Understanding Vanity Sizing for Clothing

Clothing brands are adding smaller size numbers—and making their clothing increasingly larger. Is it vanity sizing or size inflation?

Clothing has gotten larger over time

In 1958 a woman’s size 8 had a waist of 23.5 inches. In 2008 a size 8 waist had increased to about 29 inches. Even clothing with the size in inches is not immune. A pair of size 28 waist pants may actually have a 29 or 30 inch waist.

Small sizes make us feel good

Studies, including a recent one published in the Journal of Consumer Psychology show women’s self-esteem is enhanced by wearing “smaller” sizes.

Timeline of clothing sizes

Since clothing is getting larger, but is not being labeled with larger numbers, clothing manufacturers are compensating by creating smaller size numbers.

1958—Smallest women’s clothing size is an 8
1995—Size 2 is the smallest in most clothing lines
2014—J Crew introduces women’s size 000

1. Slate Magazine
http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/design/2012/02/clothing_sizes_getting_bigger_why_our_sizing_system_makes_no_sense.html

2. Journal of Consumer Psychology

www.sizecharter.com