



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Retailing

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/retail

The bigger the better: An investigation of consumer responses to clothing retailers' extended-sized product lines

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ARTICLE INFO

Associate Editor Dr Katrijn Gielens

Keywords:

Extended sizing
Stigmatized consumers
Body-size Diversity
Inclusivity
Product Assortment

ABSTRACT

This research draws from the stigmatized-identity safety cue and trust literatures to examine how consumers' perceptions of retailers with extended-sized clothing compare to their perceptions of retailers who offer only a limited range of (smaller) standard-sized clothing. The results suggest that, compared to retailers that only sell standard-sized clothing, extended-sized retailers are perceived to be more inclusive and trustworthy. These perceptions in turn increase consumers' willingness to pay and intentions to purchase from the retailer. Furthermore, we explore the effects of offering mixed-availability sizing (i.e., all styles available in standard sizes and limited styles available in extended sizes) and the influence of the body size of the model featured in the advertisement. This research provides retailers with timely and important information regarding how adopting extended-sized product lines can have a positive influence on consumers' retailer-related perceptions and behaviors.

1. Introduction

"We don't believe curvy bodies should change to fit clothes; we changed clothes to fit curvy bodies" Liz Muñoz, chief executive officer of Torrid (Ell, 2021).

Media messaging that focuses on beauty, fashion, and health typically reinforces the notion that the "ideal" woman is tall, slender, and weighs at least 15 % less than the average American woman (Hawkins et al., 2004). This concept of the thin ideal continues to thrive in the fashion industry, even though 68 % of American women wear plus-sized clothing (George-Parkin, 2018). In fact, many retail clothing brands have a history of explicitly stating that their clothes are not for larger people (Meyers, 2022). However, in response to recent societal shifts, including the body positivity movement, some firms are taking a different approach. Specifically, an increasing number of retailers have started selling extended-sized product lines, which offer the same item of clothing in a wide range of sizes to fit women of all sizes.

The purpose of this research is to provide insight into consumers' evaluations of clothing retailers that offer extended-sized (versus only standard-sized) clothing. Women's clothing sizes can either be alpha- (XS – 4XL) or numeric-sized (00 – 32); this research examines both sizing options. We refer to extended-sized product lines as the retailing practice of offering the same item of clothing in a wide range of sizes (i.e., XS – 4XL or 00 – 32; Outdoor Research, 2022) to meet the needs of diverse-bodied consumers. We compare consumers' responses to retailers that offer extended-sized product lines to those that only offer standard-sized product lines. Note that

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2025.09.003>

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Please cite this article as: Deepika Naidu et al., *Journal of Retailing*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2025.09.003>

the fashion industry refers to the traditional sizing scheme that spans from XS – L or 00 – 14 as straight sizing (Greenleaf, Hauff, Klos & Serafin, 2020). For clarity, we refer to straight sizing as standard sizing. This range of sizes fits smaller-bodied women; approximately two-thirds of American women consumers do not fit into standard-sized clothing (Christel & Dunn, 2016). Importantly, extended-sized product lines are different from plus-sized product lines because plus-sized product lines typically start at size 16, are physically segregated from the standard-sized section, and offer different clothing styles than the standard-sized section (Huber, 2021).

Plus-size women have been advocating for more fashionable clothing options since the early 2000s (Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013). In response to this call for more inclusive fashion, many retailers launched extended-sized product lines. Retailers such as Universal Standard and Good American debuted in the marketplace with extended-sized product lines and have seen tremendous success. Universal Standard has had strong year-over-year revenue growth (Pile, 2024) and Good American generated over \$200 million in sales in 2022 (Brody, 2023). Abercrombie and Fitch increased sales by 20 % when it adopted inclusive sizing in 2021 (Meyers, 2022). Similarly, Christian Siriano, a high-end fashion designer, tripled sales after extending the sizes of his clothing (Krentcil, 2018). Yet, not all retailers have had success with extended-sized product lines. In 2021, Old Navy launched its Bodequality campaign, which touted an extended-sized product line that was available both online and in every store. The company reversed this strategy a year later. While extended sizing is available online, some stores only offer standard-sized clothing (Segran, 2022). Furthermore, companies such as M. M.LaFleur and Loft have stopped selling plus-sized clothing (Segran, 2022). The consumer backlash that occurred after these decisions suggests that discontinuing the sale of larger-sized options may have a detrimental impact on consumer trust (Segran, 2022; Waldow, 2023).

Given consumers' demand for more inclusive sizing and the mixed outcomes experienced by retailers who have introduced extended sizes into their product assortments, this research seeks to understand how the availability of extended-sized clothing influences consumer perceptions and retail-related outcomes. Specifically, how does a firm's decision to offer extended-sized product lines influence consumer perceptions, willingness to pay, and purchase intentions? We draw from the stigmatized-identity safety cue (Chaney et al., 2019) and trust (Guenzi et al., 2009; Rubio et al., 2017) literatures to investigate how consumers perceive and evaluate retailers that offer extended sizing to meet the needs of consumers with diverse body sizes compared to retailers that exclusively offer standard sizes, which are only suitable for smaller consumers. We propose, and then empirically test, whether offering extended-sized product lines increases consumers' perceptions of that retailer's inclusiveness and trustworthiness (versus a standard-sized only retailer). Furthermore, we investigate how extended-sized product lines influence consumers' willingness to pay for an item sold by the retailer and intentions to purchase from the retailer. We also examine the effects of mixed-availability sizing, which is when a retailer offers all styles in standard sizes but only a limited number of styles in extended sizes, and how the body size of the model featured in an advertisement used to promote a retailer influences our previously observed results.

The current research adds several important theoretical and practical contributions to the retailing literature. First, this research extends the stigma (Goffman, 1963; Hebl & Mannix, 2003; Rugs et al., 2015) and trust (Guenzi et al., 2009; Rubio et al., 2017) literatures by demonstrating that extended-sized product lines serve as stigmatized-identity safety cues (Chaney et al., 2019). That is, consumers perceive extended-sized retailers to be more inclusive and trustworthy. This has positive effects on consumers' willingness to pay for products sold by the retailer and intentions to purchase from the retailer. Second, we expand the stigmatized-identity safety cue literature (Chaney et al., 2016; Chaney et al., 2018; Chaney et al., 2019; Chaney et al., 2021) by investigating the influence of stigmatized-identity safety cue strength and the effect of having multiple, and sometimes conflicting, stigmatized-identity safety cues. Third, we contribute to the scant, but timely and practically important, literature on body size diversity in retail settings. For practitioners, our research provides initial insight into how offering extended-sized product lines can influence consumer perceptions and retailer outcomes. Specifically, our results show that offering extended-sized product lines is a strategic action that serves as a stigmatized-identity safety cue. As a result, retailers are perceived to be more inclusive, not just of different body sizes, but of other forms of diversity (e.g., racial and gender) as well. Extended-sized retailers are also viewed as more trustworthy than standard-sized only retailers. Furthermore, consumers are willing to pay significantly more to shop at, and have significantly higher intentions to purchase from, an extended-sized retailer. Additionally, by examining consumers' responses to the implementation of mixed-availability sizing and the use of different sized models in advertising promoting extended-sized retailers, we provide actionable insights for retailers.

In the following section we present our conceptual framework. Then, across four studies, we investigate how offering extended-sized (versus standard-sized only) clothing influences consumer perceptions and retailer outcomes. Next, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our research. Finally, opportunities for future research are discussed.

2. Conceptual background

The majority of mainstream clothing retailers have two separate women's clothing sections: a standard-sized section (usually sizes 00 – 14) and a plus-sized section (usually sizes 16 and above; Greenleaf, Hauff, Klos and Serafin, 2020). Standard-sized and plus-sized clothing are not typically displayed together within brick-and-mortar retail stores and are identified as different categories on online stores (Huber, 2021; Shelton et al., 2023; Tennison, 2021). The physical separation of the standard-sized and plus-sized merchandise creates an "othering" effect for plus-size consumers (Huber, 2021). Additionally, clothing styles typically differ between the standard-sized and plus-sized clothing sections (Huber, 2021).

However, some clothing retailers have changed their strategies and now offer extended sizes to meet the needs of all consumers. That is, rather than only offering standard-sizes, or offering one set of clothing styles in standard sizes to fit smaller women and a *different* set of clothing styles in plus-sizes to fit larger women, extended-sized retailers offer the *same* product assortment across a wide range sizes for consumers with both smaller and larger body sizes (Kingson, 2022). Although retailers that modified their retail

strategies to be more inclusive of different body sizes by offering extended product lines have seen mixed success, marketing researchers have yet to investigate the factors that influence how consumers respond to retailers with extended-sized (versus standard-sized only) product assortments.

