

CONSUMER DEMAND FOR CERTAIN READY-MADE GARMENTS
AS DETERMINED BY OBSERVATION
OF CONSUMERS' PURCHASING HABITS

by

HAZLE JAMES KETCHERSID

B. S., North Dakota Agricultural College, 1934

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

KANSAS STATE COLLEGE
OF AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE

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INTRODUCTION

To justify women's immense expenditures for ready-made clothing more should be known concerning the purchasing habits of consumers as well as the variations of such purchasing habits and the reasons for the same. Of the 85 per cent of the nation's money which women are credited with spending, one billion dollars a year, according to an article in Fortune (1933), is the sum turned to the ready-made clothing industry. To meet their demands, over 167 million dresses of all kinds and qualities were manufactured in 1931, according to Scott (1934).

The consumer aims to buy for personal satisfaction. Denny (1932) says that if a vote were taken from the buying public on the first requisite in textile purchases, one would be safe in predicting that it would be "to be in style" or "to be up to date". Text book phrases such as "durability", "tensile strength", "thread count", and "fiber content" would receive little if any attention. Besides wanting to buy style, the American customer also wants to know how to get it in an article which will not cost too much, will not require too much care, will be suited to its purpose, and will look well during a reasonable period of use.

Kyrk (1933) states that good buying is the selection of the best article available for the purpose with a minimum expenditure of time, energy, and money. Good buying so defined is the resultant of two factors: one, the methods and information of the buyer; the other, the devices and arrangements of the market.

Retail stores offer such a wide variety of price, style, and quality of goods that the consumer is confused and finds it extremely difficult to make selections best suited to her needs and purse. She seems to be in an unfavorable bargaining position and is confronted with more problems than existed for any other generation of consumers.

According to Kyrk (1933), the problem of selection takes two forms: (1) identification of the "best" among several articles offered at the same price, and (2) comparison of the relative merits of articles offered at different prices. Unless the buyer is able to make this identification or comparison there can be neither price nor quality competition between goods made by different producers.

It is now recognized that consumption is the sole end and purpose of production. In the mercantile system, however, the interest of the consumer is almost constantly sacrificed to that of the producer; and it seems that production, not consumption, is considered the ultimate end

and object of all industry and commerce. Consumers may indicate by purchases what they prefer: price, style, quality and future fashion goods. The availability of goods is dependent upon the ease with which buyers make their preferences known.

If producers set the price, consumers will in a large measure set the volume; if producers set the volume, consumers will in a large measure set the price, as stated by Lynd (1934).

The consumer needs information about goods that he buys. Brands, trade-marks, and labels may be information-giving devices that consumers would find helpful. Good labels may carry an informative legend and descriptive matter regarding the quality and purpose of the article as well as the brand name or trade-mark, whose function is to identify rather than to inform.

Scott (1934) believes home economists should urge that informative labels be attached to merchandise so that consumers have definite facts upon which to base their selections. It is unfortunate that so many labels are non-informative, give only half truths, are trade "puffed" with meaningless superlatives or are misleading if not wholly untrue.

A limited number of women are interested in labels that

give information pertaining to fashion such as "an original" gown. Information given by the Fashion Originators' Guild labels state that the dress is A Registered Original Design With Fashion Originators' Guild. This label is placed on dresses as inexpensive as \$10.95 and has proven a reliable protection against style piracy since 1931. Other labels give such information as "an adaptation" or a model by a particular or favorite dress designer.

Consumers must be taught to read existing labels critically and to determine for themselves whether there is any dependable meaning in the statements given. This means that they must keep alert to new development to understand the significance of the labels used.

The qualities sought by purchasers in the selection of clothing have been the subject of controversy on the part of producers and retailers as well as home economists. If the quality of merchandise now offered by retailers can be thought of as a measure of consumer demand, it would seem that durability is less significant now than in years past. However, available information does not show the extent to which rational, emotional, and habit motives prompt prospective purchasers in their buying. A knowledge of consumer buying habits is apparently essential for the development of a program of consumer education. Such

information also would be an aid to the retailer in his effort to satisfy consumer wants. At present, few studies are available which give definite information concerning the reactions of shoppers when selecting ready-made garments. Therefore, this study of consumer demand was undertaken (1) to obtain information concerning consumer preferences in purchasing "silk"¹ dresses; (2) to ascertain the knowledge consumers have concerning the garments they buy; (3) to determine the relation of price to the purchase as it limits the choice of dresses; (4) to study the importance consumers give to style and suitability of dress design when purchasing dresses; and (5) to ascertain, if possible, some factors which influence choice or which prevent the purchase of a garment.

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

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Definite information concerning the reactions of shoppers when they select their ready-made "silk" dresses is available in only a few studies. Those which relate to the present study are reviewed here. The earliest available study of consumers' purchasing habits made by Phelps (1920) is based on information contained in 789 questionnaires sent to teachers, university students, clerks, and homemakers. Phelps found that wool was more widely used than silk for the "service dress" or dress worn by the business woman and for the street dress and house dress worn by the homemaker. She found there were more yard goods than ready-made garments sold. Six different materials were popular. The study is of little value at the present time since the information is only what people bought 15 years ago, not why they bought.

The Phillips study (1931) made in New York City revealed the need of education for successful purchasing of clothing and home furnishings. She points out buying difficulties caused by consumers' inability to arrive at definite decisions and inability to profit by knowledge and warnings. Widely different interests of family members is given as the main cause of maladjustment and lack of

cooperation on purchasing problems of men and women. Bargains, special sales, and special prices complicate the buying problems by preventing careful selection and appreciation of values. The unnecessary limitation of the average consumer is exposed in lack of personal taste and creative ability. Both the consumers and merchants complicate the buying problem. Integration of interests would increase efficiency in buying and scientific information and standardization would decrease waste. Lack of proper adjustment to a limited income is really the consumer's problem. Phillips concludes that educators, merchants, and consumers must recognize the limits of the purse.

Mack and Cooke (1931) found that salespeople misrepresent to the consumers the amount of weighting present in ready-made dresses priced from \$2.98 to \$59.50. Of the 50 silk dresses tested, 47 contained tin weighting. Weighted silk fabrics upon exposure to light deteriorated; over half of the fabrics waterspotted; laundering caused great shrinkage in weighted silk fabrics; dry cleaning did not cause the fabric to lose strength; and price was no indication of color fastness of silk fabrics. Also, there was no apparent correlation between the real wearing qualities determined and the salespeople's statements about the wearing qualities of the 50 ready-made silk dresses investigated.

Mack (1934) made a study of one hundred discarded silk dresses collected from women who had discarded them. In answer to the contention that consumers want only style in dresses, it was found that 66 dresses were discarded solely because the fabric was no longer wearable (55 were discarded because of splitting, the remainder because of fading or shrinking); 25 were discarded because the fabric was no longer wearable, together with other reasons. Seven were discarded solely because they were out of style; and 2 were discarded solely because the garment fitted poorly. Women stated that they would like to be able to recognize a good piece of silk because they prefer making over out-of-style garments for children.

Church (1936) attempted to determine by questionnaire method what 400 selected women desire in "silk" dresses commercially-made and home constructed. She found that 68 per cent purchased ready-made dresses, 27 per cent constructed dresses at home, and 5 per cent employed dress-makers. Both rural and urban women gave the following reasons for purchasing ready-made dresses: time was saved, more distinctive styles were obtained, more satisfactory material could be secured. Of ready-made "silk" dresses, the average number purchased by each person for 12 months was 1.7. A majority of the women questioned desired

informative labeling, and approximately 60 per cent would be willing to pay more for a garment bearing a trade name. About 70 per cent of the women were dependent upon the salesperson for information concerning the qualities of fabrics. Of the 200 urban women, 64 per cent emphasized style and 36 per cent emphasized durability, while 53 per cent of the rural women placed durability first and style second. She also found the two prices most commonly paid for ready-made "silk" dresses were \$10.95 and \$16.95 for the urban group and \$7.50 and \$10.95 for the rural group. In buying fabrics neither group accepted knowingly rayon interchangeably with silk, and over 50 per cent indicated that they would not knowingly purchase weighted silk.

The Thor (1931) study of consumer purchasing habits in regard to purchasing dresses relates directly to the present study. The investigator noted the buying habits of 200 dress customers during March, 1931. Results of the study indicate that, of the 200 dress customers, over 40 per cent stated prices they wished to pay when calling for dresses, and 90 per cent of the 23 purchasers named price and purchased dresses of the designated price. Of the 55 dresses purchased, over 90 per cent were \$16.75 garments. These were the lowest in price carried in stock and constituted by far the greatest number of dresses. Over 70 per cent of the

customers paid cash and about 25 per cent charged garments. Two were purchased on the installment plan.

Style appeared to be a factor in the purchase of a dress, about 25 per cent of the 200 customers desiring to know if the dresses they purchased were of the latest fashion. Good quality and workmanship were preferred by over 30 per cent of the 200 women, as shown by careful inspection and feeling of materials. Seams and stitching were examined by 7 per cent. There were no requests for guarantees as to wearing qualities or color fastness. No trade names were used in calling for dresses but textile fiber names; silk, linen, and wool were terms used by most of the women. Color was specified by 90 per cent, and over 65 per cent of the purchasers bought dresses of the colors for which they called. Analysis of the lines of dresses with respect to figure requirements was made by only 8 per cent of the 200 customers. Half of the 200 women who selected dresses sought the advice and opinions of others. The majority of the consumers tried on from 1 to 4 dresses; 84 per cent of them took 15 minutes or less time to decide whether the dress suited them or not. Of the 49 buyers who stated sizes in calling for dresses, 92 per cent purchased the sizes requested even though 50 per cent of the 55 dresses purchased required alteration.

About 90 per cent of the women shoppers specified the kind of dress they desired by naming such factors as type, material, color, size, price, quality, and style. The 4 factors named by about one-third of the customers were type, material, color, and size. Reasons given by customers who did not buy were: nothing suited them; the desired color was not available; they objected to alterations; the dresses were too high priced.

METHOD OF PROCEDURE

A tentative plan of the record form was prepared for use in registering information concerning the purchasing habits of consumers with regard to ready-made "silk" dresses, and was discussed with several merchants. Its usefulness was then tested by making a number of trial observations before the blanks were prepared in final form. The points listed in the record were carefully considered before the study was begun so as to include only those for which it was believed satisfactory information could be obtained from remarks and actions of those observed. The record sheet was set up in form that was convenient, easily handled, and quickly filled in. It was planned so that the observer could follow through all steps in the transaction with the prospective buyer from the time the salesperson

approached the customer until the customer left the department. The form permitted the recording of facts concerning the store; facts concerning the shopper, her physical characteristics, her occupation, those accompanying her; limiting factors mentioned in calling for dresses; number of dresses shown and tried on; evidence of interest in and knowledge about qualities of garments shown; kinds of dresses shown and bases on which selected; number of dresses sold; reasons for lost sales; alterations, approvals, and returned goods; and time consumed by each shopper. A copy of the record form will be found in the appendix.

