

I Prefer 30° and Changing Consumer Perception

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While there have been a number of campaigns to date which have looked to encourage consumers in Western Europe to turn the temperature dial down on their washing machine, an average washing temperature of 41° persists across the region. While average temperatures do appear to have dropped over the last decade there remains something of an impasse; how to convince consumers to behave in a manner which in a way defies conventional wisdom. Wisdom which makes the assumption that water is good for cleaning, water and detergent better but with warm water better still.

The link between water temperature and efficacy is well established with Western Europeans, which is the consequence of educated, this is true of hand hygiene, bathing and washing hair all serving to formalise the principal that warm water is effective when it comes to cleaning. While laundry is less personal than bathing, the primacy of warm water and efficacy is well ingrained in consumers' mind-set, which has counted against low temperature washing campaigns thus far.

While the same point can be made for many societies around the world the fact that Western European (for the most part) have easy access to warm water in the home or appliances which can heat water independently is the key factor and a very difficult habit to break as earlier attempts to do just that have demonstrated.

Earlier initiatives

Procter & Gamble's (Ariel) very visual 'Turn to 30°' campaign from 2007 is a case in point, however well executed remains a straight brand owner to consumer communication. The simple fact being there still isn't a body of evidence wide enough to override the notion that warm water is most effective, regardless of what the packaging states. This remains a problem for the industry - how to convince the majority of consumers without a chemistry degree that low temperature washing is effective and ultimately change engrained behaviours which have often been passed down from generation to generation.

A new approach

In 2013, the International Association for Soaps, Detergents and Maintenance Products (AISE) launched its own I Prefer 30° campaign. Where the campaign differs from what has gone before is the association have looked to bring in a wide portfolio of stakeholders from across the industry. This involvement covers major brand owners, including Procter & Gamble,

Unilever, Henkel and McBride, and their retail partners, such as Carrefour, Coop and Auchan. The initiative is particularly interesting in that participants cover the whole industry - ingredients manufacturers (Novozymes, DuPont), appliance manufacturers (Beko, AEG) and textiles (Corfeet, Danish Fashion Institute), for example.

The I prefer 30° campaign is evidence that sustainability is becoming more mature, with not just the realisation that collaboration is key to success, but now mainstream and high profile examples of how the industry is moving to a more holistic approach. Laundry as a process, although an everyday and fairly mundane for most consumers, is complex and multifaceted, and any successful initiative clearly needs to tackle the process across the range of points where consumers pick up information which help to form opinion.

To influence consumer behaviour requires a concerted effort at all points where consumers interact with laundry, whether this being where they purchase detergents, their clothing or their appliances. This multi-faceted multi-stakeholder approach, if successful, may well become something of a blueprint for future sustainability initiatives.

http://www.iprefer30.eu/#be_partner