

INFORMATIVE LABELS AS A FACTOR IN THE  
SELECTION OF CERTAIN ARTICLES OF CLOTHING

by

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## INTRODUCTION

The need for informative labels as a guide in recognizing certain qualities in textile fabrics becomes increasingly important as new fibers and finishes further complicate the problems of the consumer buyer. No longer can experience, inspection, and simple tests at the time of purchase be relied upon as accurate means of judging qualities of material. Experience, which is at best an expensive teacher, is of very little value to the consumer of durable goods when the character of the product on the market is constantly changing as in the textile trade. Likewise, inspection has lost much of its value as a guide in buying since new synthetic fibers and special finishes have been employed by the industry. The success of manufacturers in imitating fabrics of natural fibers with synthetics has made it impossible for the consumer to recognize materials by examining them. Simple tests by which the consumer can determine service qualities have not been developed nor are they likely to be. Only well-equipped laboratories have facilities for analyzing textile products.

Other guides such as price, brand name, and information from salespeople are of questionable value to the consumer. Price should not be thought of as a reliable guide

in determining the value of a product although it may have been used extensively by the consumer who believes that "you pay for what you get". The same product may sell for two or more prices, even in the same store. Branded products have not been standardized to the extent that they can be depended upon to always represent given qualities. Salespeople are often willing to inform the customer concerning the product, but they are not always adequately prepared to answer all questions which may arise. Without informative labels the consumer with no reliable guidance has been compelled to select from among textile products of any qualities which the manufacturers and retailers provided.

Consumers, retailers, and manufacturers have failed to agree on the amount of information which should be given on the labels according to a survey made by the National Consumer-Retailer Council (7). Check lists suggesting information which might be stated on labels of certain commodities indicated that consumers would like more information than retailers and manufacturers thought necessary to give on labels. According to Reid (10)

Ideally the label should provide all important facts about the product which cannot readily be determined in the store by inspection or by other simple means at the time a comparison is being made.

Coles (4) stated that producers object to putting informative labels on products on the basis that consumer demand is not sufficient to justify the expense involved. According to Reid (10) objections to labeling among re-

tailers comes mostly from those selling inferior products which probably would not sell at all if the facts were known and from those selling very good products who have established for themselves a certain amount of prestige.

The United States Government purchases large quantities of all types of products by specification. Under normal business conditions manufacturers bid for orders which must meet specifications determined by the Bureau of Standards. Products which do not meet specifications are rejected; thus, the government protects itself from acquiring inferior products. The Bureau of Standards, maintained at a cost of \$2,000,000 a year, saves an estimated 100 million dollars every year for the government (6). Large-scale buyers have been able to insure quality in their purchases by having their own testing laboratories. However, the individual consumer cannot set specifications nor test the products offered to him. Because of cut-throat competition in the industry, manufacturers who are not producing to certain specifications have frequently used substitutes or inferior materials and disguised the quality so that the unsuspecting consumer cannot detect the real quality of a product at the time of purchase.

Certain regulations of the Federal Trade Commission and recent legislation in regard to the labeling of wool indicate a trend toward the use of informative labels. The Federal Trade Commission established in 1914 has made

certain rulings designated "to foster and promote fair competitive conditions and the protection of the purchasing and consuming public in the interest of both industry and the public" (13). These rulings do not require that all information must be given; however, if it is given, information must be truthful and accurate. Trade practice rules for the rayon industry issued in October, 1937 stated regarding rayon that

It is an unfair trade practice to cause such fiber or yarn or thread, strands or fabric made therefrom to be sold, offered for sale, distributed, advertised, described, branded, labeled or otherwise represented: (1) as not being rayon; or (2) as being something other than rayon; or (3) without disclosure of the fact that such material or product is rayon, made clearly and unequivocally in the invoices and labeling and in all advertising matter, sales promotional descriptions or representations thereof however disseminated or published (13).

Similar rules were issued for the silk industry in 1938 (2). Clear distinction was to be made between "Pure Dye" silk which may contain not over ten per cent finishing materials required to produce color and finish of the product (except black in which such materials shall not exceed fifteen per cent) and "weighted" silk which shall have the presence of weighting and the percentage fully disclosed. The Federal Trade Commission also considers misbranding, (false or deceptive marking of grade, quality, use, size, material, content, substance, origin, preparation, manufacture or distribution) as an unfair

trade practice (3). The Wool Products Labeling Act of 1939 (14) which became effective July 14, 1941, requires that wool products carry labels stating the kinds of fibers used, wool, reprocessed wool, reused wool, and other fibers, along with the percentages of each of those contained in amounts to exceed five per cent.