Cooperation of the merchants was secured by introducing, explaining, and discussing the form to be used in recording information sought. Permission to observe customers was granted by managers of ready-to-wear departments in seven Kansas stores in Manhattan, Junction City, and Topeka. These are classified in Table 1, the stores being designated by letters A through G. The bases for selection were the class of trade to which the store catered and the quality and quantity of merchandise carried. An attempt was made to include departments having merchandise representative of the several qualities demanded by consumers.

The stores chosen in Manhattan were fairly representative of towns of like population, namely 10,537. They

Table 1. Classification of Stores in which Observations Were Made, Based on Location, Type of Store, Size of Department, Price Range Carried in Ready-made "Silk" Dresses, and Number and Percentage of Observations Made in Each Store.

Store	Town	Type of Store	Size of Dress Department	Price Range	Number and Per Cent of Observations
A	Manhattan	Department	Medium	\$3.95 - \$29.50	23 - 18.4
B	Manhattan	Specialty	Small	2.98 - 15.00	43 - 34.4
C	Manhattan	Specialty	Small	3.95 - 29.50	8 - 6.4
D	Manhattan	Specialty	Medium	4.88 - 49.50	13 - 10.4
E	Junction City	Specialty	Large	5.95 - 98.00	11 - 8.8
F	Topeka	Department	Large	5.95 - 98.00	19 - 15.2
G	Topeka	Department	Large	7.95 - 98.00	8 - 6.4
				Total	125 - 100

catered to townspeople and to those of surrounding territory as well as to college people. The size and quality of the stock carried in the store in which observations were made in Junction City, a town whose population was 8,303, was well above the average for towns of this size. The clientele of this establishment came mainly from the Fort Riley Army Post, four miles distant, as well as from the town and surrounding territory. Topeka stores catered to many classes of shoppers drawn from a territory of 100 miles or more radius. Topeka has a good reputation as a trade center besides being the capital city of Kansas. The number and percentage of observations made in stores in Manhattan, Topeka, and Junction City are as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Manhattan	87	69.6
Topeka	27	21.6
Junction City	11	8.8

Women's ready-to-wear sections in department stores and specialty shops handling women's apparel were represented among the seven stores cooperating. Clark (1932) defines a department store as that type of retail institution which handles a wide variety of merchandise under one roof with the merchandise grouped into well defined departments centrally controlled, and catering primarily to women shoppers. A specialty shop, according to Nystrom (1930), is that type

of retail institution which carries a limited line of goods or a few closely related lines of merchandise, such as women's wearing apparel, accessories, millinery, shoes, or a combination of these.

The number and percentage of observations made in the two types of stores are as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Department stores	50	40.0
Specialty stores	75	60.0

The classification of dress departments as "large", "medium", and "small" was made by the observer by comparing the stock of dresses on hand during the season when the observations were made. As it was impossible to obtain from the inventories of the dress departments the number of "silk" dresses bought and sold during the year, such a comparison seems the only one which could be made. The number and percentage of observations in large, medium, and small departments were:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Large	36	30.4
Medium	38	28.8
Small	51	40.8

Store A was a department store located in Manhattan. The dress stock, which occupied one section on the main floor, was of medium size with a price range for "silk" dresses from \$3.95 to \$29.50. Of the total 125 observations

made, 23 observations, which represent 18.4 per cent, were recorded from this store. The buyer, who also sold merchandise, was the only regularly employed person in the dress department. The store depended upon salespeople from other departments and part-time employees to assist in caring for customers.

Store B was a small specialty shop in Manhattan where "silk" dresses retailed from \$2.98 to \$15.00. Forty-three recordings, or 34.4 per cent of the observations, were made in this shop. One person, who was the owner, manager, buyer, and saleswoman, operated this shop with little extra help.

Store C was a small specialty shop in Manhattan. Eight observations, or 6.4 per cent of the total recordings, were made from a stock of dresses which retailed at prices from \$3.95 to \$29.50. The two people in the shop did all the merchandising.

Store D was a specialty shop of medium size stock located in Manhattan. This shop carried "silk" dresses which retailed from \$4.88 to \$49.50. Thirteen, or 10.4 per cent of the observations, were recorded from this store. The two owners and one salesperson carried on all the business in the store.

Store E was a specialty shop located in Junction City which carried a large stock of "silk" dresses that retailed

from \$5.95 to \$98.00. The number of observations in this store was 11, or 8.8 per cent of the recordings made. The 3 owners of this shop performed all the functions of merchandising.

Store F was a department store in Topeka. The large ready-to-wear department occupied the greater part of the third floor. The price range for "silk" dresses was from \$5.95 to \$98.00. Nineteen observations, or 15.2 per cent of the total, were made in this dress department. The department employed 12 salespeople and 2 buyers as well as assistants and stockkeepers.

Store G was a large department store in Topeka. The dress section on the second floor was rated as large. "Silk" dresses retailed from \$7.95 to \$98.00. Eight, or 6.4 per cent of the total observations, were taken from this store. A sales staff of 10 people was employed, as well as a buyer, an assistant buyer, and stockkeepers.

A separate data sheet for recording information was used for each shopper. The observer, at the suggestion of the department manager, acted in the capacity of a customer or as an employee of the dress department, either as salesperson or stockkeeper. The shopper was observed from the time the salesperson approached her until she left the department. It seemed desirable to record information

without her being aware that she was under observation. Observations were recorded at the close of the sale, after the shopper left the department, or during the time the shopper was looking at or fitting dresses. The salesperson often supplied information not otherwise available to the observer.

A study of the reactions of shoppers desiring varied qualities in ready-made "silk" dresses seemed more significant than a study of the effectiveness of one store in meeting consumer demand for ready-made "silk" dresses. Therefore observations were not confined to one establishment or one type of clientele. A schedule of college classes limited the time within which the investigator observed customers. While waiting between observations in the establishments, time not spent in recording customers' actions was used in assisting in stockkeeping or other activities associated with the business of the store.

The observations of 125 dress customers, providing the data for the study of consumer demand for ready-made "silk" dresses, were made in February, March, April, and May, 1936. Due to the fact that the spring season of 1936 developed into a "suit" season, time set aside for observations had to be extended to four months rather than two months as first planned. The results obtained on observation sheets were

recorded in tabular form and summaries made.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the 125 prospective buyers 104, or 83.2 per cent, purchased "silk" dresses, and 21, or 16.8 per cent, did not buy. In the attempt to avoid too many observations of what proved to be lost sales, the investigator limited her observations, in the main, to those that were informative of consumer purchasing habits.

Occupations of Shoppers

The occupations of those shoppers who were observed are presented in Table 2. This information was offered by the customer, or the facts were known to the clerk, in 110 cases. In the other instances, the observer guessed the occupations. The greatest proportion of women observed were housewives, 43 in number, or 34.4 per cent of the total. The next largest group consisted of students, 30, or 24.0 per cent, of whom were college students and 6, or 4.8 per cent, high school students. Teachers made up 12.8 per cent of the group, of which 8 were public school teachers and 8 college instructors. Housewives, students, and teachers made up 76 per cent of those persons observed. The numbers of persons in other groups were considerably smaller than

Table 2. Classification as to Occupations of 125 Prospective Buyers of Ready-made "Silk" Dresses, Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

Occupation	Number	Per Cent
Housewives:	43	34.4
Students:		
High school	6	4.8
College	30	24.0
Teachers:		
Public school	8	6.4
College	8	6.4
Office employees:		
Stenographers	4	3.2
Secretaries	6	4.8
Office girls	1	0.8
Business women:	4	3.2
Others:		
Retired women	3	2.4
Nurses	2	1.6
Salespersons	2	1.6
Waitresses	2	1.6
Bakery employee	1	0.8
Combination housewife and secretary	3	2.4
Combination housewife and student	1	0.8
Combination housewife and salesperson	1	0.8

the ones mentioned above.

Characteristics of Shoppers

The estimated ages and classification of physical characteristics of prospective buyers of ready-made "silk" dresses appear in Table 3. The ages of the prospective buyers were from 14 to 75 years; the median was 27 years; and the average, 31 years. The large proportion of students included among those observed accounts for the relative youth of customers as expressed by the median age. The 125 shoppers were grouped as to coloring under the classification of blond, brunette, medium, red hair, and grey hair. The greatest number were brunettes. There were 54 persons so classified, or 43.2 per cent of the total number. Those of medium coloring numbered 24, or 19.2 per cent; grey haired women, 22, or 17.6 per cent; blonds, 18, or 14.4 per cent; and red haired women, 7, or 5.6 per cent.

The height of persons was expressed as tall, medium, and short, referring to estimated height rather than to height-width relationships. Of the 125 women observed, 46, or 36.8 per cent, were tall; 49, or 39.2 per cent, were of medium height; and 30, or 24.0 per cent, were short.

Apparent weight was expressed in terms of body build, that is, as slender, medium, or stout. Sixty, or 48.6 per

Table 3. The Estimated Ages and Physical Characteristics of 125 Prospective Buyers of Ready-made "Silk" Dresses as Indicated by Coloring, Approximate Height and Weight, Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

Estimated age:		
Range	14-75 years	
Median	27 years	
Average	31 years	
	Number	Per Cent
Coloring:		
Blond	18	14.4
Brunette	54	43.2
Medium	24	19.2
Red hair	7	5.6
Grey hair	22	17.6
Height:		
Tall	46	36.8
Medium	49	39.2
Short	30	24.0
Weight:		
Slender	60	48.0
Medium	47	37.6
Stout	18	14.4

cent, of the 125 women were slender; 47, or 37.6 per cent, were of medium body build; and 18, or 14.4 per cent, were stout.

Since sizes of garments vary with manufacturers and with style, they are not generally uniform. Nystrom (1928) names and interprets sizes of dresses which are being offered for sale by most stores. Regular sizes are worn by women who have figures which conform approximately to the average. Misses' regular sizes range from 10 to 20; women's sizes from 34 to 42, and thereafter by even numbers through the regular stout sizes up to 56. Many women who begin wearing misses' sizes wear the regular women's sizes when they pass the age of 20. However, misses' sizes are worn by a great number of adult women. Women's sizes are for more developed figures of normal height, with definite proportions requiring more generous allowances for hips and bust, while misses' sizes are straighter than women's regular sizes and a trifle shorter waisted.

