International consumer survey

Consumers place increased focus on textiles tested for harmful substances and their environmentally friendly production

Degree of familiarity and use of textile labels

For the question about the use of textile labels OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 was the clear number one: 22 % of all respondents have already purchased a textile product with this label. On average the EU eco label (“EU flower”) was the most well-known label (44 %) in all countries surveyed, but as a certification system across several industries its use in the textile sector is rather minor. The degree of familiarity of the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 with its label “Confidence in textiles” is almost at the same level. 42 % of all consumers in the survey know this textile quality label which has been an effective protective shield against harmful substances for 20 years.

A trend analysis in seven European countries, carried out in 2008 by the management consultancy BBE Retail Experts – also on behalf of the German certification body OEKO-TEX® – already determined the degree of familiarity of the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 and its quality label “Confidence in textiles”. In the direct comparison between years and countries the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 was even able to gain another 2 percent in its degree of familiarity (2012: 43% / 2008: 41%).

Result: The OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 is known in all participating countries. In 6 of the 13 countries in the survey half of the population is familiar with the label – with an upward trend.

Relevance of textile labels

In an international context almost half of the consumers rate textile quality labels as important (29 %) or very important (16 %) for the purchase of textiles and clothing.

A specific certification according to OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 is important to 29 % and very important to 14 % of all consumers surveyed worldwide. The OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 certification is most popular with consumers in China, Turkey and Russia. In Turkey and Italy as many as one in four consumers describe Oeko-Tex® Standard 100 certification as very important.

Result: In countries where the use of product quality labels has been rather restrained so far, consumers have a particularly strong wish for textile products certified according to OEKO-TEX® Standard 100. The absolute reliability of the quality label meets this need for protection against potentially harmful substances in textiles.

Important aspects for purchasing textiles

On a scale of “1 = not important” to “5 = very important”, the consumers in the 13 countries surveyed rated product quality (4.4), skin friendliness (4.3), price (4.3) and testing for harmful substances (4.1).
as the most important factors for purchasing textiles and clothing. Surprisingly, the factors “Fashion relevance” (3.1) and “Brand/manufacturer” (3.1) ranked at the very bottom in this context. In the direct comparison between 2008 and 2012 and taking into account the same countries, it became evident that the factor “Textiles tested for harmful substances” has clearly improved its general relevance. The 2008 survey also determined the most important aspects for purchasing textile products on a scale of “1 = not important” to “5 = very important”. The average level of importance of testing for harmful substances across all participating countries was 3.3 in the first survey and 4.0 in 2012. It is particularly remarkable that textiles tested for harmful substances have gained immense importance in all countries surveyed in 2008 and in 2012 without exception. Similar to these results the average importance of the aspect “Environmentally friendly production” also increased from 3.1 in 2008 to 3.8 in 2012. In principle, environmentally friendly production of textile products is rated higher in countries with textile production than in all other countries.

Result: Product quality and skin friendliness are globally the most important factors for purchasing textiles. The criterion “Testing for harmful substances” comes in fourth place just behind “Price”. However, this time comparison shows a clear increase in the relevance of testing for harmful substances for the consumers. All consumers also particularly appreciate the environmentally friendly production of textile products.

Assessment of the future significance of textile quality labels

At the end of the survey the consumers were asked to assess the future significance of textile quality labels and the respective criteria. Accordingly an average of 73 % of the respondents believe that the relevance of the criterion “Environmentally friendly production” will increase in the future. 69 % of the respondents predict an increasing importance for testing for harmful substances for textile products. The overwhelming majority (89 %) of all consumers surveyed worldwide would like to see more certified products and items in the textile sector.

Result: When evaluating future criteria for textile quality labels, consumers worldwide rate environmentally friendly production and textiles tested for harmful substances as the two most important factors for textile quality labels. Basically, 9 out of 10 consumers worldwide would like more protection against possible harmful substances in textiles and therefore more certified products.
Especially in Germany, the degree of familiarity of the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 has increased from 46 % in 2008 to 70 % in 2012. But the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 has also been very successful in other European countries in its 20th year: In Switzerland the degree of familiarity increased from 34 % in 2008 to 53 % in 2012, in Portugal from 3 % to 31 % and in Spain from 14 % to 27 %.

22 % of all consumers in the survey have already purchased a product with the label “Confidence in textiles”. More than two thirds of German consumers can even recognise Oeko-Tex® by the logo. The degree of familiarity of the label around the globe is enormous!

The Oeko-Tex® Standard 100 certification is most popular with consumers in China, Turkey and Russia. In Turkey and Italy one in four consumers describe an Oeko-Tex® Standard 100 certification as very important. But consumers in countries such as Spain and Portugal also welcome a certification.
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The Oeko-Tex® Association celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. A good reason to take stock in the form of an international consumer survey. And the success is truly impressive!
About OEKO-TEX®

With 25 years of experience, OEKO-TEX® leads the world in empowering and enabling consumers and companies to protect our planet by making responsible decisions. OEKO-TEX® provides standardised solutions which optimise customers’ manufacturing processes and help deliver high quality, more sustainable products. All of the products within the OEKO-TEX® portfolio are used to strengthen our customers’ systems, processes or products and, ultimately, they help create more sustainable companies. To date, 10,000 manufacturers, brands, and retailers in almost 100 countries are working with OEKO-TEX® to ensure that their products are tested for potentially harmful substances and millions of consumers around the world look for OEKO-TEX® labels before making buying decisions. OEKO-TEX® certified products and suppliers can be located in the OEKO-TEX® Online Buying Guide at www.oeko-tex.com/products. Connect with OEKO-TEX® on Facebook, on LinkedIn, and on Twitter.