One of the important phases of consumer education deals with buying habits of the consumer. A major problem of the consumer-buyer is that of getting the most for ones money. An attempt has been made to teach good buying habits which would help him to receive a maximum of satisfactions from expenditure of his income. Educators referring to the subject have generally agreed that informative labeling is definitely needed to guide the consumer-buyer; however, they have not agreed that consumers are willing to use labels. Those home economists, representatives of women's organizations, and representatives of the textile industry who participated in the Informative Labeling Forum held under the auspices of the Textiles Education Bureau, New York, November 4, 1938 (12), agreed

(1) that consumers were anxious for such informative identification; (2) that the responsibility for accurate, honest identification on merchandise rests with the fabric manufacturer, insofar as he is the logical person to issue factual information; (3) that consumers, by insistent and continuous demand for informative identification over the retail counter can exert far-reaching influence in persuading retailers to leave informative identifications on merchandise.

Letters of inquiry received by consumers' testing agencies asking for specific information regarding a product such as those referred to by Mahood (8) in a paper presented at a National Conference on Consumer Education have led many to believe that consumers in general are desirous of information about the products they buy. Some writers, however, claim that consumers are not as yet interested in informative labels. Reid (10) said that ignorance and indifference on the part of consumers is partly responsible for lack of information on labels. She also stated that "An interested and informed buying public could do much to make available, almost at once, information about those products for which grading systems or standard measures have been developed." Coles (4) stated, "The great mass of consumer-buyers probably do not read labels today, or if they do read them, they do not do so with any great degree of intelligence." Coles (4) contended, however, that consumer-buyers do not read labels more intelligently because the value of reading labels carefully has not been directed to their attention. She says, "The present lack of interest in labels on the part of consumer-buyers does not mean that they cannot be educated to look for and to use information given on labels."

This study has dealt with that which a selected group of consumers say they want in regard to informative labeling and the extent to which they actually use it. The



purpose of this study was to determine the use made of informative labels by women in selecting certain ready-made articles of clothing; to ascertain what information consumers desire on the labels of garments and from what sources they have acquired information concerning labeling.

#### METHOD OF PROCEDURE

Three types of garments frequently purchased by women were used for the investigation. These were rayon crepe slips, rayon knit panties, and boys' broadcloth shirts. Such garments were chosen because they are not only frequently purchased but also are little affected by sudden fashion change. Three garments of each type comprised a group. The sizes and colors of all three garments in a group were the same. The prices of all the panties were identical, and the prices varied only slightly within each of the other two groups. Styles of each of the three articles were similar but in no group were all the garments exactly the same. One garment in each group carried an informative label; another had a label giving little if any valuable information, and the third no label.

The data were collected by interviewing 200 members of women's clubs and study groups in three Kansas towns. The groups of garments were placed one after the other before each woman who was asked to choose the ones which she would purchase if she were shopping for these garments.

Her selections and reactions were recorded on Form I. After making the selections, each person was asked the questions on Form II, and her answers were recorded.

The results of the investigation were tabulated and the analysis of the data comprised the body of the thesis.

#### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studies related to the problem may be classified as those regarding consumers' buying habits and those relating to the adequacy of labeling. Within the last few years there have been three studies relating to consumers' buying habits. Smith (11), after observing 215 customers in a Denver City, Texas, store, reported that price, color, workmanship, and personal suitability were the most important factors in selecting ready-to-wear dresses. She reported that informative labels were given little attention being noticed by only 6.0 per cent of the customers observed. Bowen (1), using questionnaires filled out by 100 consumers representing widely scattered areas, concluded that consumers were influenced by trade marks, brand names, and labels. Information desired included fastness of color, washing directions, and the amount of shrinkage. Name of the manufacturer was also considered desirable. Phelps, Petzel, Loring, and Nielson (9),

studying the values sought and the practices followed by consumers, interviewed 294 women and observed 303 sales of silk yard goods in Minneapolis. They concluded that

although consumers may know what values they want, many of them do not and probably cannot buy in a way to obtain goods that will give maximum satisfaction.