Provision is made for short or little women under 5 feet 4 inches in height who have the same measurements, except for height, as the regular sizes. No special provision is made, as a rule, for tall or long women. They are cared for by the extension of hems.

The "regular stout" begins with size 42 and continues

up to 56 and 58. The "short stout" is from 3 to 5 inches shorter than the "regular stout", but has "regular stout" measurements in bust and hips. Extra allowance is provided in width. The "short stout" is usually designated by quarter sizes, such as $42\frac{1}{4}$, $44\frac{1}{4}$, $46\frac{1}{4}$, to $52\frac{1}{4}$. The investigator found no quarter sizes in the stores in which observations were recorded.

"Stylish stouts" are designated by half sizes, such as $42\frac{1}{2}$, $44\frac{1}{2}$, $46\frac{1}{2}$, to $54\frac{1}{2}$. This figure type is distinguished from the "regular stout" by a more fully developed bust and longer waist. The hips are small in proportion to the bust.

The "stubby" or "odd stout" is usually designated by odd number sizes from 35 to 55. The investigator did not see dresses sized in this manner in stores where observations were recorded. This "stubby stout" is less developed across the back and bust but has a greater hip measure.

Short and little women's sizes are generally indicated by odd half sizes, such as $13\frac{1}{2}$, $15\frac{1}{2}$, $17\frac{1}{2}$, and $19\frac{1}{2}$, followed by women's half sizes $37\frac{1}{2}$, $39\frac{1}{2}$, to $53\frac{1}{2}$.

Junior sizes, designed for youthful figure types who still have the physique of children but who desire garments which give them more of a grown-up look, are designated in sizes 11, 13, 15, 17, and 19. They have narrower shoulders and are more flat breasted than regular sizes.

Although this classification of sizes is given here, real standardization of clothing sizes is largely in the developmental and experimental stage.

Number of Dresses Shown and Tried On

It was of particular interest to note that the 125 prospective buyers were shown a total of 571 dresses and that of this number, 319 were tried on. The time consumed by the customers in looking at dresses and trying them on amounted to 3,990 minutes, or $66\frac{1}{2}$ hours. This does not represent the total number of hours which the investigator spent in the stores, but the time devoted to observing consumers' buying habits. The number of dresses shown to a single shopper ranged from none to 14. The range of number of dresses tried on by an individual prospective buyer was from none to 12; the average number per person was 2.6 dresses; and the median number, 2 dresses. In each observation the time given by the clerks in assisting shoppers was from 5 to 120 minutes. The average time consumed was 31.8 minutes; and the median time, 25 minutes. The above information appears in Table 4.

The time of day during which observations were recorded is an indication of the time of day during which shopping is done. The number of customers who shopped from 9 to 12

Table 4. The Range, Average, and Median Numbers of Ready-made "Silk" Dresses Shown to 125 Prospective Buyers and Tried On by Them, and the Range, Average, and Median Numbers of Minutes Consumed Therein.

	Number of Dresses Shown	Number of Dresses Tried On	Time Given to Customer by the Clerk
Range	0 - 14	0 - 12	5 - 120 minutes
Average	4.6	2.55	31.8 minutes
Median	4	2	25 minutes
Total	(571)	(319)	(3,990 minutes or 66½ hours)

o'clock in the morning was 27, or 21.6 per cent; the greatest number of observations were recorded from 12 o'clock noon to 6 o'clock in the afternoon. Freedom from household tasks during the latter part of the day may account for the fact that more women shop during the afternoon. Few observations were recorded from 6 to 9 o'clock in the evening, which indicated that few customers really buy then even though many may go shopping. Only 6, or 4.8 per cent of the persons observed, selected this time to purchase garments. It is believed that people as a general rule prefer to make their choices in daylight. Many evening customers stated that their work interfered with daytime shopping. The times of day during which observations were recorded are as follows:

<u>Time of day</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
9 - 12 A. M.	27	21.6
12 M. - 6 P. M.	92	73.6
6 - 9 P. M.	6	4.8

Consumer Preferences

The preferences of the 125 prospective buyers of ready-made "silk" dresses were indicated by their requests for certain types of dresses, which designated purpose or occasion, sizes, colors, and qualities. Sixty, or 48.0 per cent, preferred a particular type of dress; 48, or 38.4

per cent, stated the size which they desired; 42, or 33.6 per cent, asked to be shown certain colors; 29, or 23.2 per cent, asked for certain materials; 15, or 12 per cent, definitely requested style in terms of tailored, semi-tailored, dressy, or semi-dressy garments.

Good quality--that is, excellence of material, design, and workmanship--was preferred by 9, or 7.2 per cent, according to statements made. The same number or percentage requested preferences for garments on display. Advanced showings were desired by 6, or 4.8 per cent. It is especially interesting to note that of the 125 selected shoppers not one requested advertised dresses. This is shown in Table 5.

Sixteen, or 12.8 per cent, of the prospective buyers who entered the dress departments stated no preferences in calling for ready-made "silk" dresses. Shoppers not mentioning preferences may have refrained for the reasons that they had not made up their minds to their needs and desires, or they felt that salespeople would intentionally limit the number of dresses shown if any preference were stated and they wished to see the entire stock. Some shoppers asked for the assistance of the salesperson; others did not wait for assistance; and a few shoppers avoided the clerk. Others, who were with friends, saw dresses which

Table 5. Factors Limiting Preferences for Ready-made "Silk" Dresses as Given by a Selected Group of 125 Prospective Buyers, Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

Factors Given	Number	Per Cent
Size	48	38.4
Type	60	48.0
Material	29	23.2
Color	42	33.6
Price	8	6.4
Good Quality	9	7.2
Style	15	12.0
As Advertised	0	0.0
On Display	9	7.2
Advanced Showings	6	4.8
No Limiting Factors Stated	16	12.8

they wished to examine or try on. In several cases it was not necessary for the customer to mention preferences because the salesperson was acquainted with her desires and tastes.

Thor (1931) states that type, material, color, and size were the 4 factors specified by about one-third of the customers. In this study, as in the one reported by Thor, it was found that type, material, color, and size were the factors most frequently mentioned. Forty-seven, or 37.3 per cent, of the shoppers indicated preferences by naming 2 factors; 35, or 28.8 per cent, expressed 1 factor. In no cases were there more than 5 factors mentioned.

Consumer Interest in Qualities of Garments

Consumer interest in qualities of materials was disclosed by 77, or 61.6 per cent, of the 125 shoppers, who gave special attention to the general appearance of the fabric. There were but 2 customers who asked for better dresses than those they were being shown, and 7 requested more practical garments. Washability was of importance to 36, or 28.8 per cent; 24, or 19.2 per cent, inquired about color fastness; and 23, or 18.4 per cent, asked if garments would shrink in tubbing. Sixteen, or 15.4 per cent, of the dresses sold were wash "silks". Information concerning

consumer interest in qualities of garments appears in Table 6.

Interest in construction of seams of garments was shown by remarks of 42, or 33.6 per cent, of the consumers. Hems were examined by 41, or 32.8 per cent, of the 125 shoppers. The observer noted that with the present popularity of straight skirts, in which may be found hems varying in width from 1 to 3 inches, less interest was shown in hem width than might be expected had there been quarter-inch hems as was true when flared skirts were fashionable.

Interest suddenly dropped from these qualities of materials and construction of seams and hems to low numbers and percentages for each of the following details of construction: finishing; stitching; fastenings; matching plaids, stripes, checks, and patterns; and hand versus machine work. There was no show of interest in hand stitching, due perhaps to the fact that most garments on the market are stitched with a machine simulating hand work. Consumers prefer other qualities to hand work, which would naturally increase the price of the garment.

Few consumers were interested in the cut of garments. Thirty-four, or 27.2 per cent, remarked about fullness; 8, or 6.4 per cent, expressed a belief that garments were skimpily cut. Garments at relatively high prices are less

Table 6. Evidence of Consumer Interest in Qualities of Materials, Garment Construction, Cut and Fit of Garments, Details in Dress Design, Cost of Upkeep, and Labels (Informative and Non-Informative), as Revealed by Remarks of 125 Prospective Buyers and Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

	Expression of Interest		No Expression of Interest	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Material:				
Quality	77	61.6	48	38.4
Color fastness	23	19.2	101	80.8
Shrinkage	23	18.4	102	81.6
Washability	36	28.8	89	71.2
Construction:				
Seams	42	33.6	83	66.4
Hems	41	32.8	84	67.2
Finishings	13	10.4	112	89.6
Stitching	10	8.0	115	92.0
Matching plaids, stripes, checks, and patterns	3	2.4	122	97.6
Fastenings	4	3.2	121	96.8
Hand vs. machine	0	0.0	125	100.0
Cut:				
Skimpy	8	6.4	117	93.6
Full	34	27.2	91	72.8
Right direction of fabrics	1	0.8	124	99.2
Fit:	73	58.4	52	41.6
Details in dress design:				
Application of trim	47	37.6	78	62.4
Amount of trim	41	32.8	84	67.2
Quality of trimming in relation to dress material and price of garment	15	12.0	110	88.0
Suitability of trimming in rela- to dress material	47	37.6	78	62.4
Upkeep:	13	10.4	112	89.6
Labels:				
Trade names	6	4.8	119	95.2
Original designs	1	0.8	124	99.2
Informative labels:				
Fiber content of fabric	3	2.4	122	97.6
Care of fabric	2	1.6	123	98.4
Others	1	0.8	124	99.2

likely to be skimpy in cut than are low priced garments. One of the purchasers examined the dress to see if it had been cut the right way of the material. She remarked that manufacturers of print dresses often cut one section of the print in the opposite direction from that of the other pieces of the garment.

Consumers were probably more interested in general appearance and fit of garments than they were in durability and wearing qualities of materials. Interest was expressed by 77, or 61.6 per cent, in material, and 73, or 58.4 per cent, indicated interest in fit. The 3.2 per cent difference in expression of interest with regard to general appearance of material and fit may be due to an apparent lack of knowledge about fit and to greater preference for good appearance than for comfort.

Consumers indicated interest in details of dress design. Forty-seven, or 37.6 per cent, referred to the application of trim; 47, or 37.6 per cent, expressed interest in suitability of trimming in relation to dress material; 41, or 32.8 per cent, revealed interest in the amount of trim; and 15, or 12 per cent, showed interest in quality of trimming in relation to dress material and price of the garment.