Extended-sized product lines are most prevalent in women's clothing. Even though the average American man is plus-sized, the men's clothing industry has not widely adopted inclusive sizing practices the same way the women's clothing industry has (Kingson, 2022; Parisi, 2021). Larger-bodied men still must seek out a specialty retailer or a separate, plus-size line within a mainstream retailer to find clothing that fit them (Parisi, 2021). Since very few companies have adopted extended-sized product lines for men (Parisi, 2021; Ruben, 2023), the current research focuses on women consumers' responses to extended-sized product lines.

Extended-sized product lines are relatively new and, as a result, this retail trend has received scant attention in academic research. Consumers perceive brands that offer inclusive product lines, including extended-sized clothing lines, to be more inclusive and moral, which leads consumers to rate the brand more favorably when the product assortment skews towards minority (i.e., plus-sized) versus majority (i.e., straight-sized) consumers (Naidu & Donnadieu Borquez, 2025). Additionally, portraying diverse-bodied models on online stores leads consumers to rate brands with diverse-bodied models more positively, but consumers find it harder to shop on websites that use diverse-bodied models (D'Angelo & Ross, 2025). Building on this work, the current research seeks to understand how offering extended-sized (versus standard-sized only) product lines influence consumers' perceived inclusivity of the brand, trust in the retailer, willingness to pay for clothing sold by the retailer, and intentions to purchase clothing from the retailer.

While there is limited research on how consumers respond to extended-sized product offerings, prior research has examined how consumers respond to vanity sizing, which occurs when companies size clothing smaller than they actually are (Aydinoglu & Krishna, 2012). Consumer reactions to vanity sizing depend on individual characteristics. Vanity sizing leads consumers to believe they are thinner, but only consumers low in appearance self-esteem exhibit a preference for vanity-sized clothing (Aydinoglu & Krishna, 2012). However, given inconsistent sizing practices across retailers, it is possible that consumers may require a larger size than expected. In such situations, consumers engage in compensatory consumption and are less likely to buy the target clothing item but are more likely to purchase items that can enhance their self-esteem (Hoegg et al., 2014). Furthermore, consumers with an interdependent (versus independent) self-construal display lower intentions to purchase the clothing item when they learn they are a larger than expected size (Jung et al., 2023).

Consumers form negative impressions of both the product and retailer when they believe that a retailer intentionally used vanity sizing to deceive consumers (Aydinoglu & Krishna, 2012; Hoegg et al., 2014). Yet, when retailers acknowledge there is a discrepancy in the sizing, this effect is attenuated (Ketron, 2016). Additionally, as the magnitude of the difference between the consumer's actual size and the size on the label grows, product sizing becomes less believable (Ketron & Spears, 2017). While most of the research on vanity sizing has focused on situations in which having smaller clothing sizes is socially desirable, in certain cases, such as when shopping for bras, consumers report higher purchase intentions when they are told their size is larger than their true size (Ketron & Naletelich, 2017). In summary, the extant literature suggests that consumers prefer sizing schemes that suggest that their bodies are closer to the culturally ideal body size. However, consumer response to a relatively new retailing strategy – an extended-sized product assortment – is unknown. Thus, building on the stigmatized-identity cue literature (Chaney et al., 2016, 2018, 2021), the current research seeks to better understand the retailing and consumer implications associated with the decision to offer extended-sized product lines.

2.1. Stigmatization of plus-size consumers

A stigma occurs when other people devalue an individual because of one of three types of attributes (Goffman, 1963): physical deformities, such as physical disabilities or body size, blemishes of character, such as dishonesty or mental illness, or tribal attributes, such as an individual's race or religion (Goffman, 1963). Stigmas can be associated with a group of people, such as plus-size individuals (Goffman, 1963; Hebl & Mannix, 2003; Ruggs et al., 2015), or specific products (Brough et al., 2016). Thus, we investigate women's responses to retailers that offer extended sizes, which signals that the brand is for both non-stigmatized women and women who have been traditionally stigmatized because of their body sizes.

The majority of research on stigmatization in retail settings has focused on how stigmatized consumers face discrimination in retail settings (King et al., 2006; Ruggs et al., 2015) and how the presence of stigmatized service employees influences product and retailer evaluations (Cowart & Brady, 2014; Ruggs et al., 2015). Interestingly, most of the stigmatized-identity safety cues offered by retailers are persuasive communications (versus strategic actions) that feature stigmatized individuals in marketing (Chauhan, Gupta & Das, 2025; D'Angelo & Ross, 2025; Milfeld, Haley & Flint, 2021). However, offering products meant for consumers with stigmatized identities is a strategic action taken by retailers. Building on previous research on how inclusive product lines influence consumers' attitudes towards a brand (D'Angelo et al., 2025; Naidu & Donnadieu Borquez, 2025), the current research investigates how offering extended-sized product lines, which are one form of inclusive product lines (Naidu & Donnadieu Borquez, 2025), influence consumers' willingness to pay for items sold by the retailer and intentions to purchase from the retailer.

2.2. Stigmatized-identity safety cues

Stigmatized consumers rely on environmental cues to determine if a given audience is safe or threatening (Harmeling et al., 2021).

Retailers can communicate stigmatized-identity safety cues through their product assortments and marketing communications. Stigmatized-identity safety cues signal that a company values consumers with a stigmatized identity, especially those who have historically been excluded from marketing activities (Walker et al., 2012; Chaney et al., 2019). This inclusion also makes stigmatized consumers more likely to want to partake in the depicted activity (Murphy & Taylor, 2012; Murphy et al., 2007), which can lead to positive results for the retailer. Thus, offering extended sizes should serve as a stigmatized-identity safety cue to plus-size consumers.

Additionally, stigmatized-identity safety cues can benefit more than just the target stigmatized group. When brands communicate the inclusion of one group, the inclusion cues can transfer to nontargeted identities (Chaney et al., 2016, 2018, 2021). For example, the presence of gender-inclusive bathrooms leads women and racial minorities to believe that the company has more positive gender and racial climates and is more procedurally fair towards women and minorities (Chaney & Sanchez, 2018). Moreover, the products a company sells signals the company's values and beliefs (Barlow et al., 2018) and can act as a stigmatized-identity cue. By offering extended-sized clothing meant to fit large-bodied consumers, retailers signal that they value plus-size consumers. We propose that the stigmatized-identity safety cues that extended-sized product assortments provide for plus-size consumers spillover such that all women consumers perceive the retailer to be more inclusive not just of different body sizes, but also of underrepresented consumers in general. In the current research, we define perceived inclusivity as the extent to which a retailer is perceived to be inclusive of not only the targeted underrepresented group, but of underrepresented consumers in general.

Hypothesis 1. Women consumers perceive extended-sized retailers to be more inclusive than retailers that only offer standard sizes.

2.3. Retailer trust

Trust is fundamental to building strong consumer-retailer relationships (Urban, Sultan & Qualls, 2000). Trust is defined as “the expectation held by consumers that the service provider is dependable and can be relied on to deliver on its promises” (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002, pg. 17). Moreover, trust has two components: operational competence and operational benevolence (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). The current research focuses on operational benevolence, which is defined as “behaviors that reflect an underlying motivation to place the consumer's interest ahead of self-interest” (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002, pg. 18). By offering extended-sized clothing, retailers are diversifying their product assortments by selling the same clothing styles in an array of sizes meant to fit all body types. This attempt to serve the needs of consumers of all sizes also comes at a cost to the retailer because they not only need to manufacture but also transport and store a wider range of sizes. Consumers trust retailers more when they have a positive image of the retailer's product assortment (Guenzi et al., 2009; Rubio et al., 2017) and believe that the retailer is responsible for a desired outcome, in this case, the availability of a wide range of clothing sizes (Chen et al., 2013). As such, we posit that offering stigmatized-identity safety cues in the form of an extended-sized product line will increase consumers' trust in the retailer.

Hypothesis 2. Women consumers trust extended-sized retailers more than they trust standard-sized only retailers.

Consumer trust influences several retailer outcomes, including purchase intentions (Zboja & Vorhees, 2006) and willingness to pay (Castaldo et al., 2009). Moreover, as previously articulated, a retailer's extended-size offering can be seen as a stigmatized-identity safety cue, which expands the retailer's potential consumer base and can have a positive effect on retailer outcomes. As such, we propose that consumers will be willing to pay more for products sold by an extended-sized (versus standard-sized only) retailer and will report higher intentions to purchase from an extended-sized (versus standard-sized only) retailer. Stated formally:

Hypothesis 3. Offering extended-sized (versus standard-sized only) product lines positively impacts (a) consumers' willingness to pay and (b) intentions to purchase from the retailer.