They were convinced that consumers need "authoritative standards of quality" and "honest informative labeling" to insure their getting what they believe they are purchasing.

With regard to the adequacy of labeling Fletcher and Dennhardt (5) found in comparing laboratory analyses of fiber content with such information given on labels and by salesmen that although information given on labels was more accurate than that given by salesmen both were regarded as inadequate. The National Consumer-Retailer Council made a study (7)

to obtain, through suitable sampling, opinions of consumers, retailers, and manufacturers as to what information should be contained on the merchandise labels for 12 commodities.

Blankets, mattresses, cotton sheets, terry towels, kitchen knives, window shades, men's hosiery, men's shirts, woven piece goods, women's hosiery, slips and petticoats, and women's wash dresses were the commodities considered. Schedules or check lists suggesting information which might be given for each commodity were sent to 4000 persons including manufacturers of each commodity, retailers (members

of National Retail Dry Goods Association), and consumers (members of American Association of University Women, and American Home Economics Association). Specific items were listed for each commodity. Those for slips and petticoats included name of fabric, fiber content, yarns per inch, weight in ounces per square yard, weighting and sizing, size, cut of garments, thread used, workmanship, type of seams, breaking strength, resistance to yarn slippage at seams, shrinkage, color permanence, special laundering instructions, and name and address of sponsor. Similar check lists were prepared for each of the other clothing commodities. Items suggested for inclusion on labels for each commodity were checked as being "most important", "less important but desirable", "undesirable or unnecessary", or "items which must await agreement on standard test". Filled out schedules were returned by 435 consumers, 189 retailers, and 122 manufacturers.

A table showing the proportion of consumers, retailers, and manufacturers rating each item as to its desirability for inclusion on a label was given for each commodity. Large percentages of all groups checked name of fabric, and washing directions for slips as "most important". The percentages indicated that consumers considered items such as fiber content, thread count, breaking strength, and weight in ounces per square yard much more important than did retailers and manufacturers. Another table for each

commodity more or less summarized the study by indicating those items voted as desirable by 51 per cent or more of each group (consumers, retailers, and manufacturers) and those voted as desirable by 51 per cent or more of consumers and 51 per cent or more of retailers and manufacturers. These tables showed that more than half of the consumers voted all items suggested in the check lists as desirable, but more than half of the retailers and manufacturers considered only part of the suggested items as being desirable. This method of handling the data is hardly convincing as 51 per cent in such a study is not a significant figure.

#### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. The number and percentage of 200 selected women who ordinarily purchase slips, panties, and boys' shirts.

Garment	Number who purchase garment	Percentage
Slip	193	96.5
Panties	195	97.5
Shirt	169	84.5

The three types of garments used in making the study were articles of apparel which are ordinarily purchased

by women. Of the 200 interviewed 193 or 96.5 per cent said that they bought slips, 195 or 97.5 per cent purchased knit panties, while only 169 or 84.5 per cent selected shirts on the market (Table 1). Those who did not ordinarily purchase shirts frequently commented that they had no sons, and their husbands preferred selecting their own shirts.

Table 2. The extent to which 200 women ordinarily purchase clothing from local stores, large city stores, and mail order houses, expressed in numbers and percentages.

Type of market	Number of women using each	Percentage
Local	189	94.5
Large city	29	14.5
Mail order	28	14.0

When asked where they purchased clothing several women named a combination of two or even three types of markets as being used. This explains the total for number of women using each market to exceed 200; likewise, for the percentages when totaled to exceed 100 per cent (Table 2). There were 189 or 94.5 per cent who reported that they often purchase on the local market. Twenty-nine or 14.5 per cent of those interviewed said that they frequently bought clothing in a city, and 28 or 14.0

per cent sometimes purchased from mail order houses.

Table 3. Factors named by 200 selected women when they were asked that influenced them in purchasing clothing.