The cost of upkeep was of apparent interest to only

13, or 10.4 per cent, of the 125 prospective buyers. It was no doubt true that many purchasers did not intend to clean inexpensive garments, and therefore they were not concerned with cleaning, shrinkage, and care of fabrics.

Customers expressed only slight interest in labels. Six of the 125 shoppers, or 4.8 per cent, asked for information about trade names; 1 shopper indicated interest in original design labels; 3 were attracted by informative labels with regard to fiber content of the fabric; 2 noticed labels which gave information about the care of the fabric; and 1 shopper inquired about a label bearing the name of a dress designer.

It should be recognized that many shoppers may have been interested in more of the above qualities but failed to mention their interest.

Consumer Knowledge about Qualities of Garments

By consumer knowledge about qualities of garments, the investigator means information or wisdom with regard to such qualities.

Material was mentioned as a factor limiting preference by 29, or 23.2 per cent, of the 125 shoppers interested in ready-made "silk" dresses, as presented in Table 5. Table 7 reveals that 45, or 36.0 per cent, of the total shoppers

Table 7. Evidence of Specific Knowledge of Consumers in Regard to Qualities of Material, Garment Construction, Cut of Garment, Details in Dress Design, Cost of Upkeep, Names of Colors and Fabrics, and Labels, as Indicated by Remarks of 125 Prospective Buyers and Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

	Specific Knowledge		No Specific Knowledge	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Material	45	36.0	80	64.0
Construction	37	29.8	88	70.2
Cut	21	16.8	104	83.2
Details in dress design	34	27.2	91	72.8
Upkeep	12	9.6	113	90.4
Names of fabrics	13	10.4	112	89.6
Names of colors	13	10.4	112	89.6
Labels	1	0.8	124	99.2
Trade names	4	3.2	121	96.8
Original designs	0	0.0	125	100.0

had specific knowledge about materials and that 80, or 64.0 per cent, of the people observed attempted to shop with little or no knowledge as a guide in the rational selection of materials.

Thirty-seven, or 29.8 per cent, of the prospective buyers presented evidence of specific knowledge about construction, which leaves approximately two-thirds of them without information about construction that consumers should have in order to buy wisely. Thirty-four, or 27.2 per cent, of the shoppers exhibited knowledge about details in dress design.

It was of special interest to note that only 13, or 10.4 per cent, of the prospective buyers revealed specific knowledge about both color and fabric names. This small number may not mean that 89.6 per cent knew nothing about names of fabrics and colors, but they failed to present such information.

To the amazement of the investigator, only 1 of the prospective buyers revealed specific knowledge about labels; 4, or 3.2 per cent, indicated specific knowledge about trade names. There was no evidence of knowledge about original dress designs.

Remarks indicated that 17, or 13.6 per cent, of the 125 shoppers recognized fiber content; 108, or 86.4 per

cent, gave no sign of recognition. Six, or 4.8 per cent, of the total prospective buyers indicated recognition of fabric finish, such as weighting, and 5, or 4.0 per cent, evinced recognition of sized materials. Fabric construction or weave was recognized by only 7, or 5.6 per cent. This left 118, or 94.4 per cent, who expressed no knowledge about fabric construction. This is shown in Table 8 and Figure 1.

Bases for Selection of Dresses

The 104 customers who selected particular dresses gave various reasons; the most common reason given was that the choice was suited to their needs. Seventy-two, or 69.2 per cent, of the purchasers gave this reason as the most important one for their selections. If a dress is suited to the needs of an individual, it is well adapted for wear for certain occasions or purposes. Becomingness of color was given by 54 persons, or 52 per cent, as a reason for their purchases, and 37, or 35.6 per cent, of the total 104 purchasers remarked that becomingness of line and proportion helped to determine their preferences. The salesperson influenced 34, or 32.6 per cent, of the shoppers in making their choices. Individuality of style was mentioned by 31, or 29.8 per cent, as a reason for buying. The number desiring designs of youthful appearance was 21, or 20.2 per

Table 8. Evidence of Consumer Recognition of Fiber Content, Fabric Construction, and Fabric Finish, as Indicated by Remarks of 125 Prospective Buyers and Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

	Recognition		No Recognition	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Fiber content	17	13.6	108	86.4
Fabric finish:				
(1) Weighting	6	4.8	119	95.2
(2) Sizing	5	4.0	120	96.0
Fabric construction	7	5.6	118	94.4

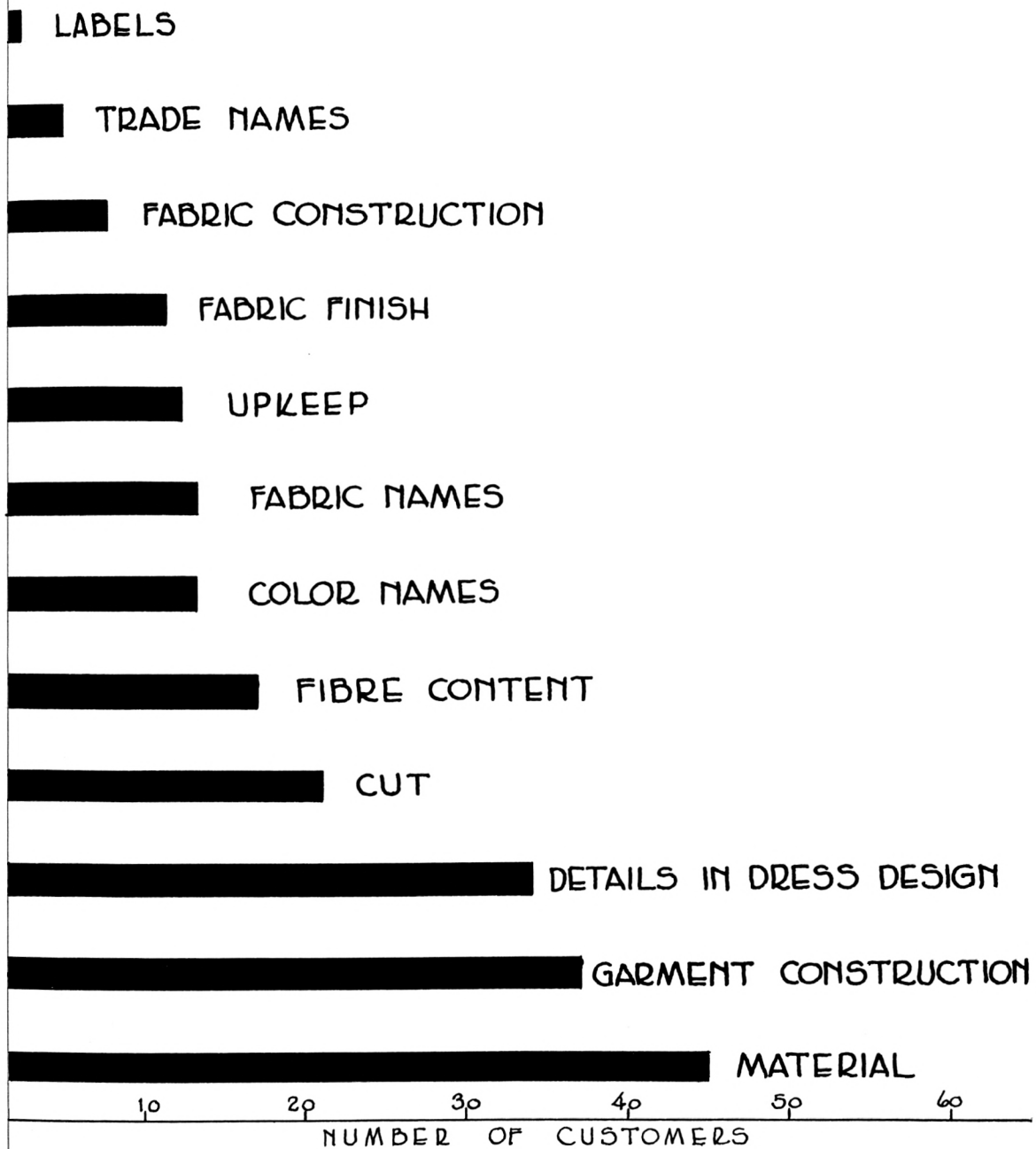


Fig.1: INDICATION OF CONSUMER KNOWLEDGE CONCERNING READY-MADE "SILK" DRESSES PURCHASED.

cent. Many garments available in larger sizes make the wearers appear older than they are and are unattractive on them.

Nineteen customers, or 18.3 per cent, selected dresses of the latest fashion because they desired to be up to date. Other motives mentioned as influencing sales were: urgent desire to have a dress at once; husband's insistence; companion shopper's suggestion; satisfaction of a whim; and mother's preference. Last resort was mentioned as a reason for purchasing by two customers who apparently had been shopping for some time and had found nothing they really desired.

The above information is found in Table 9 and Figure 2.

It should be recognized that customers mentioned from 1 to 8 reasons for selection of dresses. Most of them gave equal importance to from 1 to 4 reasons.

Classification of Dresses Purchased

Type. Type is the term used to designate purpose or occasion for which a dress is chosen.