We argue that extended-sized product lines act as a stigmatized-identity safety cue (Chaney et al., 2019) and lead women consumers to perceive the retailer to be more inclusive. Prior research suggests that favorable perceptions of a retailer's assortment, in this case, perceiving the assortment to be more inclusive, increases trust in the retailer (Rubio et al., 2017). Furthermore, higher levels of trust in the retailer leads to more favorable retailer outcomes (Castaldo et al., 2009; Zboja & Vorhees, 2006). As such, we propose that the effect of offering extended-sized (versus standard-sized only) size ranges on retailer outcomes (willingness to pay/purchase intentions) is serially mediated by the perceived inclusivity of the retailer and trust in the retailer. Stated formally:

Hypothesis 4. The relationship between a retailer's size range and retailer outcomes is serially mediated by perceived inclusivity and retailer trust (size range → perceived inclusivity → trust in the retailer → retailer outcomes).

2.4. Stigmatized-Identity safety cue strength

As previously stated, we propose that offering an extended-sized product line serves as a stigmatized-identity safety cue because it signals that a firm values plus-sized consumers (Murphy & Taylor, 2012; Murphy et al., 2007). However, not all retailers offer extended sizes across their entire product line. For example, REI offers extended sizes, but not for all clothing styles (REI, 2021). We refer to this strategy as a mixed-availability sized product line, which we define as having all styles available in standard sizes, but a limited number of styles available in extended sizes. A mixed-availability sized product provides an opportunity for retailers who do not have the resources to fully commit to an extended-sized product line to offer some products for larger-bodied consumers. Additionally, a mixed-availability sized product line could be an option for retailers that want to test how selling a wider range of clothing sizes impacts the retailer.

We propose that like extended-sized product lines, mixed-availability sized product lines will be seen as a stigmatized-identity

safety cue because the retailer is appealing to the needs of plus-sized consumers (Chaney et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2012). As such, we believe that offering some extended-sized options with a mixed-availability sized product line (versus none at all; standard-sized only product line) will positively influence consumer perceptions of the retailer and increase retailer-oriented outcomes. Yet, because only limited styles are available in extended sizes, the stigmatized-identity safety cue provided by mixed-availability sized products will not be as strong as the stigmatized-identity safety cue provided by extended-sized product lines. As a result, while mixed-availability sized product lines will improve consumer perceptions and retailer outcomes compared to a standard-sized product line, we propose that compared to a fully extended-sized product line, a mixed-availability sized product line will lower consumer perceptions and retailer outcomes. Stated formally:

Hypothesis 5. Offering a mixed-availability sized product line (versus a standard-sized only product line) will have a positive influence on consumer perceptions (perceived inclusivity and trust in the retailer) and retailer outcomes (willingness to pay and purchase intentions) but compared to offering an extended-sized product line, a mixed-availability sized product line will have a negative influence on consumer perceptions and retailer outcomes.

2.5. The presence of multiple stigmatized-identity safety cues

Consumers are attuned to signals that suggest a retailer values (or devalues) them (Chaney et al., 2019). Any representation or portrayal of diversity can be perceived as a stigmatized-identity safety cue (Chaney et al., 2019) and favorable representation leads consumers to pay more attention to the message being delivered (Walker et al., 2012). Retailers can provide body-size-relevant stigmatized-identity safety cues in many forms, including selling extended-sized product lines, portraying plus-size models in advertisements, and displaying diverse-bodied mannequins in stores. It is possible that a retailer adopts more than one of these stigmatized-identity safety cues in their retailing practices. Prior research on stigmatized-identity safety cues has only focused on the presence of a single stigmatized-identity safety cue, such as gender-neutral bathrooms (Chaney & Sanchez, 2018) and diversity statements (Chaney et al., 2025). The effect of multiple, or even contradictory, stigmatized-identity safety cues, has not yet been studied. Thus, the question remains: how do consumers respond when retailers offer different types of body-size-relevant stigmatized-identity safety cues? We propose that when a thin model is featured in an advertisement, the thin model will not act as a stigmatized-identity safety cue, but an extended-sized product line will. As a result, when a thin model is featured in the advertisement, the retailer will be perceived to be more inclusive when it offers an extended-sized product line (versus standard-sized product line). However, we propose that featuring a plus-size model in an advertisement serves as a stigmatized-identity safety cue and attenuates the previously proposed effect of size range on perceived inclusivity. Specifically, we suggest that when a plus-size model is featured in the advertisement, there will be no significant difference in how inclusive the extended-sized retailer and standard-sized retailer are perceived to be.

Hypothesis 6. The size of the model featured in the advertisement will moderate the serial mediation process such that portraying a plus-sized (versus thin) model in an advertisement will moderate the previously observed effect of size range on perceived inclusivity of the retailer.

3. Studies

3.1. Overview of studies

Four studies test our hypotheses. Since extended-sized product lines are specific to women's clothing, we only sample women participants. Studies 1 and 2 investigate women consumers' perceptions of extended-sized (versus standard-sized only) retailers and

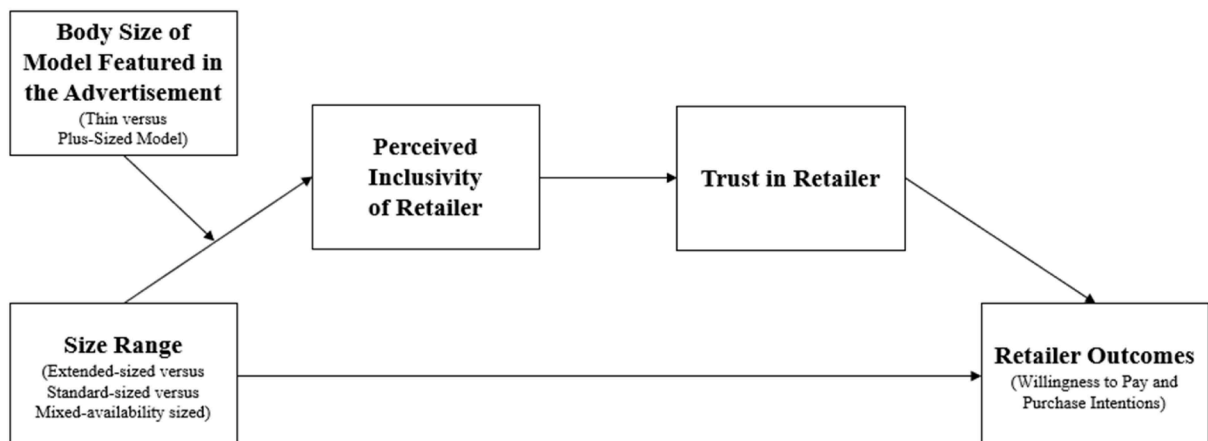


Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

how offering extended-sized product lines influence consumers' willingness to pay and intentions to purchase from the retailer. To increase the generalizability of our findings, study 1 utilizes alpha sizing (i.e., XS – 4XL) sizing and study 2 uses numeric sizing (i.e., 00 – 32). Next, to provide insights for practitioners that may not have the resources to fully commit to an extended-sized product line, study 3 examines the impact of offering mixed-availability sized product lines. Lastly, study 4 explores how the body size of the model featured in a retailer's advertisement influences our previously observed effects. Fig. 1 outlines our conceptual model.

3.2. Study 1

Study 1 was designed to experimentally test how the availability of extended-sized product lines, which we propose serve as a stigmatized-identity safety cue, influence consumers' perceptions of the retailer, willingness to pay, and purchase intentions.

3.2.1. Participants and procedures

Two hundred six women participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 39.27$, $SD = 12.44$) from Prolific Academic were recruited to participate in this study. Participants were randomly assigned to either the extended-sized or standard-sized only conditions. Prior to seeing the stimuli, participants provided their demographic information, including their age, gender, height, weight, and typical pant size. In this study, and in all subsequent studies, controlling for BMI and typical pant size did not influence the significance of our results. In both conditions, participants saw identical screenshots of a fictitious clothing retailer's website. The screenshot displayed a pair of athletic leggings on a mannequin, but the sizes available varied between the two conditions (see Appendix A for stimuli). In the extended-sized condition, participants saw sizes ranging from XS to 4XL. In the standard-sized only condition, participants saw sizes ranging from XS to L. After viewing the screenshot, participants were shown the size chart for the athletic leggings they were presented (see Appendix A for stimuli).

Next, participants indicated their willingness to pay for the item and intentions to purchase from the retailer (Jiang et al., 2010; $\alpha = 0.97$). Then, participants completed a manipulation check ($\alpha = 0.97$). Additionally, participants rated their trust in the retailer (Darke et al., 2016; Tax et al., 1998; $\alpha = 0.95$) and how inclusive they perceived the retailer to be (Naidu, 2023; $\alpha = 0.89$; Appendix B for full scales used in this study).

