

INDEPENDENT CONSUMER RESEARCH ON **APPAREL CHARACTERISTICS** INFLUENCING PURCHASE DECISIONS

INTRODUCTION:

This summarizes the findings of consumer research conducted by the NPD Group, Inc. to determine the desirability of various casual apparel attributes and how they affect consumer purchase decisions.

The study also focused on care label instructions, consumer perceptions of various care instructions and how they affect purchase decisions.

The research found that apparel purchase decisions are three-tiered events. When forced to rank various attributes on a scale of 1 to 10, consumers ranked *fit*, *easy care* and *durability* as their primary purchase requirements (ranked 9-10).

The second tier of preferred characteristics (ranked 7-8) consisted of *price/value*, *bleachability* and *fabric blend*. The third tier, consisting of all attributes ranked below 7, included such attributes as *recognized brand name*, *hand wash*, *cold wash* and *dry flat*. This third level of characteristics was generally neutral or only slightly influential to the purchase decision. The first two tiers, those characteristics ranked 7 or higher, could be considered important or very important to apparel purchase decisions.

**THE STUDY REPORTS...****THE CARE LABEL ON CLOTHING IS IMPORTANT TO MOST CONSUMERS.**

- ◆ Four out of five look at the label *before they buy* clothing, and follow the instructions on the label when washing clothing.
- ◆ Study confirms previous research that showed *83% of consumers read care labels* before making a purchase decision.
- ◆ Bleachability enhances consumer perceptions on two of the three most important purchase criteria - *easy care* and *durability*.

continues...

METHODOLOGY:

The research consisted of a nationally representative sample of households. Surveys consisted of two basic components. The first was a traditional attitudinal assessment including:

- ◆ Desirability of garment attributes (10-point ascending scale)
- ◆ Ratings of self-descriptive statements (5-point ascending agree/disagree scale)
- ◆ Laundry behavior and bleach usage

The second component was a conjoint task forcing a ranking of various combinations of five factors:

- ◆ Brand Familiarity (Familiar or not Familiar)
- ◆ Fabric Content (100% Cotton, 100% Polyester, or a blend)
- ◆ Washability (Regular Cycle-Any Temp., Regular Cycle-Cold, or Gentle Cycle-Cold)
- ◆ Dryability (Tumble Dry-Normal Heat, or Tumble Dry-Low Heat)
- ◆ Bleachability (Bleach When Needed, Non-Chlorine Bleach When Needed, Do Not Bleach)

Conjoint analysis is a more valid tool for assessing the desirability of product attributes than simple ratings because it asks respondents to trade off one feature for another - not just whether bleachability or dryability is important, but which is more important.

THE STUDY FOUND THE FOLLOWING...

BLEACHABILITY IS AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION TO MANY CONSUMERS WHEN BUYING CLOTHING.

- ◆ Two-thirds say that, other things being equal, they prefer to buy garments with care labels indicating bleachability.
- ◆ Half report they think bleachability is indicative of the quality and the durability of a garment.
- ◆ Separate research found these perceptions true for either chlorine (hypochlorite) or non-chlorine (color-safe bleach).
- ◆ On a 1-10 ascending scale rating the desirability of casual clothing features, respondents on average rate bleachability a 7.
- ◆ Confirms previous research that 79% of consumers believe bleachability is important and that 73% equate bleachability with quality, value and durability.

RESULTS OF CONJOINT ANALYSIS SUPPORT THE IMPORTANCE OF BLEACHABILITY.

A conjoint analysis proved that, when asked to make “trade-off” decisions among five different attributes of casual clothing, respondents demonstrated that bleachability is as important as washability and brand familiarity.

- ◆ Respondents clearly preferred garments whose label indicated “Bleach When Needed” or “Non-Chlorine Bleach When Needed” to those saying “Do Not Bleach”.
- ◆ Previous research reported that 68% would switch brands to get a bleachable product.

BLEACHING PRODUCTS ARE USED BY THE MAJORITY OF CONSUMERS:

- ◆ 85% use hypochlorite bleach; 73% color-safe bleach; 64% soil/stain removers.
- ◆ There is considerable cross-usage of bleaching products; recent users of either type of bleach are more likely to use the other type of bleach, and a soil/stain remover, as well.

CONSUMERS RECOGNIZE THE ADVANTAGES OF BLEACHABLE APPAREL.

- ◆ 57% agree that “I think that bleach works when nothing else will get the clothes clean.”
- ◆ 44% agree that “I would have to throw away a lot of good clothing if I never used bleach to get out stains.”
- ◆ 25% agree that “If I were able to use bleach in more of my wash loads my clothing would last longer and would stay looking like new.”

