\_ 1 season
  - (b) \_\_\_ 2 seasons
  - (c) \_\_\_ 3 seasons
  - (d) \_\_\_ 4 seasons
  - (e) \_\_\_ More
36. Do you desire silk fabric for dresses that will
- (a) Dry clean? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
  - (b) Launder? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
37. Check the two prices per yard you most often pay for silk fabrics.
- (a) \_\_\_ \$0.79
  - (b) \_\_\_ 1.00
  - (c) \_\_\_ 1.50
  - (d) \_\_\_ 1.95
  - (e) \_\_\_ 2.95
  - (f) \_\_\_ 3.50
  - (g) \_\_\_ More

38. Do you purchase silk fabric by mail? (Check)

- (a) \_\_\_ Always
- (b) \_\_\_ Frequently
- (c) \_\_\_ Occasionally
- (d) \_\_\_ Seldom
- (e) \_\_\_ Never

39. Do you most frequently make your selections

- (a) From samples? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
- (b) From description? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_

40. Are your mail order purchases of silk fabric most often made from

- (a) Large department stores? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_
- (b) Large mail order houses? Yes \_\_\_; No \_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation or profession \_\_\_\_\_

Married \_\_\_\_\_

Unmarried \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Number of dependents in family at present time \_\_\_\_\_

Number of women in family over 18 wholly or in part dependent upon family income \_\_\_\_\_

Number of men in family over 18 wholly or in part dependent upon family income \_\_\_\_\_

Number of girls between 12 and 18 wholly or in part dependent upon family income \_\_\_\_\_

Number of boys between 12 and 18 wholly or in part dependent upon family income \_\_\_\_\_

Children under 12 wholly or in part dependent upon family income \_\_\_\_\_

Check your type of home

- ( ) rural - modern - all city conveniences
- ( ) city or town