Swimsuits in co-design

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Introduction: Ergonomics teaches that the “average man” doesn’t exist. Panero and Zelnik (2002) say that make three measures coincide in the same person is a small chance: 3%. A guided observation in a swimming pool makes it easy to realize this fact: if a woman that is L (large) on the bust buys a swimsuit, she must be also L in the whole body, or the garment will have a bad fitting in any part that’s not L. Normally women choose to buy the size that fits their biggest measure, and where fabric was not needed in that amount it overabounds. Piller […] and other authors who work for the mass customization show a way to solve this kind of trouble.

Methods: Guided observations took place in a thermal center and interviews with a structured quizz were made for this research which purpose was verify what do industry offers to ladies above fifty years old as swimsuits, what kind of situations of discomfort they experiment and what they would change in it, if it was possible. In both cases the subjects participated while they were preparing to go to the pool or leaving it. The observations and the interviews took place in Iretama and Curitiba, both cities in south Brazil, and all of them were registered in video.

Results: The main issue stated is that swimsuits, for ladies above 50 years old, must have a line under the bust, allowing better accommodation of breast. Problems found are with the straps, that commonly enlarges with some use, and the size, that doesn’t fit comfortably if the shape is not equal at the top and at the bottom. Modularity in swimsuit seems to be a great way to offer comfortable garments to all women who doesn’t fit properly in a totally small, or totally medium, or totally large standard one piece swimsuit.

Keywords: co-design; swimsuit; ergonomics in fashion design.

Abstract: Not every women have the whole body in a same standard size “small”, “medium” or “large”. Buying a swimsuit, for those who are not small on hips and small at the bust, is always a choice of bad fitting. The situation gets even worst if she is not in the “average” height. The mass industry still makes the one piece swimsuit without no options of different sizes at the top and at the bottom, and as the average body is rare, comfort counts on elasticity of lycra and mainly with the lack of ambition of those who never find any other better option. This research works on these needs and focus in a system of production – the mass customization – that can offer modularity as a way to the heterogeneity. It’s time to realize that people are not made in a machine, and also that each day more they want to participate in the design process of their clothes and anything they buy. It’s a challenge to design, but also a precious help count on the user to find out exactly what they need.