Influencing factors	:Number of women: :naming each	:Percentage:
Price	160	80.0±2.8
Quality of material	157	78.5±2.9
Style	154	77.0±3.0
Trade-mark or brand	119	59.5±3.5
Quality of workmanship	17	8.5±2.0
Name of reputable dealer	15	7.5±1.8
Labels which give information	11	5.5±1.6
Other	35	17.5±2.7

When asked to give the factors which influenced them in purchasing clothing, more than three-fourths of the women mentioned price, quality of material, and style. Price was named in 80.0±2.8 per cent of the cases which was slightly more often than any other one factor (Table 3). However, quality of material and style also ranked high being mentioned by 78.5±2.9 per cent and 77±3.0 per cent of the group, respectively. These slight differences in percentages are not significant as the standard error of the difference between percentages ( $\sigma_{D_p}$ ) for price (80.0±2.8 per cent) and style (77.0±3.0 per cent) was 4.1

per cent and the difference between the two percentages was only 3.0 per cent. To be truly significant the difference would have to be three times the  $\sigma_{Dp}$  or 12.3 per cent. There is a significant difference, however, between the percentages naming the first three factors already discussed (Table 3) and the percentage naming trade-mark or brand. The  $\sigma_{Dp}$  for style (77.0 $\pm$ 3.0 per cent) and trade-mark or brand (59.5 $\pm$ 3.5 per cent) is 4.3 per cent while the difference between the percentages is 17.5 per cent which is more than three times the  $\sigma_{Dp}$  (4.3 per cent) and therefore, can be considered as exhibiting a true difference. Each other factor mentioned was suggested by such a small number of people that it can be regarded as being relatively unimportant to those interviewed.

In response to the question as to whether or not they wanted informative labels, 173 or 86.5 per cent stated definitely that they did; the other 27 or 13.5 per cent thought informative labels unnecessary. However, figures in Table 7 show that when actually making choices the women read the labels in only 5.2 $\pm$ 0.9 per cent of all the cases, and in only 1.2 $\pm$ 0.4 per cent of all the choices were labels an influencing factor.

Information which 173 women said they wanted was wide in scope, but many of the items were suggested by only a small number as can be seen in Table 4. Fiber content,



Table 4. Information which 173 women claimed they would like to have stated on labels on clothing.

Type of information	:Number of :women naming: :each item	: : :Percentage :
Fiber content	126	72.2
Shrinkage	113	65.3
Color permanence	95	54.9
To washing	10	
To sunlight	9	
To perspiration	0	
Cleaning directions	82	47.4
Size of garment	41	23.1
Yarns per inch	37	21.4
Name and address of manufacturer	30	17.3
Quality of workmanship	8	4.6
Weighting and sizing	7	4.0
Special finishes	5	2.9
Breaking strength	4	2.3
Cut of garment	2	1.2
Price	2	1.2
Weight (oz. per sq. yd.)	1	0.6
Name of fabric	1	0.6
Type of seams	1	0.6
Other	25	14.4

shrinkage, and color permanence were mentioned by 72.2, 65.3, and 54.9 per cent of the women as being desirable. Less than half (47.4 per cent) of those stating the information they desired suggested cleaning directions. The 23.1 per cent who asked for size indicated that they wanted standardized sizes. Yarns per inch was mentioned by 21.4 per cent of the group. The name and address of the manufacturer was considered important enough to be requested by only 17.3 per cent of those naming kind or information wanted. Although 19 other specific items were suggested, no one was mentioned by as many as five per cent of the group. Information which was suggested only a few times included quality of workmanship (4.6 per cent), weighting and sizing (4.0 per cent), special finishes (2.9 per cent), breaking strength (2.3 per cent), and weight of material in ounces per square yard (0.6 per cent). The 25 people asking for other items not listed in Table 4 included such things as labor conditions, special care required, age of garment, guarantees, country in which made, and length of service to expect of garment.

A comparison of these findings with the study made by the National Consumer-Retailer Council indicates that consumers when asked to state information desired do not specify as much as when the items are suggested and consumers check those desired. Either they are not familiar

with the wide variety of information available or they do not consider it necessary.

Table 5. Sources from which 173 women said they had acquired information concerning adequate labeling.