Dresses purchased by 104 customers were classified as to type into 4 groups, namely: formal; semi-formal, street, including sport; and afternoon, or all-purpose. More afternoon, or all-purpose, dresses were sold than any other

Table 9. Bases for Selection of the 104 "Silk" Dresses Purchased as Indicated by the Remarks and Actions of the Dress Customers and Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

Bases for Selection	Number	Per Cent
Becomingness of line and proportion	37	35.6
Becomingness of color	54	52.0
Individuality of style	31	29.8
Latest fashion	19	18.3
Youthfulness of the style	21	20.2
Suited to needs	72	69.2
Must have a dress at once	10	9.6
Satisfies a whim	7	6.7
Influence of:		
Salesperson	34	32.6
Companion	7	6.7
Husband	8	7.7
Mother	4	3.85

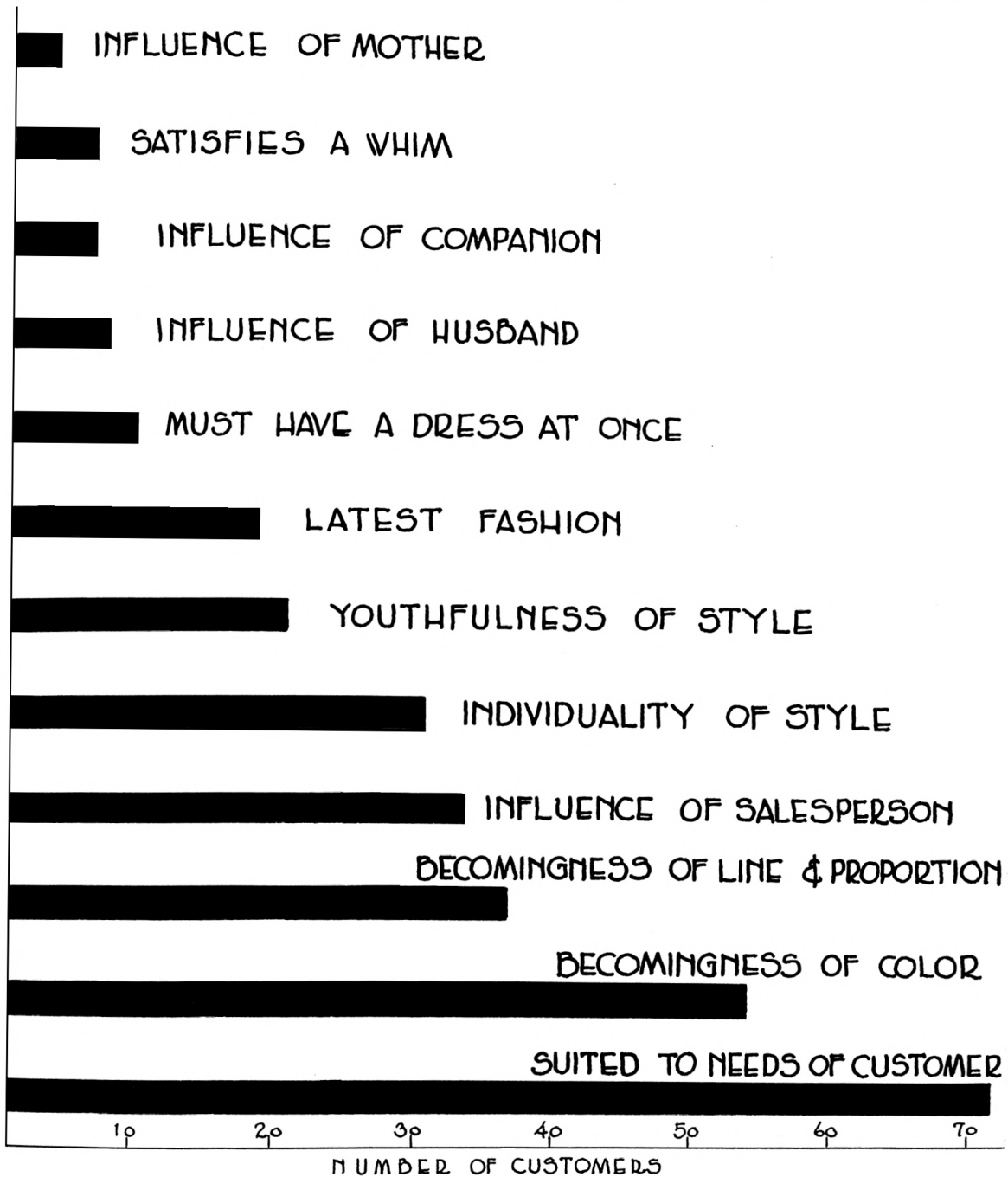


FIG. 2: REASONS GIVEN BY WOMEN FOR PURCHASING READY-MADE "SILK" DRESSES.

one type of dress. Fifty, or 48.1 per cent, of the shoppers considered in this study purchased such dresses; 30, or 28.8 per cent, purchased street and sport frocks; 22, or 21.2 per cent, purchased formals; and 2, or 1.9 per cent, bought semi-formal dresses. This information is shown in Table 10. Church (1936) states that 95.9 per cent of the rural women and 92.2 per cent of the urban women buy all-purpose "silk" dresses.

Type as a factor in limiting preference was indicated by 60, or 48.0 per cent, of the 125 shoppers (see Table 5). Fifty-two customers purchased the type of dress originally requested, while others had no particular type of dress in mind in their shopping.

Style. The investigator classified the 104 dresses purchased into 4 groups according to style, namely: tailored, semi-tailored, dressy, and semi-dressy. The tailored garment was the style dress most commonly requested. Of the total 104 customers, 73, or 71.8 per cent, purchased tailored styles. Dressy styles were bought by 23, or 22.2 per cent. The numbers of dresses and percentages in the 4 style classifications are presented in Table 10.

Six of the 125 prospective buyers requested advanced showings. However, this does not mean that only 4.8 per cent of the shoppers wanted to be dressed in the latest

Table 10. Classification as to Type, Style, Color, Material, Size, and Price of 104 Ready-made "Silk" Dresses Purchased by 125 Prospective Buyers, Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

	Number	Per Cent
Type:		
Afternoon	50	48.1
Street (including sport)	30	28.8
Formal	22	21.2
Semi-formal	2	1.9
Style:		
Tailored	73	70.2
Semi-tailored	6	5.8
Dressy	23	22.1
Semi-dressy	2	1.9
Color:		
Navy	15	14.4
Blue (light and medium)	13	12.5
Navy with design (print, 4; stripe, 2; polka dot, 5)	11	10.6
White	8	7.7
White print	4	3.9
Yellow	7	6.7
Yellow print	1	0.9
Black	7	6.7
Black and white	2	1.9
Lavender	5	4.8
Purple print	3	2.9
Orchid	2	1.9
Peach	4	3.9
Aqua	3	2.9
Green print	3	2.9
Green (light)	1	0.9
Brown	2	1.9
Tan	5	4.8

Table 10. (Continued)

	Number	Per Cent
Color (Concluded)		
Pink	2	1.9
Rose print	2	1.9
Red and white	2	1.9
Gray	1	0.9
Rust	1	0.9
Material:		
Crepe	27	26.0
Chiffon	17	16.3
Wash "silk"	16	15.4
Sheer	16	15.4
Cable net	8	7.7
Organza	6	5.8
Novelty "silk"	6	5.8
"Silk" lace	4	3.9
Taffeta	2	1.9
Moire	1	0.9
Silk pique	1	0.9
Size:		
12	4	3.8
13	1	0.9
14	23	22.1
16	33	31.7
18	22	21.2
18 ²	1	0.9
38	2	1.9
20	11	10.6
20 ²	3	2.9
40	3	2.9
42	1	0.9
Price:		
\$1.00 to \$4.95	14	13.5
5.00 to 9.95	35	33.6
10.00 to 14.95	23	22.1
15.00 to 19.95	17	16.4

Table 10. (Concluded)

	Number	Per Cent
Price (Concluded)		
\$20.00 to \$24.95	4	3.9
25.00 to 29.95	5	4.8
30.00 to 34.95	0	0.0
35.00 to 39.95	4	3.9
40.00 to 44.95	0	0.0
45.00 to 50.00	2	1.9
Cash	82	78.8
Charge	22	21.2

fashion, because 18.3 per cent of the 104 purchasers gave "latest fashion" as a reason for purchasing a particular ready-made "silk" dress.

Remarks concerning style and fashion of dresses were made by shoppers to the following effects: "The dresses are prettier this season than ever before." "That dress looks like me." "Now, why don't they make that style in my size (20)?" "Is this a new dress?" "Will this style (redingote) be good all summer?"

Several shoppers commented that they liked special styles, such as longer sleeves in summer dresses. Some wished to satisfy their own tastes, regardless of late fashions. Specific styles, such as jacket dresses or two-piece dresses, were requested by 11 shoppers and purchased by 26.

The investigator was especially interested in a remark or selling point made by a certain salesperson. A customer had questioned the appropriateness for her of a dress in a particular style which she had tried on. The saleswoman answered that it is very hard to improve upon a designer's work, as she knows her work, and if the style were not a suitable and becoming one for the customer the dress would not be made up in her size. This may or may not be true. It stands to reason that the differences in body build and

personal characteristics of shoppers necessitate individual styling and that there are wide differences in the requirements of those who wear dresses of different sizes. However, certain dresses may be made up in sizes ranging from 10 to 20 as well as in women's sizes, 32 to 54.

Color. As previously mentioned, 42, or 33.6 per cent, of the prospective buyers specified the colors of the dresses which they desired. Only 14 of those who requested particular colors purchased dresses of those colors.

Navy and light or medium blue dresses were purchased by 15, or 14.4 per cent, and 13, or 12.5 per cent, respectively. Navy with design (print, 4; polka dot, 5; and stripe, 2) made up 11, or 10.6 per cent, of the total 104 dresses sold. Eight, or 7.7 per cent, of the dresses sold were white, and 4, or 3.9 per cent, were white prints. Of the colors, yellow seemed of particular importance; 7, or 6.7 per cent, of the dresses sold were yellow, and 1 dress was of yellow print. Eight, or 6.7 per cent, of the dresses chosen were black. Other colors selected were black and white combination, lavender, purple print, orchid, peach, aqua, green print, light green, brown, tan, pink, rose print, red and white combination, grey, and rust. This information may be seen in Table 10.

Shoppers noted colors that were becoming to them and

those less becoming before any other quality of the garment was noted. They commented freely about the colors they preferred.

Fabric. Never before have shoppers had so many fabrics from which to choose their "silk" dresses. From observations of 125 prospective buyers, it was found that a wide variety of materials was selected by consumers.

Crepes were purchased by the greatest number, 27, or 26 per cent; chiffons were chosen by 17, or 16.3 per cent; and wash "silks" were preferred by 16, or 15.4 per cent.

Seventeen, or 16.4 per cent, invested in dresses of sheer or light weight, transparent fabrics, most of which were of synthetic fiber content. Other materials purchased by dress customers were cable net, organza, novelty "silk", "silk" lace, taffeta, moire, and silk pique. This information is found in Table 10.

Previous reference has been made to the fact that only 29, or 23.2 per cent, of the 125 prospective buyers mentioned materials which they particularly desired, and only 13, or 10.4 per cent, gave evidence of specific knowledge about names of fabrics (see Table 7). This should be recognized not as a particular fault of the consumers but as a result of the fact that new materials and new names for old materials are constantly appearing on the market.

There were no requests for guarantees of materials as to durability, that is, guarantees against shrinking, fading and roughing up. Neither were there requests for samples or for information secured through tests of the materials in the dresses observed. The customers' evident lack of information about the materials which they bought indicated that consumer education is both desirable and necessary.

Size. The sizes requested and bought by the 104 customers observed in this study are similar to those in the Thor study (1931). There were more demands for and purchases of size 16 than any other; 33, or 31.7 per cent, took this size. Twenty-three, or 22.1 per cent, bought size 14; and 22, or 21.3 per cent, selected size 18. These three sizes made up three-fourths of the dresses sold, or, in other words, 75 per cent of the 104 dresses considered were in this size range, 14 to 18. Other sizes purchased were 12, 13, $18\frac{1}{2}$, 20, $20\frac{1}{2}$, 38, 40, and 42. The number and percentage of the various sizes purchased are listed in Table 10 and shown in Figure 3.