3.2.2. Results

3.2.2.1. Outlier analysis. Since willingness to pay, one of our variables of interest, was an open-ended response, we conducted an outlier analysis in which any responses that were three standard deviations above or the below the mean would be excluded. No outliers were identified in this study.

3.2.2.2. Manipulation check. The extended-sized retailer ($M_{\text{extended}} = 5.88$, $SD = 0.89$) was perceived to offer more sizes than the standard-sized only retailer ($M_{\text{standard}} = 3.09$, $SD = 1.68$; $t(204) = 14.98$, $p < .001$).

3.2.2.3. Consumer perceptions. The results of an independent samples *t*-test revealed that participants perceived the extended-sized retailer ($M_{\text{extended}} = 4.93$, $SD = 0.94$) to be significantly more inclusive than the standard-sized only retailer ($M_{\text{standard}} = 3.50$, $SD = 0.97$; $t(196) = 10.57$, $p < .001$; Cohen's $d = 1.50$), supporting hypothesis 1. See Fig. 2 Panel A for results.

The results of another independent samples *t*-test suggested that participants trusted the extended-sized retailer significantly more ($M_{\text{extended}} = 4.91$, $SD = 1.19$) than the standard-sized only retailer ($M_{\text{standard}} = 3.89$, $SD = 1.19$; $t(204) = 6.26$, $p < .001$; Cohen's $d = 0.87$), which supports hypothesis 2. See Fig. 2 Panel B for results.

3.2.2.4. Retailer outcomes. In support of hypothesis 3a, participants in the extended-sized condition ($M_{\text{extended}} = \$20.58$, $SD = \$11.32$) were willing to pay significantly more for the target product than participants in the standard-sized only condition ($M_{\text{standard}} = \$15.67$, $SD = \$10.45$; $t(201) = 3.21$, $p = .002$; Cohen's $d = 0.45$). See Fig. 2 Panel C for results.

Providing support for hypothesis 3b, the results of an independent samples *t*-test revealed that participants reported higher intentions to purchase from the extended-sized retailer ($M_{\text{extended}} = 4.83$, $SD = 2.10$) than standard-sized only retailer ($M_{\text{standard}} = 3.16$, $SD = 2.21$; $t(204) = 5.58$, $p < .001$; Cohen's $d = 0.33$). See Fig. 2 Panel D for results.

3.2.2.5. Serial mediation. To ensure that our two mediators, perceived inclusivity and trust in the retailer, had discriminant validity, we followed Fornell and Larcker (1981) method to test for divergent validity. This method requires the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct to be greater than the correlation of two constructs. The square root of the AVE for perceived inclusivity and trust in the retailer were 0.76 and 0.88, respectively, which were both greater than the correlation between the two variables ($r = 0.73$), establishing that the two constructs have divergent validity.

To test hypothesis 4, we ran two serial mediation analyses using PROCESS Model 6 (Hayes, 2017). In the first analysis, we entered size range as the independent variable, perceived inclusivity of the retailer and trust in the retailer as the mediators, and willingness to pay as the dependent variable. The indirect effect of size range \rightarrow perceived inclusivity \rightarrow trust in the retailer \rightarrow willingness to pay for the target product was significant ($b = 2.00$, 95 % CI [0.88, 3.29]). Specifically, the serial mediation analysis revealed that the retailer was perceived to be more inclusive when it offered extended sizes ($b = 0.71$, $t(193) = 10.45$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, as perceived inclusivity increased, trust in the retailer increased ($b = 0.81$, $t(192) = 12.26$, $p < .001$). Additionally, as trust in the retailer increased,

participants' willingness to pay for the target product increased ($b = 3.45$, $t(191) = 4.03$, $p < .001$).

A second serial mediation analysis with size range as the independent variable, perceived inclusivity of the retailer and trust in the retailer as the mediators, and retailer purchase intentions as the dependent variable was also significant ($b = 0.61$, 95 % CI [0.45, 0.78]).

3.2.3. Discussion

Study 1 provides initial support for hypotheses 1, 2, 3a, 3b, and 4. Compared to those in the standard-sized only condition, consumers in the extended-sized condition perceived the retailer to be more inclusive (hypothesis 1), trusted the retailer more (hypothesis 2), were willing to pay more for the target product (hypothesis 3a), and indicated higher intentions to purchase from the retailer (hypothesis 3b). Importantly, when asked how much they would pay for the target item, consumers in the extended-sized condition were willing to pay 31.33 % more than their counterparts in the standard-sized only condition. This increased willingness to pay and interest in purchasing from the retailer suggests that consumers are more likely to support retailers that offer extended sizing. Additionally, the results of study 1 lends support for the proposed serial mediation model (hypothesis 4; size range \rightarrow perceived inclusivity \rightarrow trust in retailer \rightarrow willingness to pay/purchase intentions). Overall, using an online clothing retailer and alpha sizing (i.e., XS – 4X), study 1 suggests that retailers benefit from offering stigmatized-identity safety cues in the form of extended-sized clothing product offerings.

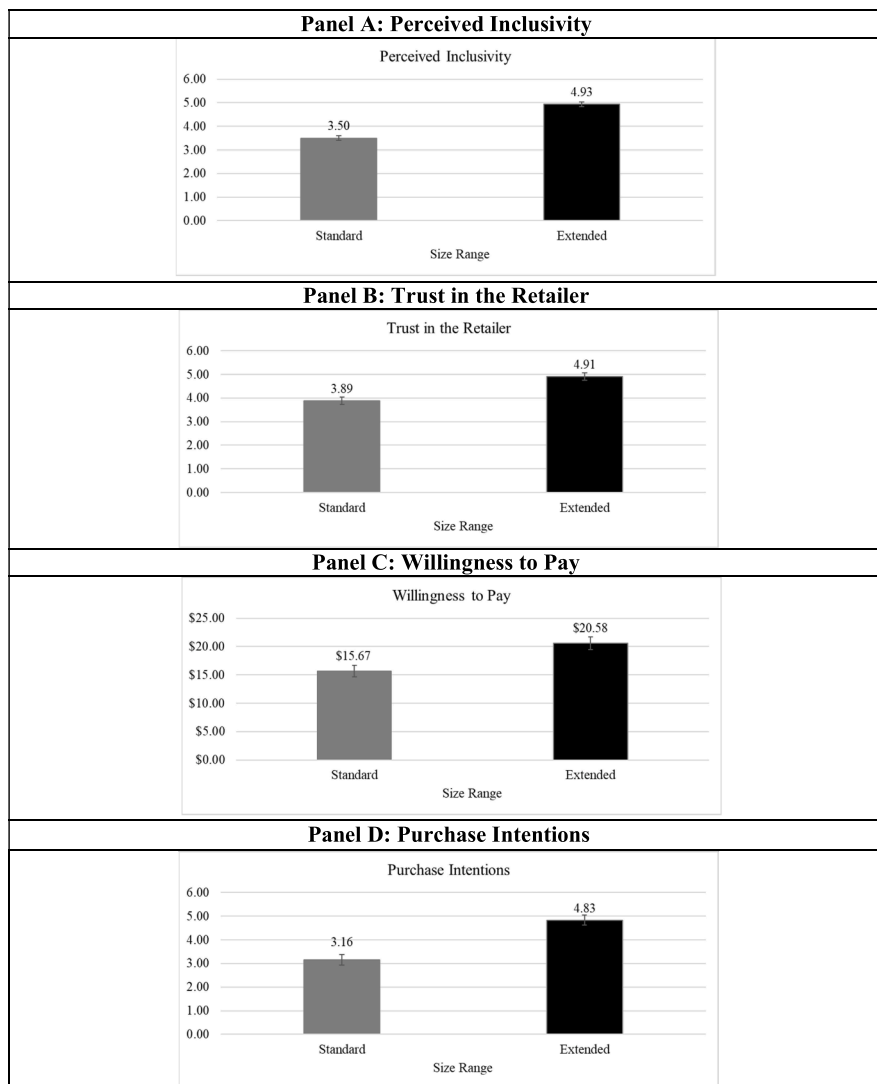


Fig. 2. Study 1 results.

3.3. Study 2

Study 2 (preregistered: <https://aspredicted.org/cgrx-3dg4.pdf>) was designed to replicate and extend the findings of study 1 while also increasing the generalizability of our findings. In study 2, we chose to operationalize the retailer in this study as a clothing subscription service for two reasons. First, it allowed us to manipulate a retailer's range of available clothing sizes without showing participants a target product, which ensures that the responses were not influenced by the specific type of target product. Second, clothing subscription services represent a growing trend in the retail clothing industry that is expected to be worth \$19.49 billion by 2030 (Virtue Market Research, 2024). As such, it is important to explore the effects of extended sizing in this context. Additionally, while study 1 utilized alpha sizing, study 2 employs numeric sizing (i.e., 00 – 32), which increases the generalizability of our results.

