

To Fit or Not to Fit: A Breast Cancer Patient's Post-Treatment Garment Selection Dilemma

Norazean Miswak
Politeknik Port Dickson
nurazr78@yahoo.com

Abstract

Academic research has ignored the needs of breast cancer patients for fit in garment selection, in contrast to disability individuals. This type of consumer, it is suggested, warrants special attention in study. After treatment, the majority of breast cancer patients experience a variety of changes, including physical alterations, psychological concerns, and social concerns. These alterations result in stigma or a poor image. This report presents the findings of an exploratory study that aimed to learn more about breast cancer patients' preferences for garment fit. During the interview, ten informants' spontaneous speech was audio/visually recorded, and sketches were used as an artefact probe. Inductive thematic analysis was used to examine the data, and three significant themes emerged: loose cutting, true size, and flexibility. These breast cancer women had a love-hate connection with clothing fit and sizing, particularly ready-made apparel, and used well-fitting garments to boost self-confidence, hide defects, and appear as normal as possible. Ideas for future study directions in these areas are discussed.

Keywords: body confidence, clothe, stigma

1.0 Introduction

In Malaysia, one in every eighteen women is diagnosed with breast cancer. Because of the devastating impacts of cancer, stigma will always exist and be a problem. A clever and competent surgeon at Johns Hopkins Hospital named William Stewart Halsted devised a radical mastectomy treatment for breast cancer patients in the 1890s. The surgery removes the tumours and reduces the risk of recurrence in the immediate area. This operation was said to have increased the survival rate of breast cancer patients, earning the surgeon a prestigious place in American science history. Despite surviving the mastectomy treatment, many women, particularly women, were left feeling wounded and disabled. Patients with breast cancer have been left with scars as a result of treatment and surgery operations. Physical markers, as well as emotional (psychology) and social marks, are all included in the list. As a result, the focus of this study is on determining post-mastectomy women's clothing fit preferences.

2.0 Stigma

Stigma was defined by Goffman (1963) as Physical Deviance. He also describes stigma as a one-of-a-kind link between the blamed and stereotype. When an attribute isn't required, is difficult to comprehend, or is unique, it becomes a stigma (Goffman, 1963). Goffman identified two approaches to overcoming stigma. Covering and passing are the two most common tactics for hiding stigma. The basic aim behind these tactics is to conceal the

problem. Covering entails concealing a stigma in order to reduce tension or divert attention away from the stigma. In the meantime, it is envisaged that the law will apply to the hiding of disability by people with disabilities with disabilities (Feather & Kaiser, 1988).

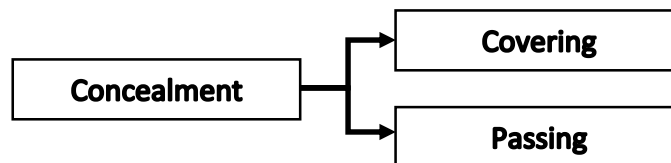


Figure 1 : Goffman's ideas for concealment (1963)

Clothing is used in appearance management. Since appearance management is important to create a balanced and positive image between appearance and disabilities (Wei, Yan, Huang & Nie, 2017; Wiedemann, Burt, Hill & Barton, 2015). Appearance can be manipulated through the correct use of clothing and accessories. However, Malcom, (2002) believes concealment is not just to hide weaknesses but also to protect their modesty. Clothing is also symbolic in improving their confidence.

3.0 Clothing and appearance

Appearance management involves the usage of clothing. Because it's crucial to strike a balance between appearance and disability in order to project a positive image, appearance management is crucial (Wei et al., 2017; Wiedemann et al., 2015). People with disabilities, according to Kaiser (1998), tend to utilise clothes as a method to minimise community perceptions of their handicap while simultaneously enhancing their appearance. The correct usage of clothing and accessories can be used to alter one's appearance. Malcom (2002), on the other hand, feels that camouflage is used not only to hide flaws but also to safeguard one's modesty. Clothing also serves as a symbol for boosting their self-esteem.

Clothing is a requirement of life. Clothing, in general, refers to "body-covering garments." Clothes, on the other hand, do more than simply cover and protect the body. Clothing also protects against the elements, such as the weather (rain, snow, and heat) (Fan, Yu, & Hunter, 2004). Clothes are also utilised to create a person's social and cultural identity so that they can be distinguished from others. Damhorst (1990) emphasises that "dress is a systematic means of transmitting information about the wearer," implying that clothing is a type of communication that reveals a person's culture and identity. This statement is also consistent with empirical findings from earlier studies (Kaiser, 1998b). In elaborating on why humans wear clothing, examine four well-established hypotheses. People dress for the reasons illustrated in Figure 2 below, according to Kaiser.