The largest size observed in this study of consumer demand was size 42; there was just one customer who required this size. Those who require the larger sizes are likely to have difficulty in purchasing desirable garments because stores have a limited selection in the stout sizes. Church

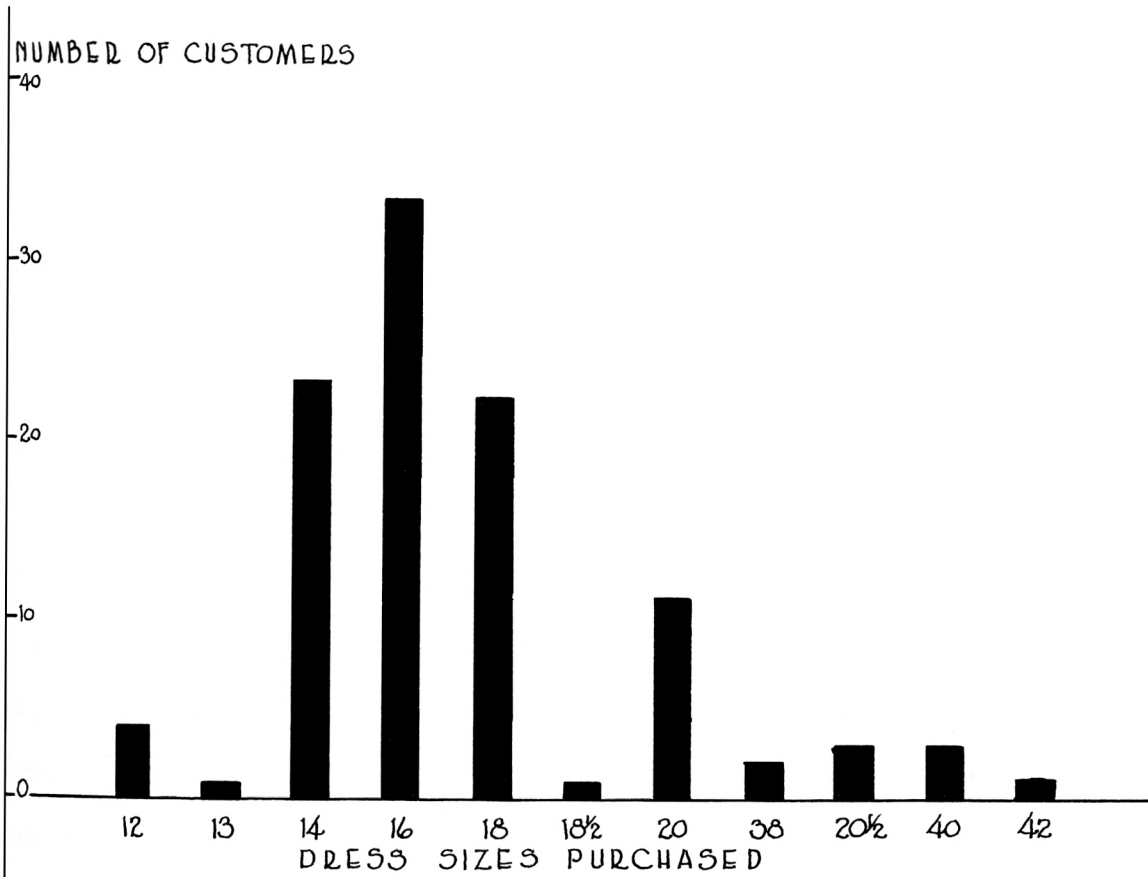


FIG. 3: NUMBER OF WOMEN PURCHASING DRESSES IN VARIOUS SIZES.

(1936) shows that the median number of her rural group wore size 38; of the urban group, size 16; and that the majority of women were most satisfactorily fitted in women's sizes.

In most cases, the customers knew exactly the size which they required. Forty-eight, or 38.4 per cent, (see Table 5) of the shoppers gave the size which they desired, and all but two purchased the requested size.

Price. Previous mention has been made that only 8, or 6.4 per cent, of the 125 shoppers gave price as a factor limiting their purchase of garments (see Table 5). This limitation was indicated by the following remarks: "Something cheap"; "reduced"; "not too high"; "inexpensive"; "under \$5.00"; "under \$18.00". Three of these 8 shoppers did not buy garments. Those who purchased inexpensive dresses bought \$4.95 and \$6.95 garments. The shopper who asked for a cheap dress purchased one at \$7.95, and the customer who requested a dress under \$18.00 paid \$16.95 and a \$3 alteration fee on the garment which she purchased. The person interested only in reduced prices bought a \$49.75 dress for \$39.75.

It should be recognized that when customers went into particular stores to shop for ready-made dresses they indicated in their selection of stores the approximate price they wished to pay. The fact, too, that in most stores

customers were attracted to the dress racks or departments which carry the prices in conspicuous numbers above the garments accounted for the few requests for dresses of a particular price.

Three prospective buyers who did not indicate a desired price refused to try on dresses because they were "too high in price"; 3 others refused to pay \$10.00, \$19.75, and \$19.95, respectively, for dresses they tried on and preferred to other garments. Purchasers who did not mention the amount they wished to pay for dresses, bought garments ranging in price from \$1.00 to \$49.75. The \$1.00 dress was a marked-down dress held over 2 seasons. The customer did not try it on but examined it carefully and remarked that she certainly could get \$1.00 worth of wear out of it if she wore it only around the house. Three customers purchased dresses because they felt the garments were bargains at sale prices.

The average price of the 104 dresses purchased was \$13.15, and the median price was \$10.50. Table 10 and Figure 4 show the prices paid for ready-made "silk" dresses. The greatest number retailed at one price was 11, or 10.6 per cent, at \$4.95; 10, or 9.6 per cent, sold at \$7.95; and 10, or 9.6 per cent, sold at \$9.95.

Eighty-two, or 78.8 per cent, of the customers paid

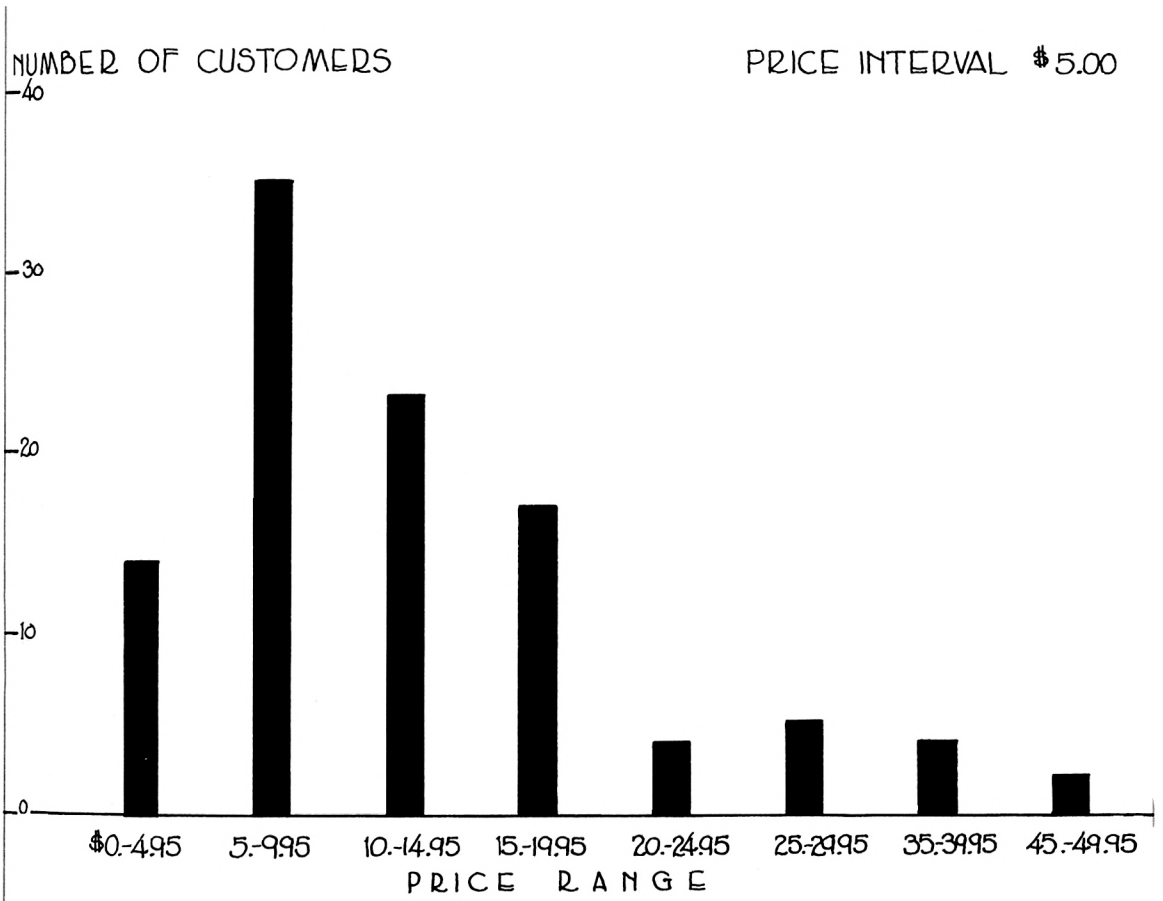


FIG.4. NUMBER OF WOMEN PURCHASING "SILK" DRESSES IN VARIOUS PRICE RANGES.

cash for dresses. This was by far the most common method of terms. Open credit in the form of charge accounts was extended to 22, or 21.2 per cent, of the purchasers.

Women of different body builds require different lines and proportions in garments. By observation it was found that most of the prospective buyers were intelligent about lines and proportions that were or were not becoming to them. If undecided about the appearance of garments, most shoppers asked opinions of the salesperson or of their companions. It is a rather well known fact that a person of one build can not wear styles in which some one of another body build looks well. Dresses must be tried on in order that their becomingness to the individual may be recognized.

Individual coloring certainly is a factor to be considered in selecting dresses. Most shoppers select dresses that emphasize or bring out the coloring of their eyes and hair; few people dress to skin coloring. There are well known colors for all persons in different color groups. Most prospective buyers have some knowledge of the various colors which are becoming to them.