Source of information	:Number of :women naming: :each item	:Percentage :
Magazines	81	46.8±3.8
Home Economics in college	24	13.9±2.6
Clubs and study groups	16	9.2±2.2
Newspapers	9	5.2±1.7
Home Economics in high school	8	4.6±1.6
Consumer group publications	5	2.9±1.3
Radio programs	4	2.3±1.1
Adult classes	3	1.7±1.0
Government bulletins	2	1.2±0.8
Other sources	5	2.9±1.3

The 173 women who said that they wanted informative labels were asked from what sources they had learned of informative labeling. Their replies were tabulated and the results are shown in Table 5. First in order of importance was magazines which 81 or 46.8±3.8 per cent of group named. The standard error of the difference between percentages ( $\sigma_{D_p}$ ) for magazines (46.8±3.8 per cent)

and Home Economics in college ( $13.9 \pm 2.6$  per cent) which was named by the next largest number of women was 4.6 per cent. The difference between the two percentages was 32.9 per cent which is 7.2 times the  $\sigma_{D_p}$ , indicating that a truly significant difference existed. Through club or study group programs 16 or  $9.2 \pm 2.2$  per cent had learned of labels. Newspapers were named by nine or  $5.2 \pm 1.7$  per cent as giving information regarding labeling. Ten other sources of information were named, but less than five per cent mentioned any one of the ten. No specific source of information was mentioned by 38.1 per cent of the group. These individuals said that from experience they had become aware of the need for informative labeling.

The reasons given by 200 selected women for choosing specific garments are shown graphically in Fig. 1. Style was the reason mentioned most frequently for choosing a slip or a pair of panties and was exceeded only by quality of material for shirts. The styles of the three garments were as nearly the same as could be found on the market and still have different garments. For instance, three tailored, rayon, straight-cut slips with shadow panels in front were used; the differences in style were mainly in the details of the waist area of the slip and in width of hems. The panties also were nearly alike, the differences being in width of hems, means of controlling fullness at

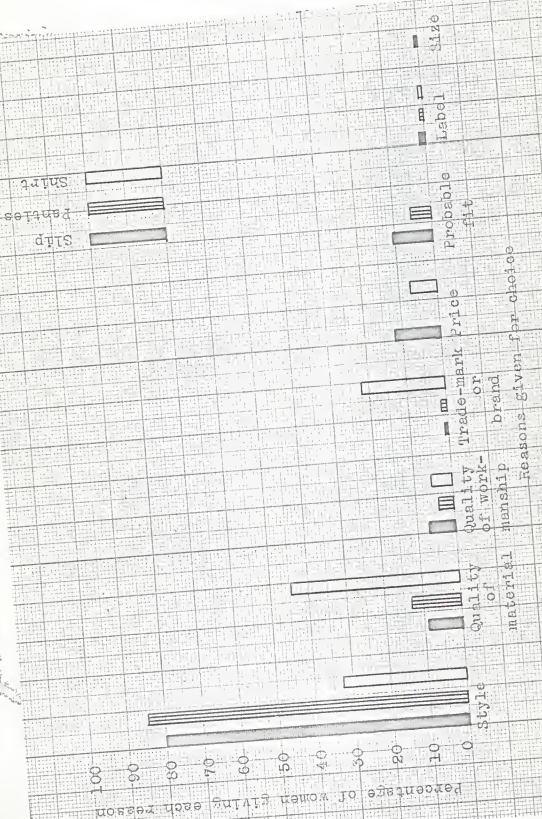


Fig. 1. Comparison of reasons given for choosing specific garments.

the waist line, that is elastic all around the waist or merely across the back and very slight differences in the cut of the crotch. In the boys' white shirts the placement of the row of stitching from the folded edge, slight differences in the angle formed by points of the collar, and variation in method of distributing fullness across the back of the yoke were the differences noted in style.

Table 6. Number of women who chose each garment mentioning quality of material as a reason for choice.

Garment selected	: Slip	: Panties	: Shirt	:
Informatively labeled	6	14	45	
Inadequately labeled	3	10	37	
Not labeled	9	2	6	

Quality of material was mentioned as a reason for choice by nine per cent and 13 per cent of those selecting slips and panties, respectively, and by 44.5 per cent of those selecting shirts (Fig. 1). Table 6 shows that those who named quality of material as a reason for their choices did not agree upon which garments were of the best quality. The only two garments in any one group whose qualities were actually known from laboratory tests were the panties bearing an informative label and those bearing no label. Both garments varying only slightly in style were purchased from the same group of garments made

to specification. When questioned about the missing label, the clerk said that it must have been lost, as all the garments on that counter were made to specification developed by that store's bureau of standards. Other panties of the same style but all in larger or smaller sizes were labeled. The clerk offered to provide the purchaser with the label, but this was unnecessary as it would have been removed for the study. The informatively labeled garment was thought the best quality by 14 women none of whom read the label while only two people chose the garment not labeled because of its quality. This comparison and the variety of choices made because of quality of material indicated that those mentioning that reason were unable to judge quality by inspection.