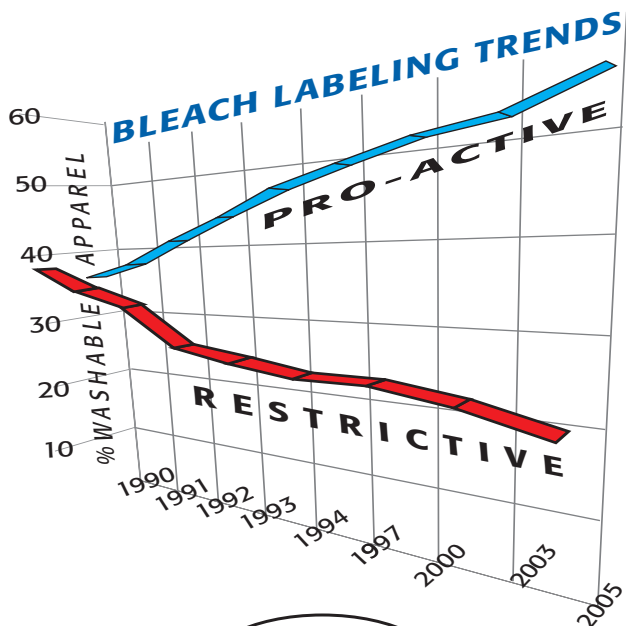


- ◆ Most (80%) agree that “I like to read the care instructions before I purchase new clothing”.
- ◆ 78% agree that “I am very careful to follow the washing instructions on clothing labels”.
- ◆ Because it is seen by many as a necessary laundry ingredient, it is not surprising that bleaching products are used by the majority of respondents.

- ◆ **TWO-THIRDS (67%) OF RESPONDENTS AGREED** that, “Given the choice between two similar articles of clothing, I would prefer to buy the one with care instructions that allow me to use some type of bleach, either chlorine bleach or non-chlorine/color-safe bleach”.
- ◆ **47% AGREED THAT “CLOTHING WHICH SAYS** to use bleach, chlorine (hypochlorite) or non-chlorine (color-safe bleach), when needed is more likely to be well-made and durable”.
- ◆ **IN ADDITION, HALF (51%)** agreed that “I prefer to buy clothing when the label says either ‘Bleach When Needed’ or ‘Non-Chlorine Bleach When Needed’”.

BLEACHABILITY IS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR THAT INFLUENCES CLOTHING PURCHASE DECISIONS.

THE APPAREL INDUSTRY AGREES...



RESEARCH DOCUMENTS TREND TOWARD ACCURATE AND AFFIRMATIVE CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- ◆ Today’s competitive retail environment, requires delivering fashion and product performance consumers are looking for.
- ◆ Savvy apparel producers know that every opportunity to serve their customers can affect sales. They know consumers are looking for bleachable, easy care fashion. That’s why so many are driving the trend toward accurate bleach instructions, effecting millions of care labels.
- ◆ **THEY ALSO KNOW IT’S THE LAW.** The Federal Trade Commission regulations are clear. The reality is that if a product can be safely laundered in detergent, it is almost always safe in some type of bleach. Saying “Do Not Bleach” is a violation. It’s also not what your consumers are looking for.

Join the trend toward accurate care instructions. Call Textile Industry Affairs for free assistance today.



IN CONCLUSION:

CARE LABELS CAN BE VALUABLE MARKETING TOOLS...

- ◆ 4 out of 5 consumers read them.
- ◆ Care instructions affect consumer impressions

BLEACHABILITY IS IMPORTANT...

- ◆ It creates perceptions of quality, value and durability.
- ◆ It is an essential element of easy-care.
- ◆ 2 out of 3 consumers will purchase a bleachable garment in preference over a similar brand that is not bleachable.
- ◆ Bleachability enhances consumer perceptions of 2 of the 3 most important purchase criteria, easy-care and durability.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ◆ **ENSURE CARE LABEL ACCESSIBILITY.**
- ◆ **ENSURE CARE LABEL ACCURACY.**
- ◆ **INCLUDE APPROPRIATE** affirmative bleaching instructions on the care label.

ABOUT TEXTILE INDUSTRY AFFAIRS

In addition to funding research and providing other free resources to the textile/apparel industry, Textile Industry Affairs provides reliable evidence and test procedures to dramatically streamline testing for colorfastness to various bleaches.

You can have the advantages of fast, easy and ecologically responsible bleach testing. By combining a thoroughly documented presumption of innocence for color-safe bleaches and a simple test for chlorine bleach safety, you can eliminate a costly and time intensive step in your care label procedures.

For free assistance, contact:

Textile Industry Affairs

Tel: 850-522-6270 / Fax 212-505-3300

Email: info@TextileAffairs.org Internet: www.TextileAffairs.org