3.3.1. Participants and procedures

We recruited 301 women ($M_{\text{age}} = 41.38$, $SD = 12.37$) from Cloud Research Connect to participate in this study. Participants were randomly assigned to either the extended-sized or standard-sized only condition. In both conditions, participants saw identical advertisements for a clothing subscription service, which featured the name of the clothing subscription retailer and information about the service (see Appendix A for stimuli). The sizes sold varied between conditions. In the extended-sized condition, the advertisement stated that the clothing subscription service was available in sizes 00 to 32. In the standard-sized only condition, the advertisement stated that the clothing subscription service was available in sizes 00 to 16.

After viewing the advertisement, participants completed the same manipulation check ($\alpha = 0.96$) from study 1. Participants then indicated their willingness to pay for the subscription service and intentions to purchase from the retailer (Jiang et al., 2010; $\alpha = 0.96$). Then, participants completed an attention check. Next, participants rated the extent to which they perceived the retailer to be inclusive (Naidu, 2023; $\alpha = 0.90$) and their trust in the retailer (Darke et al., 2016; Tax et al., 1998; $\alpha = 0.96$). Finally, participants provided demographic information.

3.3.2. Results

3.3.2.1. Outlier analysis and attention check. Following the outlier analysis method mentioned in study 1, we identified 11 outliers, which were removed from the sample. Additionally, 10 participants failed the attention check and were removed from the sample, leaving a final sample of 280 participants.¹

3.3.2.2. Manipulation check. The extended-sized retailer ($M_{\text{extended}} = 6.11$, $SD = 1.10$) was perceived to offer more size options than the standard-sized only retailer ($M_{\text{standard}} = 5.07$, $SD = 1.71$; $t(278) = 6.04$, $p < .001$).

3.3.2.3. Consumer perceptions. In support of hypothesis 1, the results of an independent samples *t*-test with size range as the independent variable and perceived inclusivity of the retailer as the dependent variable suggests that participants perceived the extended-sized retailer ($M_{\text{extended}} = 5.05$, $SD = 0.90$) to be significantly more inclusive than the standard-sized only retailer ($M_{\text{standard}} = 4.47$, $SD = 1.26$; $t(278) = 4.39$, $p < .001$; Cohen's $d = 0.53$).

The results of another independent samples *t*-test revealed that participants trusted the extended-sized retailer significantly more ($M_{\text{extended}} = 4.98$, $SD = 1.12$) than the standard-sized only retailer ($M_{\text{standard}} = 4.69$, $SD = 1.30$; $t(278) = 1.97$, $p = .03$; Cohen's $d = 0.24$), in support of hypothesis 2.

3.3.2.4. Retailer outcomes. As predicted in hypothesis 3a, the results of an additional independent samples *t*-test suggested that participants were significantly more willing to pay for a clothing subscription from an extended-sized retailer ($M_{\text{extended}} = \$35.37$, $SD = \$26.86$) than from a standard-sized only retailer ($M_{\text{standard}} = \$23.98$, $SD = \$22.50$; $t(277) = 3.84$, $p < .001$; Cohen's $d = 0.46$).

The results of an independent samples *t*-test with size range as the independent variable and retailer purchase intentions as the dependent variable revealed that participants in the extended-sized condition ($M_{\text{extended}} = 4.48$, $SD = 2.42$) reported higher intentions to purchase the target product than participants in the standard-sized condition ($M_{\text{standard}} = 3.89$, $SD = 2.45$; $t(278) = 2.03$, $p = .02$; Cohen's $d = 0.24$), supporting hypothesis 3b.

3.3.2.5. Serial mediation. As in study 1, we tested for divergent validity using Fornell and Larcker (1981) method. The square root of the AVE for perceived inclusivity and trust in the retailer were 0.77 and 0.89, respectively, which were both greater than the correlation between the two variables ($r = 0.58$), establishing that the two constructs have divergent validity.

Two serial mediation analyses (PROCESS Model 6; Hayes, 2017) were conducted to test hypothesis 4. The first analysis was run with size range as the independent variable, perceived inclusivity of the retailer and trust in the retailer as the mediators, and willingness to pay as the dependent variable. The total indirect effect of size range on willingness to pay via perceived retailer inclusivity and trust was significant ($b = 1.40$, 95 % CI [0.02, 2.92]), supporting hypothesis 4. Specifically, offering extended sizes increased the perceived inclusivity of the retailer ($b = 0.47$, $t(192) = 7.59$, $p < .001$). This, in turn, increased retailer trust ($b = 0.67$, $t(191) = 9.05$, $p < .001$) and willingness to pay for the clothing subscription service ($b = 4.41$, $t(190) = 2.40$, $p = .02$). A second serial mediation

¹ Including the outlier responses and participants who did not pass the attention check does not influence the significance of the results.

analysis with purchase intentions as the dependent variable was also significant ($b = 0.38$, 95 % CI [0.24, 0.56]).

3.3.3. Discussion

Study 2 replicates the findings of study 1 and increases the generalizability of our results by using a clothing subscription service as the target retailer and utilizing numeric sizing. Extended-sized retailers are perceived to be more inclusive (hypothesis 1) and trustworthy (hypothesis 2) than standard-sized only retailers. Furthermore, participants were willing to pay 47.50 % more to shop at an extended-sized retailer (hypothesis 3a) and indicated higher intentions to purchase from the extended-sized (versus standard-sized only) retailer (hypothesis 3b). Additionally, the effect of size range on willingness to pay and purchase intentions occurs via perceived inclusivity of the retailer and trust in the retailer (hypothesis 4). To further build on these findings and investigate a third product assortment strategy, we conducted study 3.

3.4. Study 3

Study 3 was designed to test hypothesis 5 and investigate how consumers react to a retailer with mixed-availability sizing, which offers all styles available in standard sizes but a limited number of styles also available in extended sizes.

3.4.1. Participants and procedures

We recruited 301 women ($M_{\text{age}} = 42.11$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.59$) from Prolific Academic to participate in this study. One participant was under the age of 18 and was removed from the sample. Study 3 had 3 conditions: standard-sized only, mixed-availability sized, and extended-sized. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions and saw an advertisement for a retailer. The advertisement looked the same in all three conditions, but across conditions, the sizes available varied (see [Appendix A](#) for full stimuli). After evaluating the advertisement, participants completed the same manipulation check ($\alpha = 0.97$), perceived inclusivity ($\alpha = 0.89$), trust in the retailer ($\alpha = 0.97$), and purchase intentions ($\alpha = 0.97$) measures used in the previous studies. Next, they indicated how much they would be willing to pay for a sweater sold by the retailer. Lastly, participants provided their demographic information.

3.4.2. Results

3.4.2.1. Outlier analysis. Following the outlier analysis method mentioned in study 1, we identified 3 outliers, which were removed from the sample leaving a final sample of 297 participants.

3.4.2.2. Consumer perceptions. The results of a one-way ANOVA with condition as the independent variable and perceived inclusivity as the dependent variable revealed a significant effect ($F(2, 294) = 50.66$, $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.27$). Specifically, replicating the results of previous studies, the extended-sized retailer ($M_{\text{ExtendedSized}} = 6.40$, $SD = 0.75$) was perceived to be significantly more inclusive than the standard-sized only retailer ($M_{\text{StandardSized}} = 3.48$, $SD = 1.31$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, the mixed-availability sized retailer ($M_{\text{MixedSized}} = 4.67$, $SD = 1.74$) was perceived to be significantly more inclusive than the standard-sized only retailer ($p < .001$), but significantly less inclusive than the extended-sized retailer ($p < .001$). See [Fig. 3 Panel A](#) for results.

The results of another one-way ANOVA with trust as the dependent variable were also significant ($F(2, 294) = 31.03$, $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.17$). As in studies 1 and 2, the extended-sized retailer ($M_{\text{ExtendedSized}} = 5.23$, $SD = 0.99$) was perceived to be significantly more trustworthy than the standard-sized only retailer ($M_{\text{StandardSized}} = 3.78$, $SD = 1.51$, $p < .001$). The mixed-availability sized retailer ($M_{\text{MixedSized}} = 4.43$, $SD = 1.38$) was perceived to be significantly more trustworthy than the standard-sized only retailer ($p = .001$), but significantly less trustworthy than the extended-sized retailer ($p < .001$). See [Fig. 3 Panel B](#) for results.