Trade-mark or brand was a relatively unimportant factor as is indicated in Fig. 1. That shirts were chosen because of trade-mark or brand by a larger percentage than were panties and slips may be explained by the familiarity of women with the trade-mark of one shirt used while the other two shirts were each of a less well-known brand. None of the panties and slips were of a widely advertised product.

Probable fit and size were not often mentioned as reasons for choice possibly because the styles of garments were so similar and the stated sizes were identical. Fig. 1 shows that 10.5 per cent of those interviewed mentioned

probable fit in choosing a slip while only 5.5 per cent mentioned it in selecting panties, and no one suggested it in referring to shirts. Slips of woven material do not conform to the body so readily as do knitted undergarments which may account for the higher percentage expressing concern with probable fit of slips (than were concerned with the probable fit of panties). Although size of collar, girth, and lengths of center back and sleeve are important in shirts, there is little else to consider relating to fit of those garments. Slips and panties, however, are part of the foundation for outer garments many of which are smooth fitting and must, therefore, fit meticulously. Very trim undergarments are therefore demanded.

The prices varied so little among the garments in a group that not many choices were affected by that factor as shown in Fig. 1. With few exceptions those interviewed were concerned with knowing the prices; however, when they learned that the slips cost \$1.98 and \$2.25 or that the shirts ranged in price from \$1.00 to \$1.19, they were usually not influenced by those differences. The prices of all three panties were identical.

All of the garments used in this study were exceptionally well-made; therefore, quality of workmanship as a reason for choice was not often mentioned as is shown in Fig. 1.



The garments used in this study fell into three groups as regards information found on attached labels. One in each group was referred to as not labeled, one inadequately labeled, and another informatively labeled. Those referred to as not labeled bore trade-mark, price tag, and size designation. In addition the shirt in this group carried a permanent cloth label sewed to the garment during its construction stating that the fabric was Sanforized shrunk. The inadequately labeled garments had cardboard labels giving information in addition to that which was also on the garments not labeled. Washing directions were given for slip and panties; name and address of manufacturer, Sanforized shrunk, and guarantee not to fade were on the label of the shirt. The informatively labeled garments in addition to price tag, size, and brand name were accompanied by a heavy paper tag. On one side of the label appeared the name of the article and "This is a Gimbel Tested Product"; on the other side was printed information about the product.

Information about the slip included washing directions, fiber content, thread count, and these general statements "Firmly woven fabric of satisfactory strength. Strong, durable seams. Excellent resistance to thread slippage. Good color fastness to washing and perspiration". The label on the panties stated the washing directions, fiber content, bursting strength, and these

statements: "Strong, sturdily constructed knit fabrics assure serviceability. Very good color fastness to laundering. Full cut for size and comfort. Bar tacked and double reinforced at points of strain for added strength. Well made, with strong overlocked seams".

The label on the shirt gave the kind of material, thread count, washing directions, and these statements: "Broad-cloth fabric of good strength for satisfactory service. Sanforized shrunk--average residual fabric shrinkage less than 1 per cent (CCC-T-191a). Full cut to accepted dimensional standards. Good color fastness to laundering, perspiration and sunlight. Gathered at cuffs and back for smart appearance". Each label also stated that the garment was made to specifications developed by Gimbel's bureau of standards and that a complete testing report was available. It is assumed by the retail establishment that the consumer cannot interpret such testing results; therefore, general statements as "Strong, durable seams. Excellent resistance to thread slippage. Very good color fastness to laundering." backed by a testing report available on request are more helpful to the consumer than would be a label filled with meaningless figures.

Table 7. Extent to which attention was given to labels by 200 women in making choices from among three groups of garments.

