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Making plus look Positif

27 Dec 2006

Being bigger can mean big problems when it comes to dressing right. Image consultant SUZANNA PILLAY sizes things up for the plus-sized woman in the apparel and accessories department.

ALTHOUGH dressing the plus-sized woman is something that the West is familiar with, Asia is still struggling to get the formula right. In dressing bigger women, Asean designers tend to make bigger versions of styles meant for smaller women.

Here, in Malaysia, although there are a few fashion labels that cater to the bigger woman, most plus-sized women are still restricted to unflattering options because clothes that are designed specifically for bigger ladies are either out of their budget range or tend to look frumpy and granny-ish.

Wendy Lee of Chapter-One Image Consultancy (www.chapter-one.com) says plus-sized ladies in particular, need to dress well for a better look. Most plus-sized women tend to "drown" their shape by wearing clothing that is too big—which adds kilos.


"The silhouette of clothes are very important. Some clothing being sold for big ladies are shaped like tents and tends to make them look bigger. Clothing should drape, not cling to the body and should have shape," Wendy says. Another way to look slimmer is to highlight your best features while playing down your less flattering ones through clever accessorising.

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Classifieds	Besides this, she says, smart accessorising can change the attitude and mood of an outfit, add individuality and also "revive" a garment.
Mobile	
Affiliate	
NSTP Papers	Accessories, according to Wendy, can be categorised into obvious and non-obvious accessories and are anything that's not clothing.
Business Times	Obvious accessories are jewellery, shoes, shawls and scarves, hosiery /socks, belts, watches, bags, hats, eyewear, hair ornaments. Falling in the range of non-obvious accessories would be tattoo and henna prints, body piercing, coloured contact lenses, make-up, hair colour, hair style, prints and patterns, nail polish and nail art.
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In looking at accessories, Wendy said it was important to look at the harmony of scale. For jewellery the general rule of thumb for bigger ladies is to select medium-sized beaded necklaces, earrings and bracelets. Anything too small will be a noticeable contrast to their large size, while anything too big will make them look clumsy.

"If you don't know anything, compare how three different sizes (small design, medium design and large design) look on you and ask for opinions," says Wendy.

One thing very important which all women need to know, she says, is your basic body shape. The basic horizontal body shapes (measured from shoulders to the pelvis) are hourglass, rectangle, triangle, inverted triangle, diamond and oval. You will also need to consider which vertical body type category you fall into: i.e. long legs /short torso, short legs/long torso or a balanced body.

Majority of women, she says, are pear-shaped with shorter legs but body shape is also determined by race.

"Indians tend to have longer legs and shorter bodies i.e. weight is in stomach area, problem areas for the Chinese are the thighs, whereas Malays usually have a balanced body.

"The ideal figure shapes in the fashion industry are the hourglass and inverted triangle figure shapes. To look smaller, plus-sized women should choose clothing and accessories which give the illusion of following these shapes."

For instance, in trying to achieve the inverted triangle shape, one of the easiest options is to give the illusion of lengthening the shoulder area which will make the torso area look smaller. "You can achieve this by opening up the neck and shoulder area through flattering necklines like sweetheart-shaped necklines, boat-shaped



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necklines, deep v-necks or scoop-necks, says Wendy.

"The more neck you show will also make it easier to wear accessories."

WHAT TO WEAR / WHAT NOT TO WEAR

NECKLINES

Pair round necklaces with sweetheart necklines

Never pair round necklaces with round necklines

Wrap-dresses (v-necked with ties at the side of the waist) accentuate the top and focus eyes away from problem tummies

SHOES

wear heels

pointed-toe shoes will make you taller

stiletto heels draw attention to thick calves

Wear shoes/sandals with medium-sized heels, Avoid chunky square heels which can look frumpy.

Avoid ankle straps, they appear to "shorten" legs because of the vertical ankle straps.

EARRINGS

if you have a double chin don't wear dangling earrings that end or are longer than the jaw line. It will attract attention to problems in the chin area.

drop earrings / teardrops are good for all face shapes.

if you are big don't wear small studs, wear medium-sized ones instead.

EYEWEAR

Spectacles pair up better with studs or teardrops and not dangling earrings or chandelier earrings. With the latter two styles there is too much happening in the same area.

If your face is round, don't wear

spectacles or sunglasses in angular, round or square frames. Opt for semi-angular, semi-round shapes instead.

HAND ACCESSORIES

Make sure rings, bracelets and watch straps fit properly and are not too tight. Bulging flesh will draw attention.

Rings, bracelets and watch straps shouldn't be too small.

HEAD ACCESSORIES

Wearing a tudung tends to make faces round. If you have a round face use a tudung hood accessory to elongate your head.

Make sure your tudung doesn't swing horizontally in front of you, which adds kilos because of the tent-like shape, but is instead pinned into a V-shape which will allow eyes to focus down.

SKIRTS

No vertical, knife-pleated skirts. They add weight.

Don't pair a long jacket with a long skirt. It looks frumpy

PANTS

Leg-lengthening boot cut trousers paired with heels are a flattering option

when wearing pants avoid visible panty lines with French knickers.

when altering the length of your pants, wear your shoes so that the right length will be noted.

No bell bottoms or palazzo pants if you are short and a plus-size.

Tapered leg trousers create a balloon effect at stomach and emphasise the hips and buttocks.

Avoid hipsters if you have big hips.

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