3.4.2.3. Retailer outcomes. The results of a one-way ANOVA with willingness to pay as the dependent variable revealed a significant effect ($F(2, 294) = 15.32$, $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.09$). Participants were willing to spend significantly more to purchase a sweater from the extended-sized retailer ($M_{\text{ExtendedSized}} = \38.58 , $SD = \$13.65$) than from the standard-sized only retailer ($M_{\text{StandardSized}} = \26.02 , $SD = \$17.48$, $p < .001$). Moreover, participants were willing to pay significantly more to purchase a sweater from the mixed-availability sized retailer ($M_{\text{MixedSized}} = \32.30 , $SD = \$16.93$) than from the standard-sized only retailer ($p = .02$); however, participants' willingness to pay for the sweater was significantly lower for the mixed-availability sized retailer than for the extended-sized retailer ($p = .02$). See [Fig. 3 Panel C](#) for results.

Lastly, the results of a one-way ANOVA with purchase intentions as the dependent variable were also significant ($F(2, 294) = 15.32$, $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.26$). Participants reported higher intentions to purchase from the extended-sized retailer ($M_{\text{ExtendedSized}} = 6.26$, $SD = 1.32$) than from the standard-sized only retailer ($M_{\text{StandardSized}} = 3.27$, $SD = 2.33$, $p < .001$). Additionally, participants indicated higher intentions to purchase from the mixed-availability sized retailer ($M_{\text{MixedSized}} = 4.46$, $SD = 2.47$) than from the standard-sized only retailer ($p < .001$). Yet, compared to the extended-sized retailer, participants reported lower intentions to purchase from the mixed-sized retailer ($p < .001$). See [Fig. 3 Panel D](#) for results.

3.4.3. Discussion

The results of study 3 suggest that adopting a mixed-availability size strategy by offering some styles in extended sizes (versus only offering standard sizes) increases consumers' perceived inclusivity of the retailer, trust in the retailer, willingness to pay for clothing from the retailer, and intentions to purchase from the retailer. This finding indicates that if retailers do not have the resources to

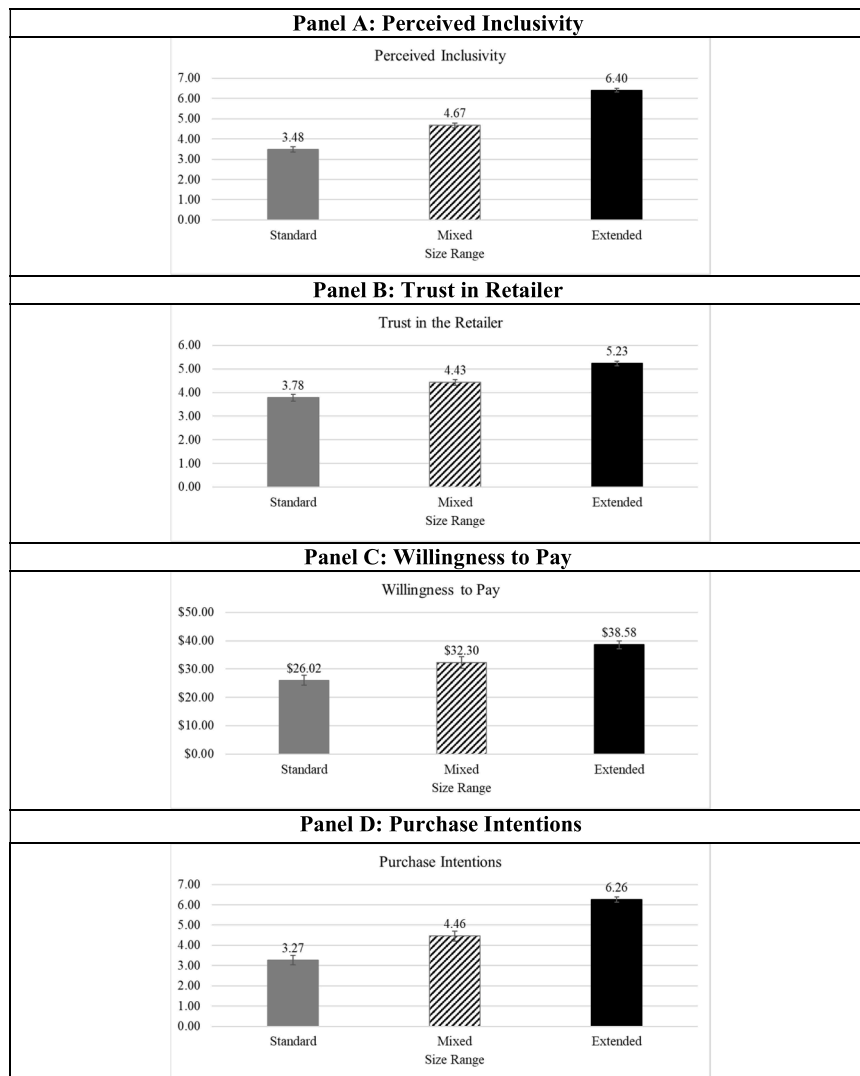


Fig. 3. Study 3 results.

commit to a fully extended-sized product assortment, offering some extended sizes is better than offering none at all. Importantly, mixed-availability sized retailers are not viewed as positively as extended-sized retailers, suggesting that if retailers want to maximize the benefits of offering extended-sizing, they should offer extended-sizing on all products, not just a limited selection of products.

3.5. Study 4

Study 4 was conducted to test whether our prior results are replicated when an advertisement promoting an extended-sized retailer features a model. In studies 1, 2, and 3, we did not portray any models in the advertisement. In study 4, we not only feature a model, but also manipulate the body size of that model.

3.5.1. Participants and procedures

We recruited 451 women ($M_{\text{age}} = 37.74$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 13.35$) from Prolific Academic to participate in this study. Study 4 had a 2 (size range: standard-size only versus extended-size) x 2 (body size of the model in the advertisement: thin model versus plus-sized model)

design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions (see [Appendix A](#)). After evaluating the advertisement, participants completed a manipulation check ($\alpha = 0.92$) and indicated how much they would be willing to pay for a dress sold by the retailer as well as their intentions to shop at the retailer ($\alpha = 0.97$). Then, participants completed an attention check. Next, participants completed the same perceived inclusivity ($\alpha = 0.86$), and trust ($\alpha = 0.95$) measures used in the previous studies. Lastly, participants provided their demographic information.

3.5.2. Results

3.5.2.1. Outlier analysis and attention check. Following the outlier analysis method previously mentioned, we identified 31 outliers, which were removed from the sample. An additional 19 participants failed the attention check and were also removed from the sample, leaving a final sample of 401 participants.

3.5.2.2. Main effect of size range. Replicating previous studies and providing support to hypothesis 1, the results of an independent samples *t*-test suggest that participants perceived the retailer to be more inclusive in the extended-sized ($M_{\text{extended}} = 5.16$, $SD = 0.91$) than in the standard-sized only condition ($M_{\text{standard}} = 4.79$, $SD = 1.21$; $t(398) = -3.52$, $p < .001$). The extended-sized retailer ($M_{\text{extended}} = 5.33$, $SD = 1.09$) was also perceived to be more trustworthy than the standard-sized only retailer ($M_{\text{standard}} = 4.79$, $SD = 1.21$; $t(398) = -3.52$, $p < .001$), providing additional evidence for hypothesis 2. However, unlike previous studies, there was no significant difference in participants' willingness to pay for items sold by the retailer between the extended-sized ($M_{\text{extended}} = \$44.47$, $SD = \$25.20$) and standard-sized only conditions ($M_{\text{standard}} = \$41.59$, $SD = \$27.10$; $t(399) = -1.10$, $p = .14$). Additionally, participants indicated being marginally more likely to purchase from the extended-sized retailer ($M_{\text{extended}} = 6.65$, $SD = 1.86$) than the standard-sized retailer ($M_{\text{standard}} = 6.34$, $SD = 2.08$; $t(399) = -1.56$, $p = .06$), lending marginal support to hypothesis 3b.

3.5.2.3. Main effect of model body size. The results of an independent samples *t*-test suggest that participants perceived the retailer to be more inclusive when it featured a plus-sized model in its advertisement ($M_{\text{plus}} = 5.21$, $SD = 0.99$) than when it featured a thin model in its advertisement ($M_{\text{thin}} = 4.76$, $SD = 1.12$; $t(398) = -4.20$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, the retailer was perceived to be more trustworthy when it featured a plus-sized model in its advertisement ($M_{\text{plus}} = 5.37$, $SD = 1.17$) than when it featured a thin model in its advertisement ($M_{\text{thin}} = 5.03$, $SD = 1.18$; $t(399) = -2.03$, $p = .02$). Participants indicated that they would be more willing to pay for an item sold by the retailer when the advertised model was plus-sized ($M_{\text{plus}} = \$45.80$, $SD = \$26.78$) than when the advertised model was thin ($M_{\text{thin}} = \$40.52$, $SD = \$25.36$; $t(399) = -2.03$, $p = .02$). Lastly, participants reported higher intentions to shop at the retailer when its advertisement portrayed a plus-sized model ($M_{\text{plus}} = 6.72$, $SD = 1.89$) than when it portrayed a thin model ($M_{\text{thin}} = 6.31$, $SD = 2.03$; $t(399) = -2.07$, $p = .02$).

