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Towel Trends

By Wanda Jankowski

A roundup of fresh resources is accompanied by insights from leading suppliers on consumer attractors and new technologies

Bath towel shopping for consumers can be tricky. What looks good on the retail floor or on the e-commerce web page may not function well once it's purchased and used at home. Buying on looks or price doesn't mean that consumers don't have high expectations for performance. Leading suppliers weigh in on what consumers are looking for today and the kinds of new technologies pushing the envelope in towel functionality.

What Do Consumers Want?

What consumers base their purchasing decisions on and how they expect the towel to perform can be two different things. What qualities are most important to them when purchasing? According to Rick Lipton, executive vice-president, Home Fashion Division, Baltic Linen Company, "Loft—the illusion that more is better, fully appeals to the American consumer. In store, they are making their decisions based on color first and they are then smoothing their hands across the face of the towel to see how soft it is to the touch. Once they satisfy these first two criteria, they will look at the price. And maybe size."

Nancy Golden, senior vice-president marketing, Welspun, concurs, "With color the motivating factor, she wants both fashion and function. Whether she is paying \$2.00 or \$20.00, it is important that she is able to select a towel that feels right to her."

"We used to believe that color was the key attraction," says Rae Ellen Blum, co-president, Espalma By Cobra/Lintex Linens. "Now it becomes the 'touch' in brick-and-mortar—softness, then color and if the price is correct, a home run.

"But, on the other hand, you have the internet boom, so the theory equation changes. The consumer either recognizes the product or the picture is worth a thousand words and it is a fabulous lofty towel with great colors and the price is amazing," Blum concludes.

When a consumer gets the towel home and uses it, the expectation is, says Lipton, “A soft hand and measurable absorbency that will not lint excessively when laundered.”

“I have found that the most important quality that consumers are looking for in a towel is absorbency,” says Nikki Rhodes, East Coast sales executive, Home Source International. “You can have a beautifully designed towel that is very soft, but if it isn’t absorbent, then it isn’t doing its job. Durability is another important quality. When consumers do find that perfect towel, they want it to last.”

A Sampling Of New Technologies

No matter how great the towel looks and feels, if it doesn’t absorb moisture well, dry in a reasonable amount of time, remain low in lint and pilling, and is not durable, the consumer will be choosing a different brand during the next shopping trip. Suppliers are constantly exploring new ways to improve the performance of towels, experimenting and innovating with new materials, and fiber constructions and weaves.

Golden states, “Welspun specializes in innovation. Our patented Hygro® Cotton towel actually gets loftier and softer wash after wash. It is highly absorbent and can now also be quick dry.”

“We are utilizing factories that are environmentally sound and are using waste and dye recycling facilities at their plants,” Lipton reveals. “We are also working with technically advanced yarn spinners that have created dual-core yarns for us: one yarn for strength and the second twisted around the first for softness, absorbency and the need for less dye to saturate and hold true color.”

At Lintex, Blum explains, “We are using more new blends to create textures—cotton chenille mixed with mingled yarns with different weaves. The end result is that the consumer wants a towel that absorbs and dries quickly.”

“Home Source specializes in fabric stories and we are known for using the highest quality and certified yarns to manufacture our products,” says Rhodes. “Like pioneering the industry-changing zero-twist towels and manufacturing 100 percent certified Egyptian cotton and bamboo/cotton towels. We are always searching and working with manufacturers to create the newest and best that technology has to offer.”

Micro Cotton®, owned by Sharadha Terry Products Ltd. based in Coimbatore, India, specializes in creating innovative cotton fiber constructions that affect towel performance and function. It recently introduced the Superb towel, which the company claims has double the absorbency of similar constructions available in the marketplace. Softness and absorbency don't always go hand-in-hand, but the Superb has achieved that with its soft, cashmere-like texture, in addition to a fashionable dobby design. The unique pile construction, which makes the towel lightweight, but lofty, also is very low lint and low pill.

In addition, Micro Cotton®'s Fall 2016 product introductions are broken down into various lines catering to specific needs within the consumer landscape, such as: Essential, Signature, Spa, Elements and Limited Edition. Each line has its own signature design elements that capture current styles, trends and color palettes. As with all Micro Cotton® towels, each new product is made with special, extra-long staple cotton for softness. Towel colors stay vibrant due to the brand's color-lock technology, which helps colors resist fading for up to 30 washes.

For LinenMe, it's not all just about cotton when it comes to bath towels. That company offers linen bath towels, such as the Washed Waffle Collection made with 100 percent linen. The towels are garment washed to insure softness and allow for shape retention after laundering. In 2016, LinenMe will introduce Linen Terry towels made with 100 percent linen, or 50 percent cotton, 50 percent linen loops on a 100 percent cotton base.

Presented in this article as well is an array of fresh towel offerings, from workhorse master bath performers to decorative powder room options, offered by a wide range of companies. Towel suppliers are hard at work creating options to meet the needs of consumers from towel purchase through performance.



Micro Cotton Introduces Superb The Superb towel from Micro Cotton®, made with special, extra-long staple cotton, has double the absorbency of similar constructions offered in the marketplace. With a cashmere-like texture and fashionable dobby design, it features a unique pile construction with low lint and pill. Towel colors stay vibrant due to the brand's color-lock technology, which helps colors resist fading for up to 30 washes.