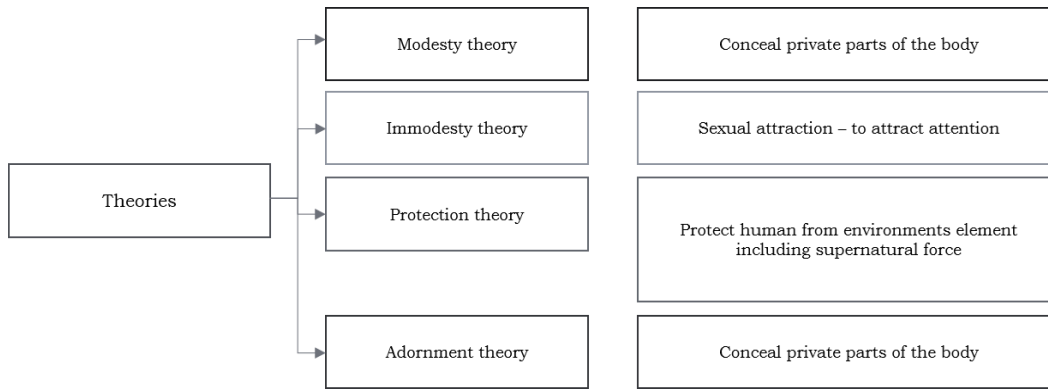


Figure 2 : Adapted from "Why People Wear Clothing," four theories reveal "why people wear clothing" (Kaiser, 1998b)

Kaiser (1990) proposed four explanations about why people dress. These four theories, on the other hand, are applicable to those who are not disabled. Clothing is necessary for people with impairments for more than just covering their bodies. The clothing contains communication elements for the wearer. According to Damhorst (1990), the beauty of a garment is determined by how well it serves its intended purpose. Clothing is worn by people with impairments to hide their flaws and shortcomings. c. Between "student without a disability" and "student with a disability," the theory is essentially the same. (Barnard, 2021), a fashion theory author, has a little disagreement with the modesty theory. The modesty idea, according to Kaiser (1990), refers to concealing private portions of the body, however, Barnard (2021) claims that clothes do not draw attention away from the body or reduce awareness.

Table 1 : Adapted from a comparison of four theories (Kaiser, 1998b)

Without disability "Why people wear clothes " 1990 (Kiser)	"Student with a disability " 1985 (Kaiser, Freeman, and Wingate)	Other research
Modesty	Concealment	Covering (Goffman, 1963)
Immodesty	Deflection	Bareness (Chun, 2010)
Protection	Compensation	none
Adornment	Emphasis	Exaggerated (Chun Sheng Wu, 2010)

4.0 Method

4.1 Design

Given a large number of options, the researcher decided to concentrate on the fit preference function. To learn more about the physical issue, psychology issue, fit preference, and social impact, semi-structured

interviews with open-ended questions were undertaken. Because participation was difficult to come by, the snowball sampling approach was utilised to find names and addresses that could not be distributed. The researcher can use this sampling strategy to ask each informant to recommend another informant. As a result, the number of participants will grow, and the researcher will be able to collect new data and rich case studies.

Investigating known patterns and models is an important aspect of the design problem's systematic examination. As a result, this step entailed looking for clothing models and patterns in academic journals, catalogues, and websites. Breast cancer patients do not wish to be segregated with an unusual design in this scenario. As a result, the goal of this research is to find the best and most appropriate apparel for breast cancer patients in order to meet their needs. The investigation is founded on earlier research's empirical evidence, which is then integrated with current interviews. This study will be able to detect the needs and abilities of a wide variety of breast cancer patients thanks to the integration of data. This information may make it easier for breast cancer patients to find what they need, as well as serve as an indicator for the types of clothing that can be used to categorise functional, emotive, and aesthetic (FEA) features.

4.2 Participants

The sample population is homogeneous because this is a qualitative case study and the target informants have been determined. Breast cancer patients and women with breast cancer, ranging in age from 30 to 60, were included in the study. The informants can clearly identify the upper body constraint and preferred fit. Only the upper body was employed in this study.

Table 1 : Informants and informants in total.

