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# Ooh That Smell: Dow Survey Shows Consumers Struggle With Apparel Odor Control

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Most people take pains to remove or avoid smells or odors from their clothing, but a vast majority don't find the methods employed to be effective.

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That was among the most telling results of a new consumer survey from Dow Microbial Control, a global business unit of DowDuPont Specialty Products Division, into odor control perceptions and habits across China, the U.S. and Japan.

International research firm Anerca examined the concept of odor control in the three countries, surveying issues such as what odors people worry most about and the consumer desire for advancements in built-in odor prevention products.

For 61 percent of those surveyed, removing smells or odors was their most important laundry goal. A greater majority, 82 percent, attributed these odors to “body chemistry, body oils, body odor or sweat.”

The most disliked smells, including body odor or mustiness or mildew, was a near universal problem, with both identified by more than 90 percent of consumers across all countries as a problem in their households. Despite the attention on these issues, the majority of global consumers do not consider their current odor solutions to be very effective.

“Once odor buildup occurs in a fabric, it’s nearly impossible to remove,” Karel Williams, global marketing and business development director at Microbial Control, said. “Our research showed that removing smells or odors is one of the key primary laundry goals around the world, when in reality it is much more effective to stop these odors before they have a chance to latch onto our fabrics.”

Dow’s answer to the problem is Intellifresh built-in odor protection, which allows manufacturers of apparel and home goods to prevent odor-causing bacteria from forming on fabric surfaces. The protection, enabled by Dow Microbial Control’s Silvadur technology, begins by absorbing odors that may already be on the fabric and then attacking the bacteria to reduce continued odor formation or buildup.

This value-added protection helps fabrics stay clean and fresh smelling longer, meaning they may not need to be washed as frequently, which saves water and energy—a benefit for the consumer, the material and the environment, Dow noted.

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Anerca’s research showed an opportunity for manufacturers to educate consumers about the need for odor prevention at the source. The study found “very/extremely” high levels of interest in built-in protection against odors and a strong willingness to pay a premium for pre-treated clothing, footwear and home fabrics. The research found that 75 percent of consumers would pay more for clothing or footwear treated with Intellifresh odor protection and 79 percent would pay more for pre-treated home fabrics.

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