3.5.2.4. Interactive effects. To test the interactive effect of size range and model body size, we ran a series of two-way ANOVAs. The first analysis examined the interactive effect on perceived inclusivity. The results revealed there was a significant main effect of size range ($F(1, 396) = 18.28$, $p < .001$), a significant main effect of model body size ($F(1, 396) = 11.98$, $p < .001$), and a significant interactive effect ($F(1, 396) = 5.35$, $p = .02$). When the retailer offered extended sizes, featuring either a plus-sized ($M_{\text{Extended} \times \text{Plus}} = 5.27$, $SD = 0.96$) or thin model ($M_{\text{Extended} \times \text{Thin}} = 5.06$, $SD = 0.86$) did not significantly influence perceptions of retailer inclusivity ($p = .50$). However, when the retailer only offered standard sizes, the retailer was perceived to be significantly more inclusive when it portrayed a plus-sized model in its advertisement ($M_{\text{Standard} \times \text{Plus}} = 5.15$, $SD = 0.96$) than when it portrayed a thin model in its advertisement ($M_{\text{Standard} \times \text{Thin}} = 4.46$, $SD = 1.27$; $p < .001$).

The second 2×2 ANOVA with trust in the retailer as the dependent variable revealed a significant main effect of size range ($F(1, 397) = 4.78$, $p = .03$), a significant main effect of model body size ($F(1, 397) = 8.33$, $p = .004$), and a significant interactive effect ($F(1, 397) = 5.15$, $p = .04$). When the retailer offered extended sizes, portraying either a plus-sized model ($M_{\text{Extended} \times \text{Plus}} = 5.38$, $SD = 1.12$) or thin model ($M_{\text{Extended} \times \text{Thin}} = 5.28$, $SD = 0.96$) did not significantly influence perceptions retailer inclusivity ($p = .93$). Yet, when the retailer only offered standard sizes, participants indicated that the retailer was more trustworthy when it featured a plus-sized model in its advertisement ($M_{\text{Standard} \times \text{Plus}} = 5.37$, $SD = 1.13$) than when it portrayed a thin model in its advertisement ($M_{\text{Standard} \times \text{Thin}} = 4.79$, $SD = 1.33$; $p = .004$).

The results of a third 2×2 ANOVA with willingness to pay as the dependent variable revealed that there was a significant main effect of model body size ($F(1, 397) = 4.16$, $p = .04$), but no significant main effect of size range ($F(1, 397) = 1.07$, $p = .30$) or interactive effect ($F(1, 397) = 1.31$, $p = .25$). Similarly, the results of a fourth 2×2 ANOVA with purchase intentions as the dependent variable revealed a significant main effect of model body size ($F(1, 397) = 4.38$, $p = .04$), but no significant main effect of size range ($F(1, 397) = 2.20$, $p = .14$) or interactive effect ($F(1, 397) = 2.12$, $p = .14$).

3.5.2.5. Moderated mediation analysis. We conducted a moderated mediation analysis using PROCESS Model 83 (Hayes, 2017). We entered size range as the independent variable, body size of the model in the advertisement as the moderator, perceived inclusivity and

trustworthiness of the retailer as the mediators, and willingness to pay as the dependent variable. The results revealed a significant index of moderated mediation ($b = -0.75$, 95 % CI $[-1.93, -0.13]$), providing evidence for hypothesis 6. Specifically, the interaction between size range and body size of the model in the advertisement had a significant effect on perceived retailer inclusivity ($b = -0.12$, $t(396) = 2.31$, $p = .02$). The conditional effect of model body size on perceived inclusivity shows a significant effect between the two conditions that portrayed the thin model ($b = 0.30$, $p < .001$, 95 % CI $[0.16, 0.44]$) but no significant effect between the two conditions that portrayed the plus-sized model ($b = 0.06$, $p = 0.43$, 95 % CI $[-0.09, 0.21]$). These results suggest that when a thin model is used in an advertisement, the retailer is perceived to be significantly less inclusive when it offers a standard-sized ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 1.27$) versus extended-sized ($M = 5.06$, $SD = 0.86$; $p < .001$) product line. However, when a plus-sized model is used in an advertisement, a standard-sized retailer is seen to be equally as inclusive ($M = 5.15$, $SD = 1.02$) as an extended-sized retailer ($M = 5.29$, $SD = 0.96$; $p = .855$). It is worth noting that while the thin model and standard-sized product line was perceived to be significantly less inclusive than both plus-size model conditions ($p < .001$), the thin model and extended-sized product line condition did not significantly differ from the plus-size model and standard-sized product line ($p = .94$) or plus-size model and extended-sized product line ($p = .85$) conditions.

Additionally, as perceptions of inclusivity increased, participants' trust in the retailer increased ($b = 0.82$, $t(397) = 21.96$, $p < .001$) and as trust in the retailer increased, participants reported being willing to pay more for the advertised product ($b = 1.19$, $t(396) = 13.56$, $p < .001$). The results of the moderated mediation analysis replicate with purchase intentions as the dependent variable (index of moderated mediation = -0.23 , 95 % CI $[-0.45, -0.03]$).

3.5.3. Discussion

In support of hypothesis 6, the results of study 4 suggest that the previously observed effect of size range \rightarrow perceived inclusivity of the retailer \rightarrow trust in the retailer \rightarrow retailer outcomes is moderated by model body size. Specifically, the previously observed results hold when the model featured in the advertisement is thin; however, the effect of size range on perceived inclusivity is attenuated when a plus-size model is featured in the advertisement. We propose that this effect occurs because the presence of a plus-sized model to act as a stigmatized-identity safety cue, which on its own signals inclusivity even when the retailer does not offer extended sizes meant to fit consumers who look like the model. While we do not advocate that retailers should misrepresent their product assortment by featuring models in their advertisements who do not fit into the clothing they sell, we do believe this effect has significant implications and warrants future research as we discuss below.

4. General discussion

This research explores the timely and increasingly popular retailing trend of offering extended-sized product lines. By extending their product assortments to include a greater range of sizes, many clothing retailers are now able to serve both plus-size and standard-size consumers. We investigate how this change to retailers' marketing mix – in this case, their product assortment – influences both consumer perceptions and retailer outcomes (Gielens & Roggeveen, 2023). The results of this research demonstrate that consumers are willing to pay significantly more for clothing sold by extended-sized (versus standard-sized only) retailers and report significantly higher intentions to purchase from extended-sized (versus standard-sized only) retailers. This effect occurs via consumers' perceptions that extended-size retailers are more inclusive and trustworthy than standard-sized only retailers.

4.1. Theoretical contributions

To our knowledge, the current research is the first to investigate how offering products for both stigmatized (i.e., plus-size) and non-stigmatized (i.e., standard-size) consumers impacts consumers perceptions and retailer outcomes. We contribute to the stigmatized-identity safety cue literature (Chaney et al., 2016, 2018, 2021) by exploring how a clothing retailers' product assortment can act as a stigmatized-identity safety cue. Furthermore, this research expands on the findings of Chaney and her colleagues by studying how consumers respond to differing strengths of stigmatized-identity safety cues as well as the presence of multiple stigmatized-identity safety cues. We also advance the limited prior literature on how consumers respond to retailers' inclusive product lines. While prior research has explored how offering inclusive product lines influences consumers' attitudes towards the brand (D'Angelo et al., 2025; Naidu & Donnadieu Borquez, 2025), the current research investigates how inclusive product lines, in the form of extended-sized product lines, influence retailer outcomes, including consumers' willingness to pay for products sold by the retailer and intentions to purchase from the retailer.

Lastly, scant literature has examined how consumers respond to body-size diversity efforts in retail settings. Prior research focuses on how the body size of frontline employees influences the retailer's brand image (Coward & Brady, 2014; Ruggs et al., 2015) and how consumers respond to diverse-bodied models on clothing retailers' online stores (D'Angelo & Ross, 2025; Zhang et al., 2024). The current research adds to these previous findings by studying how retailers can benefit from offering extended-sized product lines. Additionally, most research on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the marketplace has studied how consumers respond to the representation of racial, gender, and sexual minorities in marketing. Limited prior research has investigated how the promotion of body size diversity influences consumers' behaviors (for exceptions see Cinelli & Yang, 2016; D'Angelo & Ross, 2025; Naidu et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024). Our research adds to this growing body of literature.

