GLOBAL STUDY FINDS CONSUMERS STILL PREFER COTTON
GLOBAL CONSUMER BENCHMARKING STUDY

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In recent years, many clothing categories have been shifting away from cotton to more synthetic fibers and blends. However, the question remains as to whether this trend is being driven by the consumer or by brands and retailers. A recent study conducted by Hall & Partners found that consumers actually prefer cotton and have especially positive perceptions toward U.S. cotton.

In March and April 2017, a third-party research firm conducted a global survey of consumers. The goal of the study was to better understand consumers’ decision making processes, perceptions of cotton versus synthetics, and attitudes toward U.S. cotton. Participants consisted of 2,473 household decision-makers, ages 25 to 54, 80% of which were female and 20% male. Respondents represented 12 of the largest and/or growing global consumer markets: U.S., U.K., Germany, Italy, Turkey, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, China, Japan, and Korea.
Globally, more than three-quarters (76%) of respondents indicated that the type of fabric was important in their clothing purchase decisions. Consumers were more familiar with cotton (81%) than other leading fabrics such as polyester, rayon, and modal. The most important factors to consumers when purchasing clothing were also the factors most associated with cotton—comfort, value, and durability. This research suggests that global consumers desire the benefits of cotton in their clothing.
Consumers value cotton but are they able to differentiate between cotton from different parts of the world? To answer that question, consumers were asked their perceptions regarding four of the most visible cottons in the world: U.S. cotton, Egyptian cotton, Australian cotton, and Brazilian cotton.

Results of the survey found that worldwide, consumers not only have more positive perceptions of U.S. cotton compared to cotton from the other countries, but are also willing to pay more for it. This is perhaps due to the positive attitudes consumers hold toward U.S. cotton, associating it with comfort, durability, and value.
COTTON USA is the label brands and retailers use to denote that over 50% of a product’s material is made from U.S. cotton. Since 1989 the COTTON USA brand has been licensed to over 51,000 product lines representing more than 3.8 billion apparel and home textile products.

Results of the global consumer survey show that the COTTON USA trademark does project a positive brand image for consumers. Over half of consumers (55%) were aware of the COTTON USA trademark. More importantly, over half of all global consumers associate the COTTON USA trademark with comfort, quality, reliability, a premium brand, and trust. These findings suggest the COTTON USA trademark is an easy way for brands and retailers to project quality and comfort within their clothing lines.
CONCLUSION

This third-party global research study shows that despite the trend toward synthetic fabrics in clothing, consumers are more familiar with cotton, associating it with comfort. Consumers in 12 of the largest markets in the world were informed, they reported checking labels and specifically seeking cotton products, especially U.S. cotton, because of its comfort, value, and durability.

The COTTON USA brand is a symbol of the U.S. cotton industry and consumers believe that it symbolizes a high-quality, environmentally-friendly product and therefore, consumers are willing to pay more for these products.

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