

# Fit is “It”

For Alvanon, success is measured by getting **sizing** right

BY FAYE BROOKMAN

**W**hen in need of a new dress, Mary Campeas heads first to the Lilly Pulitzer section at her local Bloomingdale’s. She seeks out Lilly because the sizing works well with her body type.

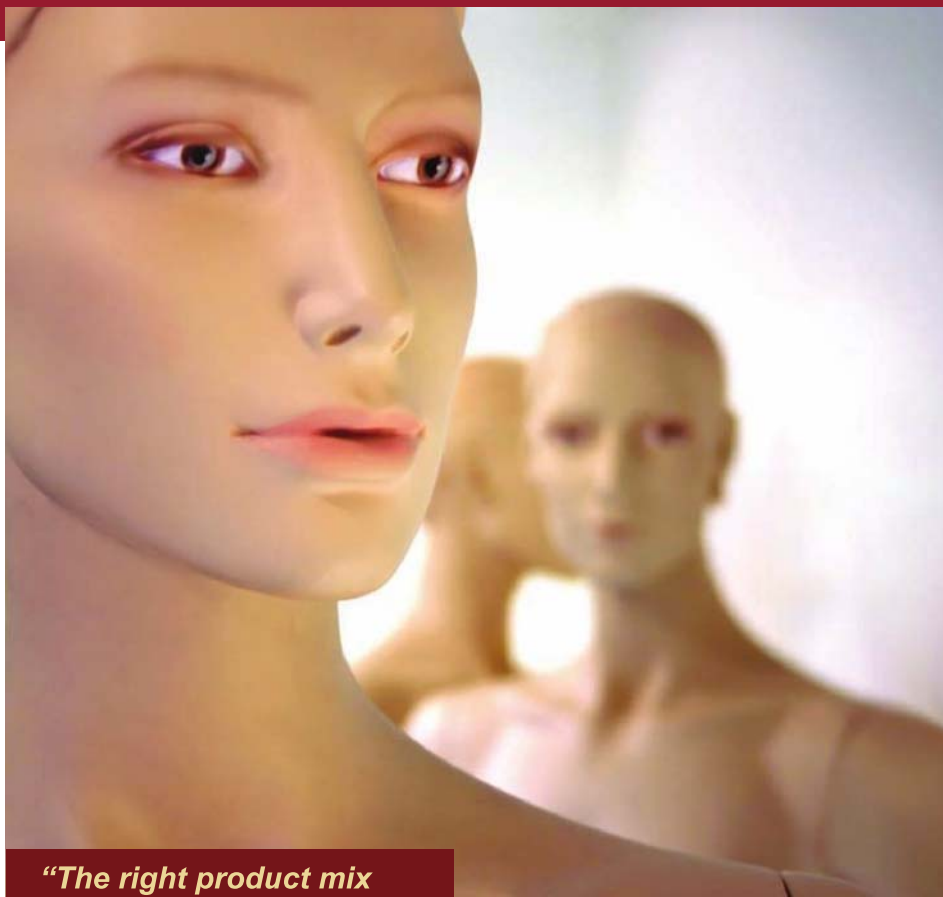
Campeas is a perfect example of what is becoming the next marketing opportunity – fit. Retailers and manufacturers spend millions of dollars understanding their target shopper from age and income to how they shop. But body type should be a part of the profile too, according to Janice Wang, CEO of Alvanon.

There are variables in fit ranging from ethnicity to the region of the country where consumers live. Surveys find that 64 percent of shoppers will return to a brand or store if they like the fit, according to Wang.

“We spend time thinking of our clients, their age or where they live and their lifestyle,” she says. “But we have to think of what they want in fit as far as their body types are concerned.” According to Wang, the right measurements lead to increased sales, more full-priced sell-through and an expanded consumer base.

Fit also is crucial in foreign markets where both manufacturers and retailers hope to expand. China is a strong example. Although entirely of one common race, Chinese consumers vary in measurements based on regions of the country and age: the younger generation is getting taller and heavier.

Alvanon conducted a fit study in a partnership with Levi Strauss & Co.’s Intellifit Scanners whereby more than 28,000 people were scanned in malls



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across China. The data will be used by Alvanon clients looking to expand in China, where fit will be especially crucial, Wang says.

“There is unprecedented retail opportunity in China,” she says, but “the right product mix must be combined with the right size and fit to achieve a successful brand following.”

Similar fit studies are planned for other countries.

The issue can be further complicated when a brand or retailer believes it has the perfect fit but uses different manufacturing plants. “You don’t want a customer to come in and try on four” pairs of pants and “wonder why three of the pairs of the same size fit differently,” Wang says.

That is another component of Alvanon’s services – using science to provide exact specifications so that a blouse made in one plant will be exactly the same size as one made in another factory hundreds or thousands of miles away.

## Visualization technology

Alvanon’s roots date to 2001 when Wang’s father, a manufacturer of children’s clothes, became frustrated by youth mannequins, which he found to be scaled incorrectly. He identified many inefficiencies in the apparel supply chain that were common problems across the industry and demonstrated that costs could easily be reduced through the use of visualization technology, allowing companies to work smarter and more efficiently.

Alvanon’s clients range from Brooks Brothers and Perry Ellis to Wal-Mart and Target. Beyond bringing fit under control, the company consults on issues like the marketing of pre-packs for specific regions of the country. The firm also assists retailers that have revamped sizing communicate those changes to their customers.

“We’re a new company and we can’t change the world overnight,” Wang says, “but we’re bringing science to fit.”

**STORES**

*Faye Brookman is a Skillman, N.J.-based writer who reports extensively on the retail industry.*