	Summary of the informant (group one)	Summary of the interview (group Two)
Sampling		
	Participant (n=20)	Participant (n=13)
Paper	2	2
WhatsApp application	4	2
Email	14	0
Snowball	0	6
Drop out	0	3

4.3 Data collection

The data collection process began in February 2017 and ended on November 27th, 2017. For a variety of reasons, the data collection process

had to be extended. Participants' health issues, cancellation of the meeting at the last minute owing to treatment and follow-up sessions, inability to reach the address, and unwillingness to attend at the last minute are among the reasons. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes to 2 hours and 30 minutes.

Initially, a total of ten women were interviewed. In order to make the greatest apparel that can enhance the participants' confidence, certain questions in the interview were made to disclose physical issues, psychological issues, and fit preference.

5.0 Finding

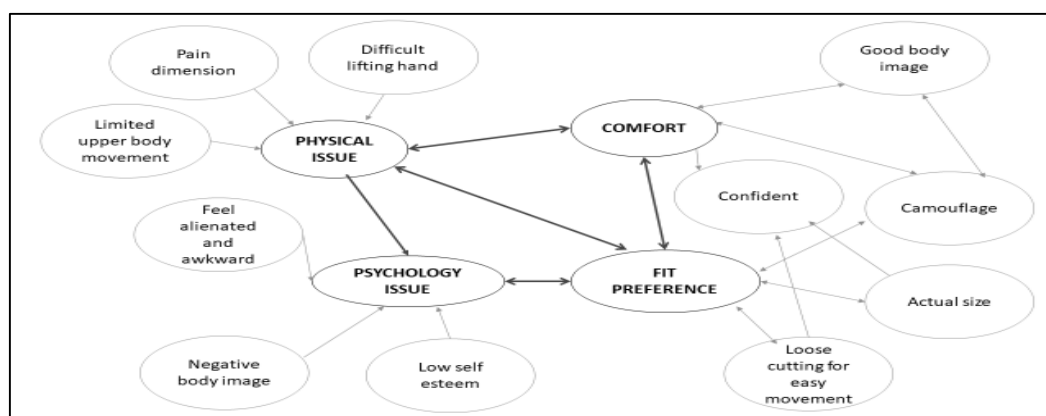


Figure 4 : Theme and sub-theme arise from thematic analysis in this study.

5.1 Theme and sub-theme

The experiences of dress fitting among women with breast cancer revealed four significant features. Physical issue, psychology issue, fit preference, and comfort are the four themes that emerge; this finding is consistent with Carroll & Gross, (2010) and Grogan, Gill, Brownbridge, Kilgariff & Whalley (2013). Figure 4 shows how the topic was linked through sub-themes. The Fit choice was linked to camouflage and comfort, for example, since breast cancer patients said that hiding the imperfection with clothing made them feel more confident and comfortable. Each concept will be expanded upon, with vivid statements from the informants to back it up.

5.1.1 A physical problem

Post-treatment for breast cancer can result in a variety of difficulties, such as an unbalanced body structure owing to the removal of one or both breasts, or lymphedema, which causes fluid to build up in the affected area. This illness also causes pain and makes lifting and moving large objects difficult. As a result, the proper fit of clothing is critical in concealing imperfection. All of the informants in Figure 5 mentioned that they are dealing with a pain dimension. According to BCP09, "I: Yes, both (refer to bra and prosthesis), they put silicone inside the bra, they give us comfort, maybe. Me myself, sometimes not wearing it, because, my surgical wound area is here

(chest area), so went wearing it tight, it feels hurt, so it becomes uncomfortable”.

Radiotherapy-induced discomfort can cause burning symptoms, making the skin more sensitive. Patients who are undergoing radiotherapy and are in pain should wear appropriate attire to keep themselves comfortable and the treatment area clean. They will feel more confident and comfortable during the uncomfortable treatment phase if they wear good thermal clothes that can tolerate heat and give moisture. (Carroll, 2001; Gho et al., 2014).