Age is a factor about which many people are sensitive when purchasing dresses. A desire to look youthful may influence many selections; on the other hand, there are

many people who feel that they would be inappropriately dressed in many garments found on the market because such garments are too youthful looking. Line, design, color, and material determine the youthfulness of dresses. It is true that the smaller sizes often are more youthful in appearance. Larger sizes in dresses usually tend toward matronly lines, darker colors, conservative materials, and less conspicuous detail and trim. However, there are many dresses in large sizes which violate all the principles of good design for the large figure. Mother and daughter may wear the same style and size dress as it appears on the market today and feel equally well dressed and fashionable, provided the style is simple and conservative.

It is of interest to note that 80 per cent, or 100 customers, purchased dresses for themselves and that 3, or 2.4 per cent, of the purchasers selected garments for a friend, sister, or grandmother. One young woman bought a dress and remarked that her sister "must wear it, too". At the time alterations were made on this dress, the sister's measurements were considered and the dress was fitted for them both.

Data on the selection of dresses follows:

<u>People purchasing for</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Self	100	80.0
Self and sister	1	0.8
Friend	1	0.8
Sister	1	0.8
Grandmother	1	0.8
<u>People who did not purchase</u>	21	16.8

Approvals and Returned Goods

One hundred four, or 83.2 per cent, of the 125 shoppers bought ready-made "silk" dresses, and 21, or 16.8 per cent, of the sales were lost. Table 11 gives this information.

Of the 104 purchases, 2 garments were returned and refunds made to the customers. One garment, a formal dress which had been altered slightly for the customer, was returned the morning after the purchase. In the opinion of the investigator, the reason given for returning the dress, that the party at which it was to have been worn was called off, was insufficient and unfair to the store. The store accepted the merchandise and cheerfully refunded the cash paid for the garment except the 50 cent alteration fee. The other customer, who returned a dress after purchase, informed the salesperson that the dress was too tight with the slip she had to wear with it, and that her husband thought the color too dark for summer wear. Even though

Table 11. The Prospective Buyers Observed, Dresses Purchased, Sales Lost, Returns After Sales, Dresses Taken on Approval, and Sales Resulting from Approvals, Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

	Number	Per Cent
Prospective buyers:	125	100.0
Dresses purchased	104	83.2
Sales lost	21	16.8
Returns after sales	2	1.9
Dresses taken on approval:	14	13.5
Dresses kept	10	71.5
Dresses returned	4	28.5

the dress was marked down, the store, breaking a hard and fast rule, refunded the money to the customer.

Fourteen, or 13.5 per cent, of the 104 dresses were taken on approval by 11 customers. Ten garments, or 71.5 per cent of the garments taken on approval, were kept and 4, or 28.5 per cent, were returned. Reasons for returning goods were that 1 dress was kept out of several taken on approval or that the customer found after taking it home that she did not need the type of garment selected.

Alterations

Table 12 and Figure 5 show that of the 104 dresses purchased, 43, or 41.4 per cent, required no alteration; 52, or 50.0 per cent, needed slight alteration; and 5, or 4.8 per cent, needed extensive alteration. It was impossible to obtain information concerning alteration of dresses taken on approval or purchased without being tried on at the store. Twenty-nine, or 27.8 per cent, of the hems needed adjustment; 20, or 19.2 per cent, of the waistlines required alteration; and 20, or 19.2 per cent, of the side seams required refitting. Other alterations in fewer number were made on sleeves, jackets, shoulder lines, and darts in the skirts.

Customers, as a rule, wished to avoid alterations.

Table 12. Extent to Which the 104 Ready-made "Silk" Dresses Purchased Required Alterations, Parts Altered, Objections to Alterations, by Whom Alterations Were Made, and Prices of Alterations, Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

	Number	Per Cent
Alterations required:		
Slight	52	50.0
Extensive	5	4.8
None	43	41.4
Dresses taken on approval	4	3.8
Parts altered:		
Hem	29	27.8
Waistline	20	19.2
Side seams	20	19.2
Sleeves	4	3.9
Jacket	4	3.9
Shoulders	2	1.9
Darts in back	1	0.9
Objections to alterations:		
Yes	1	1.8
No	56	98.2
Objections to extra charge for alterations:		
Yes	2	3.5
No	55	96.5
By whom alterations were made:		
Store	27	47.3
Customer	24	42.2
Dressmaker	6	10.5
Prices of alterations made by stores and dressmakers:		
No extra charge	18	54.5
Charges ranging from \$0.40 to \$3.00	15	45.5

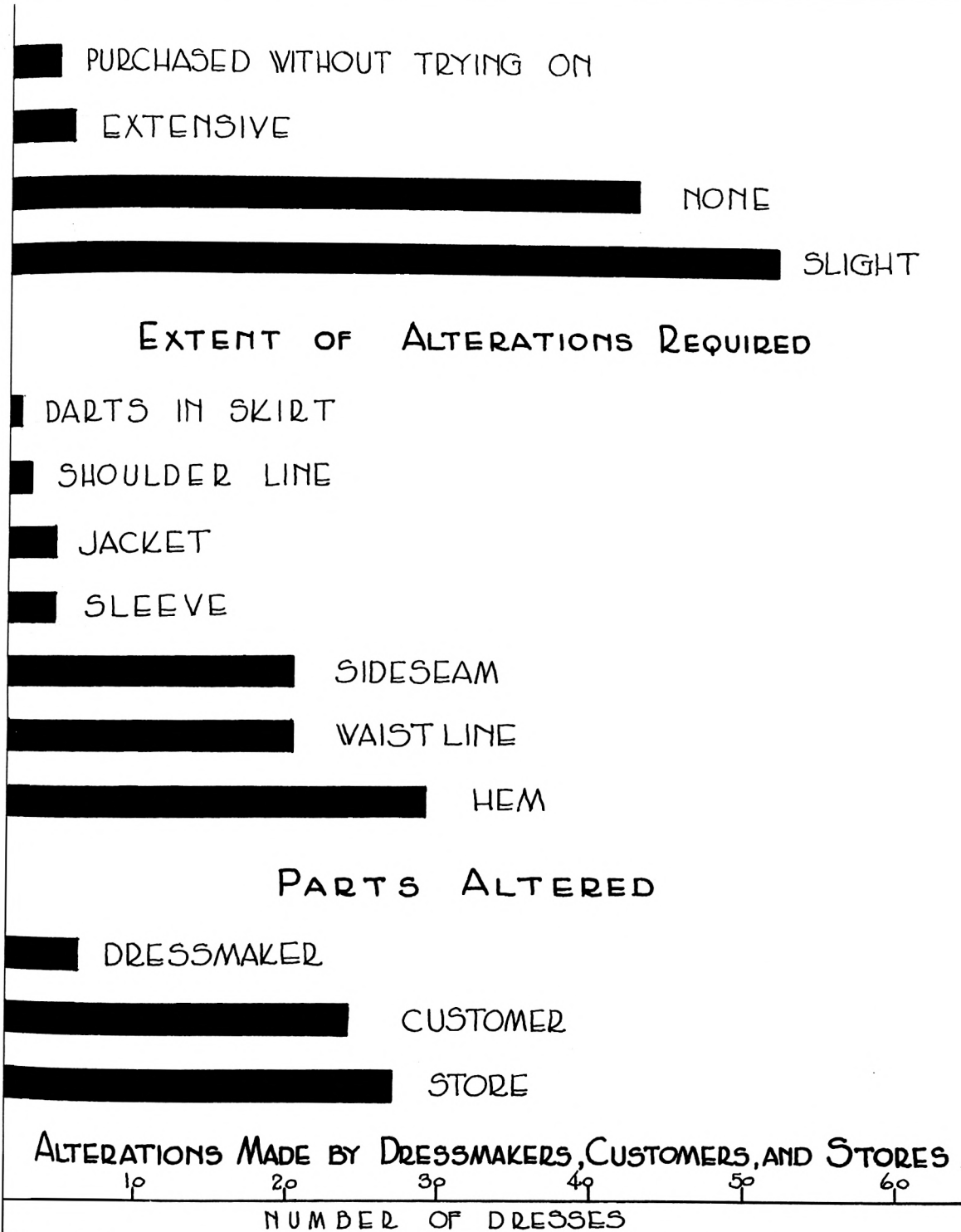


FIG. 5: EXTENT OF ALTERATIONS ON DRESSES PURCHASED, PARTS ALTERED, AND BY WHOM ALTERED.

It was surprising to note that of the 57 alterations necessary only 1 person objected to having a selected dress altered. Alteration fees ranged from \$0.40 to \$3.00 and were paid by 15 customers. Two, or 3.5 per cent, of the customers objected to an extra charge for alterations. In 1 case, the shopper remarked that the alteration cost was one-fourth of the retail price and refused to purchase for this reason. The other shopper stated that dresses should be ready-to-wear just as the name implied, and that no charge should be made for alterations if dresses did not fit.

Five of the 7 stores had their own alteration departments located in the stores; the other 2 stores employed dressmakers to do their work outside of the stores. Twenty-seven, or 47.3 per cent, of the alterations were done by the store departments; 24, or 42.2 per cent, of the alterations were made by the customers themselves; and 6, or 10.5 per cent, of the alterations were done by dressmakers.

Companion Shoppers

Table 13 reveals that 70, or 56 per cent, of the selected group of 125 shoppers were accompanied. We may assume that these prospective buyers wished to have aid or advice in selection of dresses. The greatest number, 28, or 40 per cent, of the companion shoppers were women or

Table 13. Extent to Which the Group of 125 Shoppers Observed Were Accompanied by Friends and/or Relatives When Shopping for Ready-made "Silk" Dresses, Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

	Number	Per Cent
Mother	9	12.9
Mother and father	1	1.4
Mother and aunt	1	1.4
Mother and friend	2	2.8
Daughter and father	4	5.7
Daughter	7	10.0
Husband	6	8.6
Sister	7	10.0
Aunt	1	1.4
Son-in-law	3	4.3
Friends:		
Women or girl	28	40.0
Man	1	1.4
Unaccompanied shoppers	55	44.0

girl friends; 9, or 12.9 per cent, were mothers, and 7, or 10.0 per cent, were daughters of the shoppers. In other cases, friends or relatives came with shoppers in such combinations as mother and father, mother and friend, mother and aunt, daughter and father, or, singly, husband, sister, aunt, son-in-law, and friend.

Fifty-five, or 44 per cent, of the prospective buyers were unaccompanied, indicating that they were not interested in others' opinions, they desired to select for themselves, or they relied to a great extent on the information and suggestions given by salespeople.

Previous explanation has been made of the influence of companion shoppers on the purchase of garments.

