

The Key To Confidence: What Does It Take to Build Trust with Busy, Sustainability-Minded Consumers?

In the age of “fake news” and “greenwashing,” it’s no surprise that 64% of consumers in “The Key To Confidence: Consumers and Textile Sustainability—Mindsets, Changing Behaviors, and Outlooks” who were aware of eco-textiles claimed that they check at least some of the time to see if sustainability claims are true. That number increased to 69% of the Millennials and to 74% of the parents of young children who participated in OEKO-TEX®’s global research survey(1). Combine that skepticism with time-starvation and it’s easy to see how brands, certifiers, and retailers can work together to provide reliable shortcuts to trust for these busy consumers.

To simplify the shopping process, many sustainability-conscious consumers choose to do their home-work in advance. Doing so establishes a brand set, or a collection of brands that align with their values. That brand set can include clothing and home textiles brands as well as retailer brands and certifications. Forty-two percent of consumers in the study said they like to know the values and principles of the brands they buy, 34% want to know about a brand’s sustainability practices, and 38% like to know what small steps brands have taken to be more sustainable – even if they’re not fully ‘green’.

Where do consumers get this advance sustainability information about brands and retailers? Here, age is a factor. For Millennials in the OEKO-TEX® study, the Internet ranked highest with 69% of these 18-36-year-olds relying on it compared to 55% of Boomers+. Social media is another favorite with 55% of Millennials as opposed to only 25% of Boomers+. Three quarters (74%) of Boomers+ chose mainstream media as their preferred source.

In store and on product are two prime point-of-sale opportunities to educate and influence consumers. More than half (52%) of consumers in “The Key To Confidence” research said that they check textiles for a label from an independent organization that verifies claims are true. Almost half (49%) read the fiber content labels to determine what kind of fabric is used. Forty-one percent judge a textile product by where it was manufactured.

These research findings clearly support a multi-media approach to communicating a brand’s or retailer’s commitment to environmental and social responsibility. First, consumers are interested in what brands themselves say on websites, in advertising, and on social media. Next, consumers appreciate third-party validation with certifications and labels from trusted organizations. Third, information available while shopping, such as signage, hang tags and packaging, labels, thorough online product descriptions, and informed sales associates, can be highly effective in providing relevant textile sustainability information.

Consumers are quickly learning and being taught about textile sustainability. They are looking for information to help them do the right thing. They rely on brands, certifiers, and retailers to do some of the work for them to make shopping for and buying sustainable products a positive, time-efficient,

and feel-good process. Said one Millennial in “The Key To Confidence” study, “The world is heading towards disaster due to global warming and climate change so we have to do everything possible to protect the environment. That means buying sustainable products, supporting industries that produce environmentally friendly products, and thinking about workers in those industries.”

Brands, certifiers, and retailers who work together to provide credible information and reassurances will make it easier for busy consumers to do the right thing, provide another small step towards a more sustainable lifestyle, and enable more buying without worry about impact on the environment or society. And those are the factors that will establish trust and loyalty with today’s skeptical, sustainability-minded consumers.

(1) “The Key To Confidence: Consumers and Textile Sustainability—Mindsets, Changing Behaviors, and Outlooks”, OEKO-TEX® and Anerca, 2017.

Read more about the OEKO-TEX® portfolio of testing, certification, and label products at: www.OEKO-TEX.com.

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.