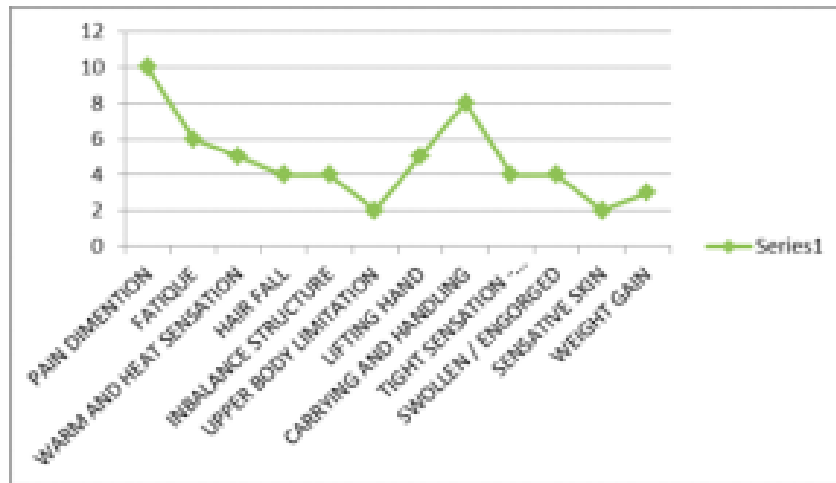


Figure 5 : Ten informants' physical issue

5.1.2 A psychological problem

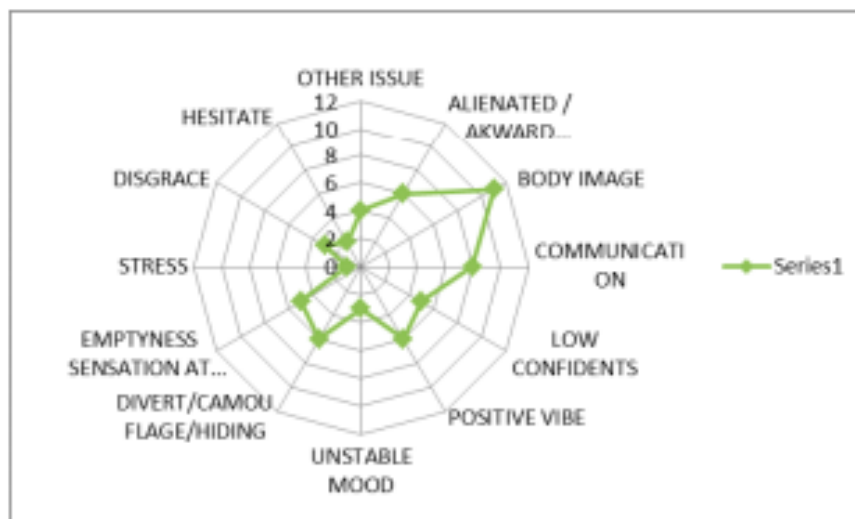


Figure 6: Psychology issue

There are 12 subthemes in the psychology problem. Body image is important for women with breast cancer because having a good and positive

body image can help them gain confidence and feel more at ease. These ladies, in reality, do not want to expose their flaws.

These women must hide their psychological stigma. Kaiser (1990) suggested that clothing has an aesthetic appeal to overcome anxiety feelings in order to disguise this stigma. After a cure, clothing provides comfort (medical approach) (Kang, Johnson, & Kim, 2013). As a result, positive psychology may be able to assist these women in overcoming their feelings. As a result, the ideal feature for developing positive psychology is correct fit, which gives comfort and boosts self-esteem.

