



GENDERED DESIGN IN STEAM

Bauru, Brazil

ID53

A case study of clothing design considerations of low-income, menopausal women in Brazil



As in many societies, in Brazil, middle-aged and low-income women are subject to marginalization caused by social and gender inequality. This reality underlies the construction of negative stereotypes associated with the devaluation of aging female bodies and beauty. Clothing, contributes to the perception of belonging and acceptance in the social environment. When the issues of aging, gender, and economic vulnerability are present, these judgments can further feed the construction of depreciating stereotypes of women. Recognizing the particularities of these women and their demands is essential for the development of clothing products that can contribute to self-esteem and social belonging, democratizing the actions and design solutions. Thus, this investigation had as a main objective: to understand how middle-aged and low-income women perceived the biopsychosocial factors of aging, and how they influence the factors of usability and social representation through the bias of gender construction.



Data collected about body changes. Measurements through questionnaire visualized using a body visualizer software.

Team

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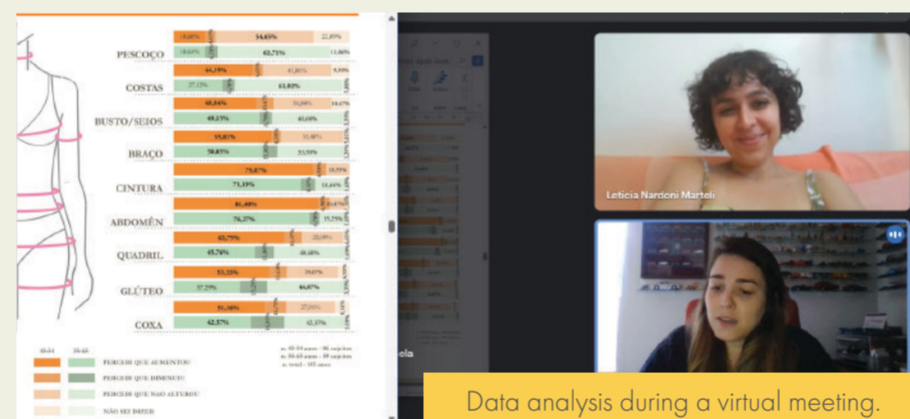
Findings

Aging Perception

- Despite the stereotypes, women seemed more aware about menopause, evaluating it with more acceptance.
- Anxiety, insomnia, and fatigue were the symptoms mostly mentioned.

Perception on body change

- Participants noted changes, especially in the waist and abdomen, which creates discomfort and embarrassment.



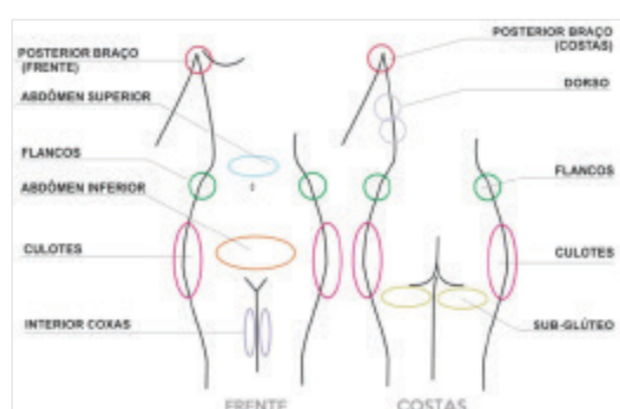
Their relationship with fashion and clothing

- Most participants commented on avoiding tight clothes, especially around the waist, expressing embarrassment on clothing that is too tight or revealing. Nevertheless, they despise loose and baggy clothes.
- They admit using accessories to help them create a more curvy silhouette, besides that, they prefer clothes that provide them with a sense of respect and social integrity.
- They believe in the individuals' freedom to choose what is more adequate and comfortable, denying ephemeral trends and marketing pressure.
- Fashion is associated with individuals' styles and it is supposed to create happiness, well-being, and a sense of belonging.

Methods

This study used a generative approach, combining qualitative research techniques with quantitative methods, which occurred simultaneously by means of a questionnaire applied in a structured interview. To try to understand multiple complex power relationships, the questionnaire was broken into 4 separate distinct parts that investigated the following aspects:

- Firstly, the socio economic and demographic aspects of the participants.
- Secondly, reproductive (or non-reproductive) stage and about their perception of aging and menopause.
- Thirdly, explore the perception of middle-aged women regarding the body and aging. Here only open questions were used. To help them identify possible body changes, two drawings with illustrative references to body parts were used.
- Finally, the relationship that women have with fashion, especially clothing. Focusing on their relationship with fashion and their way of dressing.



The two images were used as part of the survey conducted with middle-aged low-income women in Brazil about perceptions of their body.

"In general, gender studies call for more precision and sensitivity due to their multidimensional nature."

— Érica Neves

Lessons & Future Directions

- Including the female perspective in designing clothes for women with menopause is essential as designers can create clothing designs based on style and size that address the changes in a female's body, which will allow women to feel more comfortable and confident in the clothes they wear.
- By using the data that has been collected from the small sample in Bauru, there is potential to expand the project to larger regions to gather more data and to reach more women.

Learn more



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