Reasons for Lost Sales

Reasons for lost sales appear in Table 14. Nine shoppers, or 42.8 per cent, stated a desire to look farther; 8, or 30 per cent, refused to try on dresses; and 7, or 33.3 per cent, objected to price. Six shoppers gave other reasons for not purchasing, such as serious flaw found in desired dress, or necessity for asking parents for money. Wrong style and indecision each were given as reasons by 5, or 23.8 per cent, of the prospective buyers. Four, or 19.1 per cent, found nothing that suited them; 3, or 14.3 per

Table 14. Reasons for Lost Sales, Stated in
Numbers and Percentages.

	Number	Per Cent
Fit:		
Customer poorly proportioned	2	9.5
Cut of dress	1	4.8
Size:		
Customer refused to buy needed size	1	4.8
Alterations	2	9.5
Color	3	14.3
Customer wished to look farther	9	42.8
Indecision	5	23.8
No evident reason	2	9.5
Not desired fabric	2	9.5
Nothing suits	4	19.1
Price	7	33.3
Refused to try on dresses	8	38.0
Style	5	23.8
Other reasons	6	28.6

cent, expressed a wish to look farther for desired colors. Two, or 9.5 per cent, of the sales lost were due to the fact that the customer was poorly proportioned and therefore difficult to fit in dresses. Two, or 9.5 per cent, of the sales were lost because extensive alterations would be necessary, and 2, or 9.5 per cent, because dresses otherwise desired were not in the fabric the customer requested. In 2 cases no particular reason could be given by the shopper. One person refused to buy because of the cut of the garment, and one person refused to purchase needed size.

In the record form, other reasons for lost sales than those given above were listed for consideration. These were: limited selection in needed or odd sizes; poor attitude of the clerk; lack of comfort with reference to fit and material; poor construction of dresses in the lower price groups; high cost of upkeep; and lack of fashionableness.

Table 15 shows the various reasons given by the 14 shoppers from the total 125 observed who refused to try on dresses. Three, or 21.4 per cent, refused to try on dresses because the salespeople substituted colors or styles. The same number and percentage remarked that nothing they saw in the department suited their tastes or desires. That the price was too high and that the customer was shopping

Table 15. Reasons for Refusals to Try On Dresses,
Stated in Numbers and Percentages.

	Number	Per Cent
No dresses to show in requested style or color	3	21.4
Nothing suits	3	21.4
Price too high	2	14.3
Not for self	2	14.3
Just shopping	1	7.2
Too tired	1	7.2
Rather try it at home	1	7.2
Tell by looking at dress that alterations would be necessary	1	7.2

for some one other than herself were mentioned by 2, or 14.3 per cent, of the shoppers who refused to try on dresses. "Just shopping"; "too tired"; "rather try it at home"; "can tell by looking at the dress that alterations would be necessary" all were given by prospective buyers as reasons for refusing to try on garments.

The 21 observations of sales which were lost did not furnish sufficient information to draw conclusions or to establish positive reasons for loss of sales.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Prospective purchasers were shown 571 dresses, the median number being 4 to each shopper. Dresses tried on numbered 319, the median being 2 per shopper. From those shown, 104 dresses were selected and purchased. The median time consumed was 25 minutes for each customer.

2. The estimated ages of shoppers ranged from 14 to 75 years, the median age being 27 years.

3. Approximately three-fourths of the shoppers observed were housewives, students, and teachers. Housewives comprised approximately one-third of the entire number observed.

4. The 4 factors most often mentioned by customers as limiting preferences were, in order of importance, (1) type

of dress, (2) size of dress, (3) color of dress, and (4) material of dress.

5. Consumer interest in the garment, whenever expressed, was in terms of quality of the material, fit of the garment, and workmanship. Little interest was expressed in informative labels, trade names, and original design labels.

6. Expressions of shoppers indicated that 36 per cent had some knowledge about materials; 14 per cent recognized fiber content; 9 per cent indicated recognition of fabric finish; and fabric construction was recognized by 6 per cent of the customers.

7. Tailored dresses were purchased by 72 per cent of the customers. Afternoon dresses were in greatest demand; half of the customers purchased garments of this type. The materials most often purchased were "silk" crepe, 26 per cent; chiffon, 16 per cent; wash "silk", 15 per cent; and sheer material, 15 per cent.

8. Navy, medium, and light blue were the most common colors purchased, followed, in order of importance, by white, yellow, black, and 14 other colors.

9. Dresses in size 16 were purchased by 32 per cent of the customers; size 14 by 22 per cent; and size 18 by 21 per cent. The range of sizes purchased was from 12 to 20 and from 38 to 42.

10. Price was definitely a consideration in the purchase of dresses. The price groups from which more than 50 per cent of the dresses were purchased were from \$5.00 to \$9.95 and from \$10.00 to \$14.95, the price range being \$1.00 to \$49.75. Cash was paid by 79 per cent of the customers; the remaining 21 per cent charged purchases.

11. The apparent reasons for the selection of dresses, in order of importance, were: (1) suitability to the customer's needs, (2) becomingness of color, (3) becomingness of line and proportion, (4) influence of salesperson, and (5) individuality of style.

12. Relatives and friends accompanied 56 per cent of the shoppers. It seemed that 18 per cent of those who accompanied prospective buyers influenced sales.

13. Over 50 per cent of the dresses purchased required alterations. Hems, waistlines, and side seams were the parts most frequently altered. The alteration departments of stores made 47 per cent of the alterations; 42 per cent of the customers made their own alterations; and the remainder were to be made by dressmakers. Alteration charges paid by customers ranged from \$0.40 to \$3.00.

14. The percentage of dresses taken on approval by prospective buyers was 14 per cent. Of this number, 72 per cent were kept and 28 per cent were returned.

15. Observations of 21 customers who failed to purchase do not furnish sufficient information upon which reasons for loss of sales can be based. However, from those given, it would seem that shoppers wished to familiarize themselves with merchandise before buying, or did not find the merchandise satisfactory, or objected to price.

CONCLUSIONS

From this study of the purchasing habits of 125 shoppers definite conclusions can not be drawn; however, from the data presented the following are evident:

1. Consumers are interested in the qualities of ready-made "silk" dresses, but possess little knowledge of such qualities.
2. Price and style are of greater importance to consumers than quality and workmanship in the purchase of ready-made "silk" dresses.
3. There is need for consumer education.
4. Further studies of consumers' buying habits would be of value in planning courses in consumer buying.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer wishes to express her appreciation to Professor Alpha Latzke, who directed this study; and to the managers and salespeople of stores, who have helped to make this investigation possible.

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APPENDIX

Form Card Used in Securing Record of Purchasing Habits
of Consumers with Regard to Ready-made Silk Dresses

- _____
1. Date of observation _____; Time of day _____
Approximate amount of time given to customer by the
clerk _____
 2. Store in which observations are made _____
Town _____
(a) Kind of store _____
(b) Size of department _____
 3. Approximate age of customer _____
 4. Physical characteristics of customer:
(a) Height: (1) tall; (2) average; (3) short
(b) Weight: (1) slender; (2) medium; (3) stout
(c) Coloring: (1) blond; (2) brunette; (3) medium;
(4) red hair (5) grey hair
 5. Occupation of the customer _____
(a) facts furnished; (b) guessed
 6. Was the customer alone or accompanied? _____
Accompanied by whom? _____
 7. Limiting factors mentioned in calling for a dress:
(a) size (e) price (i) on display
(b) type (f) quality (j) advanced
(c) material (g) style showing
(d) color (h) as advertised

8. The number of dresses shown to customer _____
9. The number of dresses tried on by customer _____
10. Did the customer show interest with regard to:
- (a) Material in the garment? _____
- (1) quality; (2) color fastness; (3) shrinkage;
(4) washability
- (b) Construction of the garment? _____
- (1) seams (5) matching plaids, stripes,
(2) hems (6) checks, and patterns
(3) finishings (6) fastenings
(4) stitching (7) hand vs. machine
- (c) Cut of garment? _____
- (1) skimpy; (2) full; (3) right direction of fabrics
- (d) Fit of the garment? _____
- (e) Details in dress design? _____
- (1) application of trim
(2) amount of trim
(3) quality of trimming in relation to dress
material and price of garment
(4) suitability of trimming in relation to
dress material
- (f) Cost of upkeep? _____
11. Did the customer display any specific knowledge with regard to:
- (a) material (e) cost of upkeep
(b) construction (f) names of fabrics
(c) cut (g) color names
(d) details in dress design

12. Was the customer able to recognize:
- (a) fiber content? _____
 - (b) type of fabric finish: (1) weighting; (2) sizing
 - (c) fabric construction? _____
13. Did the customers ask for information with regard to labels:
- (a) trade names _____
 - (b) original design labels _____
 - (c) informative labels: (1) fiber content of fabric;
(2) care of fabric; (3) others
14. Did the customer show evidence of knowledge about:
- (a) labels (b) trade names (c) original design
15. Kind of dress purchased:
- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| (a) type _____ | (d) style _____ |
| (b) material _____ | (e) price _____ |
| (c) color _____ | (f) size _____ |
16. Was dress purchased for some one other than self? _____
17. Bases for selection:
- (a) becomingness of line and proportion
 - (b) becomingness of color
 - (c) individuality of style
 - (d) latest fashion
 - (e) youthfulness of the style
 - (f) suited to her needs
 - (g) must have a dress at once
 - (h) satisfies a whim
 - (i) influence of:
 - (1) salesperson
 - (2) companion shopper or shoppers
 - (3) husband's choice
 - (4) mother's choice

18. Alterations on dresses purchased:

(a) Did dresses require alterations? _____

(1) slight; (2) extensive

(b) parts altered _____

(c) objections to alterations _____

(d) objections to extra charge on alterations _____

(e) by whom was alteration made:

(1) the store; (2) the customer; (3) dressmaker

(f) price of alteration _____

19. Reasons for refusal to try on dresses _____

20. Dresses "taken on approval":

(a) how many? _____; (b) was a dress kept? _____

21. Returned goods:

(a) after purchase; reason _____

(b) from approvals; reason _____

22. Reasons for loss of sale:

(a) fit: (1) customer poorly proportioned; (2) cut of

(b) size: (1) customer refused to buy needed size;
(2) limited selection in needed size

(c) alterations

(d) attitude of clerk

(e) color

(f) comfort

(g) construction

(h) cost of upkeep

(i) customer wishes to look farther

22. Reasons for loss of sale (Concluded)

- (j) fashionableness
- (k) indecision
- (l) no evident reason
- (m) not desired fabric
- (n) nothing suits
- (o) Price
- (p) refused to try on dresses
- (q) style
- (r) others