

# Chinese Growing Taller, Bigger

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Photo By: Courtesy Photo

A visualization of the average body shape in China and the U.S.

The typical body shape in China is smaller and more homogeneous than in Europe and the U.S., but the younger generation is getting taller and bigger, according to a study by fit-mannequin company Alvanon released Monday.

The company scanned more than 28,000 people, including 17,520 women, in malls all over China, with the help of marketing partner Levi Strauss & Co., using Intellifit scanners. The purpose of the study was to collect data about body shape for use in crafting individual brand and size strategies for Alvanon clients that wish to develop their business in China.

"We think [China] is going to be one of the largest retail opportunities in the world in the next couple of years," said Alvanon chief executive officer Janice Wang. A range of companies could benefit from a fit strategy made specifically for their target demographic in the Chinese market, she said.

For example, the Chinese fit data could be used by luxury brands already selling in China through their own retail stores or department stores; iconic mid- to high-end brands with a strong following in Europe or the U.S., such as Levi's, and trendy young urban and streetwear brands such as Miss Sixty and Evisu.

Sizing can create a brand following, said Wang. "If the sizing is wrong, the brand following is not going to be as strong," she said. "The current way of buying more smaller sizes for that particular region will work for most retailers but there will be specific retailers who want to enter into that market and have a Chinese fit."

The study confirmed that Chinese of northern descent are taller than those from the south. Women in China have much more narrow variations in bust, waist and hip measurements than women in the U.S. That's because the U.S. is more ethnically diverse and has more wearers of plus sizes, said Wang. Retailers that want to fit about 80 percent of the population would typically offer sizes 0 through 20 in the U.S., whereas in China, sizes 0 through 8 would suffice, she said.

The highest increase in body mass index has occurred in Chinese women ages 35 to 45, according to the study, which drew on a variety of studies and sources as well as Alvanon's scan data. The average Chinese woman stands 5 feet, 4 inches tall and weighs 125 pounds. Average measurements for bust, waist and hips are 31-28-35. In contrast, the average U.S. woman is the same height but weighs 155 pounds. Average body measurements are 37-34-42.

Over the last decade, Chinese children have grown almost 1.5 inches taller, the study found, although it did not explain the reason. It also said 30 percent of urban Chinese perceive themselves to be overweight.

Alvanon has been in business since 2001. Ninety percent of its business is making custom fit mannequins. Customers include Calvin Klein, Wal-Mart, Gap, Talbots, Nike and H&M. In 2006, the company started a branding and size consulting business headed up by Ed Gribbin, formerly the president of Intellifit.