5.1.3 Clothing fit preferences

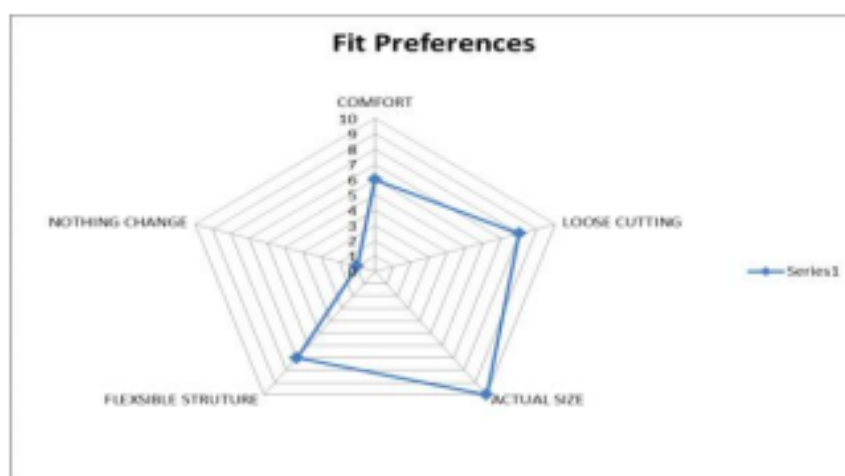


Figure 7 : Fit preferences for clothing

The most crucial factor to consider when shopping or picking clothing is the actual size (Song & Ashdown, 2013; Kasambala et al., 2016; Newcomb & Istook, 2011; Pisut & Jo, 2010;). Fit preference is linked to real size and loose cutting, according to thematic analysis. It's also linked to feelings of security and assurance. These women would not feel like themselves if the outfit was too big. According to BCP09, *“:before this, I’m wearing clothing like.....shirt, yes shirt, it comfortable, now if I’m wearing the same shirt it won feel comfortable, quick feel rubbing sensation at this area, like aaa not comfortable anymore. Let it loose, I like to wear an inner reach to the bottom, and next I will wear a blouse or jacket. Ha currently I love it, actually, at present, I’m wearing jacket always”*

In earlier investigations, Tullio-Pow (2016) claimed, Loose cutting is also used to disguise faults and disabilities, as revealed in her prior investigations. The wearer will be disappointed and stressed if the garment does not fit properly (Alexander et al., 2012). Even if the apparel is comfortable, customers will not buy it if the size is incorrect (Alexander et al., 2012; Dallesasse & Kluck, 2013; Kasambala et al., 2016; Makhanya et al., 2014). BCPO9 stated in an interview::

“I can wear it...but the feeling is changed, after the treatment, feel like uncomfortable.

R: meaning that need to find a bit loose right?

I: hmmm yes

R: meaning that to shift other

I: ermhhh attention, that's why. 26:36. Clothing needs to be loose. If tight no need to wear right now. Absolutely now, really no need. There is a benefit (giggling).

R: meaning that, tight kebaya you never try yet?

I: ermhhh not yet R: is it because of comfort?

I hurrmmmmmm yes indeed.”

Fit is vital to these women, as evidenced by this. Actual size and loose cutting are linked to fit preference. There is no way for large clothing to disguise flaws since the participants believe that if they wear clothes that are too big, other people will notice the disparities. Loose cutting is the greatest choice because they may move freely and simply wear the clothes without the need for assistance (Tullio-Pow, 2016). The most crucial quality is to hide the fault in order to decrease physical, psychological, and social barriers. Comfort and confidence will result from a fit preference. According to the previous study by Alexander et al., (2012), Kasambala et al. (2016), and Makhanya et al. (2014), poor-fitting leads to garment dissatisfaction.

5.1.4 Comfort

When it comes to apparel, the most important factor to consider is comfort (Carroll & Gross, 2010; Chang, Hodges, & Yurchisin, 2013b; Kasambala, Kempen & Pandarum 2016; Yick, Chu, Ng & Lo, 2006). The wearer will grow anxious and dissatisfied if they are not comfortable. As a result, the comfort factor is linked to self-assurance. When the user is at ease, they become more upbeat and feel better (Tiggemann & Andrew, 2012). The participants unanimously agreed that the major attribute that enhances confidence and self-satisfaction is comfort produced by fit preference (loose cutting and true size). “If the clothing distracts our movement, if the movement is stuck, of course not comfort,” BCP02 said. Meanwhile, BCP07 offered assistance, describing herself as “interesting and pleasant.” Yes. It must, without a doubt, be comfy.” The participant went on to say that if she wants to meet new people, she prefers well-fitting clothes so she can appear more confident and not have to worry about her outfit.

6.0 Discussion

These women's perceptions and experiences of clothing fit were inextricably linked to their perceptions of their own bodies. They also agreed that camouflage, fit, and comfort are key factors to consider while choosing apparel. Fit preference is also important to these women in order to mask their impairments, according to the findings. For this reason, they prefer

loose-fitting clothing to tailored apparel that is still in their true size. They will not buy the clothing if the size is too huge or too small.

According to the participants' interviews, women desire to be a part of society, not to be alone, and to look their best despite their defects (Grogan et al., 2013; Kabel, Dimka & McBee-Black, 2017; Tullio-Pow, 2016).

No one in this study wanted to appear sexy, and they stated that they avoid wearing clothing with a low neckline or that they feel uncomfortable if they wear unsuitable clothing in front of strangers. They're also concerned that sleeveless or low-necked clothing would reveal the prosthesis and more private portions of the chest and arm. Future studies should examine the data from different views, such as carer, industrial, and textile perspectives. It is also advised that more quantitative data be obtained in the future to study the correlations between the qualities.

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