4.2. Retailer implications

The current research has important implications for practitioners. First, there is limited research on how clothing retailers' promotion of body-size diversity influences consumer perceptions and behaviors (for exceptions, see [D'Angelo and Ross, 2025](#); [Zhang et al., 2024](#)). We add to these recent findings by exploring how consumers respond to retailers that offer extended-sized product lines. The results of this research suggest that when retailers offer extended-sized (versus standard-sized only) product lines, they are perceived to be more inclusive. Given that consumers are increasingly paying attention to brands' diversity, equity, and inclusion commitments and supporting brands that align with their personal values ([Brown et al., 2022](#)), being perceived as a more inclusive retailer can benefit brands. Our measure of perceived inclusivity includes several types of diversity, including body size, gender, and racial diversity. As such, the results of this research suggest that by offering extended-sized clothing, retailers are perceived to be more inclusive, not just of diverse body sizes, but of underrepresented individuals in general. Additionally, consumers believe that extended-sized retailers are more trustworthy, which leads to increased willingness to pay for products sold by an extended-sized (versus standard-sized only) retailer and higher intentions to shop at an extended-sized retailer.

This research also provides valuable insights for retailers that may not have the resources to fully commit to an extended-sized product line. We find that adopting a mixed-availability sized product line by having all styles available in standard sizes and a limited number of styles in extended sizes improves consumer perceptions and retailer outcomes compared to only having a standard-sized product line; however, it is important to note that this strategy is not as effective at increasing consumer perceptions and retailer outcomes as having an extended-sized product line. These findings suggest that extended-sized product lines are the strongest form of stigmatized-identity safety cues (compared to standard-sized only and mixed-availability sizing product lines); however, if a retailer does not have the resources to fully commit to an extended-sized product line, offering mixed-availability sizing can lead the retailer to be perceived as more inclusive and more trustworthy than only offering standard sizes. As a result of these perceptions, consumers are willing to pay more to shop at the mixed-availability retailer compared to a standard-sized only retailer and have higher intentions to purchase from the mixed-availability sizing retailer. While offering a wide range of sizes can be costly to implement and pose logistical issues, the current research suggests that this investment can provide substantial financial returns. Moreover, retailers considering modifying their product lines to include extended sizes may choose to first adopt a mixed-availability sizing product assortment to see its impact on business before fully pursuing an extended-sized product line.

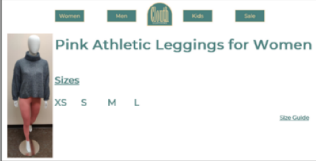
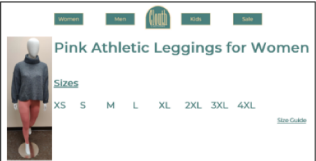
Finally, we investigate the influence of the body size of the model featured in the advertisement for an extended-sized product line. When a retailer features a thin model in an advertisement, they are perceived to be more inclusive when they offer an extended-sized (versus standard-sized) product line. Yet, when a retailer features a plus-sized model in an advertisement, it is perceived to be equally as inclusive regardless of which size range (extended-sized or standard-sized only) it offers. We propose that this effect occurs because featuring a plus-sized model in the advertisement serves as a stigmatized-identity safety cue, leading the retailer to be perceived as inclusive even when it does not offer an extended-sized product line. While we are not advocating for clothing retailers to misrepresent their product assortment by featuring plus-sized models in advertisements when it does not sell clothing for plus-sized consumers, we believe it is important for retailers to note that their persuasive communications, in this case their advertising, can act as a stigmatized-identity safety cue, even when their strategic actions, such as the sizes of clothing they sell in store, do not signal inclusivity.

4.3. Limitations and future directions

Our research is not without limitations. First, future research should expand on the results of study 4 and investigate whether portraying a stigmatized group in an advertisement but not selling products for that group negatively impacts retailer outcomes. Second, we only investigate how women consumers respond to clothing retailers' extended-sized offerings. While the men's clothing industry has not yet adopted extended-sized clothing products to the extent that the women's clothing industry has, future research should investigate whether the effects found in the current set of studies generalize to men. Third, the current research does not explore how consumers who experience different types of stigma, such as racial stigma, respond to the stigmatized-identity safety cue presented by extended-sized product lines. Future research should explore how selling products for consumers with one type of stigma influences consumers who experience different types of stigmas. While stigma cue transfers have been explored in organizational contexts ([Chaney et al., 2016, 2018, 2021](#)), there is an opportunity to investigate whether stigma cue transfers occur in retail settings. Finally, while this paper looks at stigmatized-identity safety cues relevant to body size, there are several avenues for future research on stigmatized identity safety cues in retail settings. For example, are product assortments that accommodate stigmatized identities (such as extended-sized clothing lines or shade-inclusive makeup lines) perceived to be better indicators of a retailer's kindness towards and acceptance of stigmatized consumers than portraying stigmatized consumers in advertisements? Additionally, when do stigmatized-identity safety cues backfire and lead consumers to assume that retailers have a manipulative intent? It is the authors' hope that the current research inspires future research on stigmatized identity safety cues in retail settings.

Appendix A. Stimuli



Study 1

Condition	Stimuli	Size Chart																											
Standard-sized only		<table> <tr> <th>Size</th><th>Waist</th><th>Hip</th></tr> <tr> <td>XS</td><td>25.00-26.00</td><td>35.50-36.50</td></tr> <tr> <td>S</td><td>27.00-28.00</td><td>37.50-38.50</td></tr> <tr> <td>M</td><td>29.00-30.00</td><td>39.50-40.50</td></tr> <tr> <td>L</td><td>31.50-33.50</td><td>42.00-44.00</td></tr> </table>	Size	Waist	Hip	XS	25.00-26.00	35.50-36.50	S	27.00-28.00	37.50-38.50	M	29.00-30.00	39.50-40.50	L	31.50-33.50	42.00-44.00												
Size	Waist	Hip																											
XS	25.00-26.00	35.50-36.50																											
S	27.00-28.00	37.50-38.50																											
M	29.00-30.00	39.50-40.50																											
L	31.50-33.50	42.00-44.00																											
Extended-sized		<table> <tr> <th>Size</th><th>Waist</th><th>Hip</th></tr> <tr> <td>XS</td><td>25.00-26.00</td><td>35.50-36.50</td></tr> <tr> <td>S</td><td>27.00-28.00</td><td>37.50-38.50</td></tr> <tr> <td>M</td><td>29.00-30.00</td><td>39.50-40.50</td></tr> <tr> <td>L</td><td>31.50-33.50</td><td>42.00-44.00</td></tr> <tr> <td>XL</td><td>36.25-39.00</td><td>46.50-49.00</td></tr> <tr> <td>2XL</td><td>42.00-44.25</td><td>51.50-53.75</td></tr> <tr> <td>3XL</td><td>46.50-49.00</td><td>56.25-58.50</td></tr> <tr> <td>4XL</td><td>51.50-54.00</td><td>61.00-63.50</td></tr> </table>	Size	Waist	Hip	XS	25.00-26.00	35.50-36.50	S	27.00-28.00	37.50-38.50	M	29.00-30.00	39.50-40.50	L	31.50-33.50	42.00-44.00	XL	36.25-39.00	46.50-49.00	2XL	42.00-44.25	51.50-53.75	3XL	46.50-49.00	56.25-58.50	4XL	51.50-54.00	61.00-63.50
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XS	25.00-26.00	35.50-36.50																											
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3XL	46.50-49.00	56.25-58.50																											
4XL	51.50-54.00	61.00-63.50																											

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(continued)

Study 2

Standard-sized only	Extended-sized
	

Study 3

Standard-sized only	Mixed-availability sized	Extended-sized
		

(continued on next page)

(continued)

Study 4

	Thin Model	Plus-Sized Model
Standard-Sized Only		
Extended-Sized		

Appendix B. Measures

Scale	Items	Scale Endpoints	Reference(s)
Manipulation Check	1. [Retailer] offers inclusive sizing 2. [Retailer] designs clothes for people of all body sizes 3. [Retailer] offers a wide range of sizes	1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) scale	<i>Created by authors</i>
Willingness to Pay	1. How much would you be willing to pay for the [product name] you saw?	Open-ended Response	
Perceived Inclusivity	1. [Retailer] values body diversity 2. [Retailer] values gender diversity 3. [Retailer] values racial diversity 4. [Retailer] is an inclusive brand 5. [Retailer] appears to be committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion	1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) scale	Naidu (2023) ; Naidu and Donnadieu (2025)
Trust in Retailer	1. I believe I could trust [retailer] 2. I could depend on [retailer] 3. I think [retailer] would be reliable in meeting its promises 4. [Retailer] probably has high integrity	1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) scale	Tax, Brown & Chandrashekar 1998 ; Darke, Brady, Benedictus & Wilson 2016

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