

10-41 Locate one or more consumers (perhaps family members) who have emigrated from another country. Interview them about how they adapted to their host culture. In particular, what changes did they make in their consumption practices over time?

10-42 Find good and bad examples of advertising that targets older consumers. To what degree does advertising

stereotype the elderly? What elements of ads or other promotions appear to determine their effectiveness in reaching and persuading this group?

10-43 Interview some retired people. How are they reconstructing their identities? What opportunities do their desires present for marketers?

Case Study

RIDING THE PLUS-SIZE WAVE

For years, Hollywood and the advertising media perpetuated a stereotypical image of women. As a result, many consumers have the unrealistic expectation that many women are (or should be) poreless, hipless, silken-haired, high-cheekboned, size 0, 20-year-old goddesses. But is this beauty myth finally changing? Companies like Ascena Retail Group, parent to plus-size retailer Lane Bryant, are doing their darnedest to see that it does.

Lane Bryant was founded in 1900 in New York as the first women's apparel retailer devoted exclusively to plus-sizes. In 2012 they were acquired by Ascena Retail Group, who believes that Lane Bryant's iconic brand and market leadership will contribute to Ascena's strategic plan for ongoing growth and profitability.

The future looks bright. The apparel industry defines plus-size as 14 and up—today that includes 62 percent of American women. According to one industry executive, "People are more accepting of their bodies today, and I think there has been a positive influence with role models. Years ago, manufacturers were only interested in making low-end plus-size merchandise because they thought customers were always in transition. Now no longer."

Lane Bryant is fighting this tide. With a new flagship store in New York City, the company sends the message that it's not only OK to be a plus-size, but that women in this category can be as stylish as anyone. Lane Bryant focuses on en vogue styles previously available only to more modestly sized shoppers. Their strategy also includes marketing the Cacique brand of plus-size lingerie, which is known for its appealing fit and fashion styling.

Lane Bryant's sales hit \$1 billion in 2012; other retailers are noticing this market and beginning to make a move. One of these companies, online retailer ModCloth, reports that their plus-size customers tend to spend 25 percent more per order and they buy 17 percent more items per order than non plus-size customers.

Plus-size bloggers are grabbing the attention of other retailers who are also increasing their stakes in the game.

H&M, Gap/Old Navy, Target, Lands' End, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Macy's are among national retailers offering or expanding their assortments of plus apparel sizes and increasing promotional efforts for this category. In fact, H&M gained media attention recently by casting a size 12 model for a swimwear photo without labeling the photo with the term *plus-size*. With these industry changes, who knows what images of women the media of the future will celebrate?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CS 10-1 Explain the success that Lane Bryant is currently experiencing in relation to self-concept, self-esteem, and self-consciousness. How can the plus-size industry leverage what we know about consumer behavior to address self-esteem issues?

CS 10-2 Discuss the real-world changes that appear to be occurring with respect to media images of women. What are the reasons for this?

CS 10-3 How do you reconcile the greater degree of acceptance of plus-size women with the parallel emphasis our society continues to place on thinness (as evidenced by the billions we spend on diet products, exercise, and so on)? Given the health problems associated with obesity (heart disease, diabetes, etc.) should the industry continue to encourage this acceptance?

Sources: Tamara Abraham, "The Huge Potential of Plus-Size Clothes: How Fashion Brands Are Waking Up to the Spending Power of Larger Women," <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2341742/>, accessed July 26, 2013; Ascena Retail Group, 2012 Annual Report, July 28, 2012, p. 2. From <http://www.ascenaretai.com/investors.jsp>; accessed July 28, 2013; www.spoke.com, accessed May 23, 2009; "Plus Size Teens and Women—US—November 2008," Mintel Oxygen, accessed May 23, 2009; Leigh Gragan, "Looking Good: Plus-Size Styles Are All About the Fashion," *McClatchy Tribune Business News* (March 26, 2008); Keiko Morris, "Finding Both Fashion and Fit: Plus-Size Retailing Is Becoming Hot as Demand Grows for Trendy Clothing in Size 14 and Up," *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News* (May 28, 2007): 1.