

# From Wal-Mart to Old Navy, plus sizes are mainstream

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**KING OF PRUSSIA, Pa.**—Kathy Curtis waded through a sea of colorful camisoles, gypsy skirts and lacy tees at Lane Bryant, shopping for a deal.

The 45-year-old suburban Philadelphia resident can afford to be picky. As a size 20, she didn't use to have as many choices in plus sizes. But more retailers are finally paying attention to customers like her—if she doesn't like Lane Bryant, she can shop elsewhere.

"They could do more, but things are much more stylish than they were 10 years ago—five years even," Curtis said. Before, "they figured, give them a couple of extra-large tops and they're happy."

As waistlines expand across America, fashionable plus-size clothes are proliferating and moving into the mainstream. In some cases, plus sizes are leaving the outer fringes of the store floor to hang next to "regular-sized" clothes as the average American gets bigger. Where they remain separated, plus

sizes are being displayed in specialized boutiques like Petites.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc., the world's largest retailer, is adding more racks of plus-size apparel in its "George," "Metro 7" and other lines due to increased demand, said spokeswoman Linda Blakley. And the larger sizes hang right next to the smaller sizes.

"You can shop all the lines in one section," Blakley said. Old Navy, a unit of Gap Inc., carries plus sizes in 55 stores nationwide, up from 55 stores nearly two years ago, said spokesman Greg Rossiter. Old Navy started offering them online in 2000.

"We recognize that the market is underserved," he said. "The response has been very good."

Kmart, a unit of Sears Holding Corp., hired a special designer for plus sizes a year ago. Around the same time, it also introduced "attention," a missy and plus-size clothing line that only uses stretch fabric. Kmart said it has always displayed plus sizes in

the same section as other sizes.

"It is doing really well," said June Beckstead, vice president of design at Sears Holding Corp.

The Kohl's department store chain added plus sizes for its "Apt. 9" and "Daisy Fuentes" collections last spring.

Retailers who have long catered to plus sizes are getting into their second act.

This year, Liz Claiborne Inc. in New York is opening five "Elisabeth" plus-size boutiques. The designer, which began offering plus sizes in 1990, already has 28 such stores nationwide.

"Plus-size women are very, very loyal to brands. They have a lot of spending power," said Barry Zelman, general manager of specialty retail at Liz Claiborne.

Charming Shoppes Inc. of Bensalem, Pa., announced last month that it was rolling out a chain of plus-size lingerie stores nationwide called Cacique. The stores will carry sizes 12 to 28 and feature larger dressing rooms with

tri-fold mirrors for viewing at different angles.

The parent of Lane Bryant, Catherines and Fashion Bug already had seven Cacique stores as of mid-March and plans to open 50 stores by year's end.

Retailers are expanding into larger sizes because demand has grown: Two-thirds of American adults are either overweight or obese today compared with 46 percent a quarter century ago, according to the American Obesity Association in Washington, D.C.

Among children ages 6 to 11, about 30 percent are overweight or obese, up fourfold from 25 years ago. Nearly a third of those ages 12 to 19 are heavy, with the percentage more than doubling during the same period, the non-profit advocacy group said.

That's why "virtually everybody" is looking to cater to the plus-size market, said Kurt Barnard, president of Barnard's Retail Consulting Group in Nutley, N.J. "That's where the dollars are."

But it took decades for

many retailers to see the light.

"The stores did not want the plus-size woman to mix with the svelte and slender," Barnard said. "Bad for the

image, they felt."

At least in the past, larger-size sections tended to be tucked away in less-visited parts of stores.

## Academic seeks life's meaning in coffeshop

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effect"—that is, putting a bigger emphasis on music sales, movie marketing and other non-coffee products.

Simon believes Starbucks succeeds by "selling comfort" in an anonymous, often dislocating world. He says he has lost track of the number of times people have told him that when they traveled to a

strange country, "the first thing I did when I got off the plane was go to Starbucks."

"There's a deep sense of unpredictability in the modern world, and what Starbucks provides a lot of people is predictability," he said.

However, there are regional variations. Starbucks introduced green tea frappuccinos

in Taiwan and Singapore in 2001. They proved so popular, they're now on the U.S. menu.

Simon notes one big difference between British Starbucks and their American counterparts.

"Starbucks is dirty here," he said, gesturing to a mess of used lids and stir sticks on a stained tabletop. "Americans

have been taught to do part of the labor, and they clean up after themselves. In the U.S., part of Starbucks' appeal is its cleanliness."

On the Net:  
Cappuccino Conquests:  
[www.cappuccinoconquests.org.uk](http://www.cappuccinoconquests.org.uk)  
Starbucks:  
[www.starbucks.com](http://www.starbucks.com)

## People in Mississippi push to preserve store in Till case

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**MONEY, Miss.** — The fading, whitewashed brick walls of the old Bryant Grocery & Meat Market store are crawling with vines, and the roof has long since succumbed to the elements.

It's a significant piece of Mississippi civil rights history, and it's slowly crumbling away.

The store is where black teenager Emmett Till is said to have wolf-whistled at white female shopkeeper

Carolyn Bryant in August 1955. Till was kidnapped, tortured and killed a few days later—and his mother held an open-casket funeral in Chicago, shocking the world by showing her son's mutilated body.

Now, folks who want to see the rural store practically need a tour guide. There are no historical

markers, though there might be one soon.

The Mississippi Board of Archives and History is considering putting an explanatory sign by the store, something that at least would let history seekers know where to tap their brakes on the stretch of rural Delta road about 10 miles north of Greenwood.

State Sen. David Jordan, D-Greenwood, says somebody—the state or a private investor—needs to buy the

dilapidated building and rehabilitate it. But so far, Jordan says the man who now owns the property is asking an exorbitant price.

"Everybody is concerned about this structure. Not so much the structure itself, but the history of what happened here," Jordan said one recent sunny afternoon outside the store.

Interest in the slaying has been revived in the past two years, since the FBI reopened an investigation.



Till

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