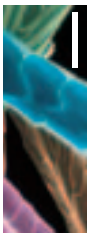
What is the consumer going to think?



In phrasing the question, it is important to focus on the future; in other words, it is not so much a case of what does the consumer think about something you're doing now, it is a case of what is the consumer going to think about a whole host of concepts in the future. And will there be a place for you in his or her thoughts?

Certainly, if you were enjoying the success generated by $400,000,000 worth of sales from your business just in Europe (forget about your worldwide sales), this question is not as academic as it might at first seem. Especially if you take strategic planning seriously.

Not surprisingly, DuPont Tactel does. After all, Tactel now accounts for 60% of DuPont's nylon business and is forecast to grow to 80% by 2003. In the first five months of 2000, sales grew 10% on the previous year.

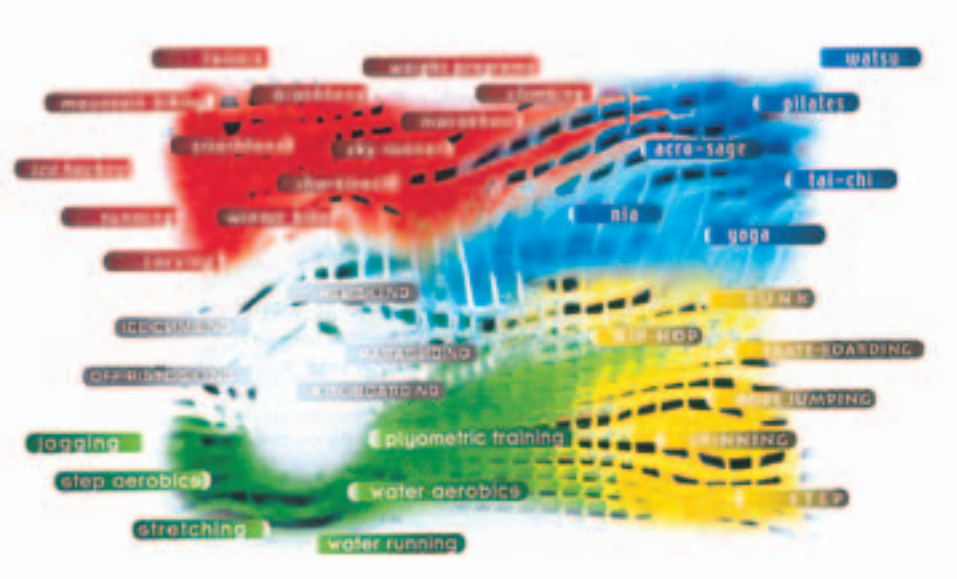
Lifestyle trends and consumer attitudes are radically changing the apparel market. The new 'contemporary consumer', defined by attitude not age, is someone who wears clothes to express their individuality and has a keen interest in new materials and ideas. Apparel retailers are having to fight ever harder to attract disposable income in competition with technology products such as mobile telephones and computers, and leisure and travel.

These changes are of fundamental interest and importance to the wellbeing of a fibre producer such as DuPont Tactel. It is insufficient for the brand to believe its success is guaranteed. Admittedly, awareness of the branded fibre has grown astonishingly throughout Europe, from 8% in 1991 to a massive 25% in 1999. It has been seen as innovative, unconventional, versatile and perfectly suited to present-day consumer needs in a range of products from ready-to-wear, intimate apparel, hosiery and activewear to performance wear. Activewear currently represents a third of the Tactel business. Complacency, however, appears to be a word not available in the Tactel vocabulary.

Recently, DuPont has invested a substantial amount of money with RISC, the research institute on social change and phonetically an interesting name for an organisation helping the global giant reduce risk. DuPont felt that such an investment was worthwhile to ensure further evolution of the brand, rather than being forced into revolutionary rethinks because insufficient attention might have been paid to changed and changing attitudes.

Success will be related to the ability to inspire the new generation of consumers. Brian Johnson, business director, DuPont Tactel Europe, explains: "As the technology sector of the economy expands, it becomes more and more essential for the textile chain to work together to maximise the perceived value of the retailers' offering to excite consumers and satisfy them in all that they look for in clothing."

The new approach will combine innovative fibre and textile technologies to go beyond the purely physiological and functional benefits -



The ever-evolving world of fitness activity according to Tactel - a view of autumn/winter 2001-02, where physical health is a direct byproduct of exercise and the goalis to improve one's efficiency and capacity, keeping the maximum body comfort.

activewear fabrics could be enhanced with after-treatment involving energising aromatherapy or deodorants.

In outlining some of the consumer trends identified by RISC, it is important to note that the analysis is based on a sample of 31,000 indepth interviews conducted in many of the world's major markets last year. Considering that often valid research work is based on samples as few as 1,000, the approach adopted on behalf of DuPont must be viewed very seriously indeed.

Whether the consumers have unrealisable and unrealistic expectations, or a belief that everything is possible in textile and garment technology, is another matter. First, there is the need for balance. In a bid to combat the stresses and strains of daily life, they are looking for a future where work and play are balanced. The first aspect of balance translates as destressing, appeasing and opting for the comfort zone. The second aspect of balance is restorative - learning, exploring and channelling energies, unleashing the hidden potential within. This trend is realised through a range of innovative fabrics that are pampering and 'energising', according to the report.

Second, the need for pleasure and enjoyment. This encompasses looking to the things in life that give us a sense of fun and enjoyment. On the one hand, this trend is about seeking the pleasurable, daring to be different and seductive; it is also about forgetting the stress and complexity of everyday life. Fabrics that reflect this mood are said to be simple and playful with 'visible' effects.

Third, the need for excitement and renewal. Here adventure leads to a place of self-discovery, learning and renewal. Sports and activewear become 'a form of communication where the body becomes a media and tells a new story every day'.

Four, the need for personalisation. This addresses the need to set oneself apart from the pack, striving to define one's identity and individuality through personal taste and choice - self-expression, customisation, dressing for oneself. The internet is adding to the demand for personal shopping, with the consumer prepared to spend time and money on the brand, affording them the ultimate freedom of choice.

DuPont believes that its Tactel campaigns need to tap into these four major trends of the foreseeable future and to this end it is introducing a new brand positioning strategy. It is based on the premise that Tactel understands and fulfils every need imaginable in clothing and this will form the platform for the whole business, from research and development through to the introduction of new communication tools at retail. The headline for the campaign is 'All you can imagine' and the images to interpret the four identified needs in fibre, fabric and clothing are very strong. Fascinatingly, all the images are totally nude.

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