Garment:	Number	Percentage	Label thoroughly read:	Label noted but not read:	Label not noticed:	Choices influenced by label
			Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Slip	11	5.5±1.6	7	3.5±1.3	182	91.0±2.0
Panties	11	5.5±1.6	14	7.0±1.8	175	87.5±2.3
Shirt	9	4.5±1.5	16	8.0±1.9	175	87.5±2.3
Total	31	5.2*±0.9	37	6.2*±1.0	532	88.7*±1.7

\* Percentage of 600, the total number of cases observed.

Few choices were influenced by the presence of an informative label as is shown in Table 7. Those who chose slips mentioned the informative label as being an influencing factor in only  $1.5 \pm 0.9$  per cent of the cases. In selecting both panties and shirts, only  $1.0 \pm 0.7$  per cent of the 200 women were influenced by the label. Totaling the number of cases observed and the number of those selections influenced by the labels shows that in 600 cases only  $1.2 \pm 0.4$  per cent chose a garment because it was informatively labeled.

Although 200 women were observed making selections from three groups of garments, only 599 choices were made instead of an expected 600. One woman was suspicious of the investigation to the extent that when the first group of garments, slips, were put before her, she examined them thoroughly but refused to make a choice. By the time panties and shirts were placed before her, she had been convinced that there were no obligations involved in making selections. Of the 599 choices made, 7 or  $1.2 \pm 0.4$  per cent were influenced by the label. It is interesting to note in Table 7, however, that in 31 or  $5.2 \pm 0.9$  per cent of the 600 cases the labels were thoroughly read, that is, the comments made and the length of time given to observing the label indicated that they were read. Since only one garment in a group carried an informative label, comparisons of garments comprising a group could not be made on the basis of specific

information. For instance, the fiber content, thread count, and breaking strength were given for one slip; however, not knowing the specifications of the other two slips, women could not make actual comparisons. This may explain why so few of those who read the labels used them in making their selections. Indications of noticing the labels were given in an additional 37 or  $6.2 \pm 1.0$  per cent of the cases, none of which actually read the label. Those who glanced at the printing on the label (often held upside down) and those who looked at the label in such a way that they could see only the "tested product" printing were credited with noticing but not reading the label. In the other 532 or 88.7 per cent of the cases, the labels were not noticed.

In comparing the attention given to labels on the various groups of garments as shown numerically in Table 7 and graphically in Fig. 2, no truly significant differences were found. The greatest variation occurred in the percentages of labels noted but not read, those on slip and shirt being the extremes. The standard error of the difference between percentages ( $\sigma_{D_p}$ ) for labels noted but not read on the slip (3.5 per cent) and shirt (8.0 per cent) was 2.3 per cent. The difference between the percentages was 4.5 per cent resulting in a ratio ( $D/\sigma_{D_p}$ ) of 2.0. This is not a significant difference, but the chances are about 98 in 100 that the obtained difference is significant. The  $\sigma_{D_p}$  for labels not noticed on the slip (91.0 per cent) and each of the other two

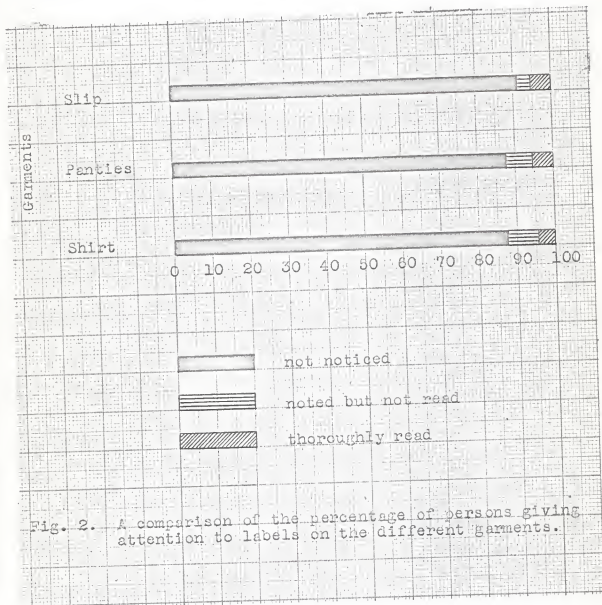


Fig. 2. A comparison of the percentage of persons giving attention to labels on the different garments.

garments (87.5 per cent) was 3.0 per cent. The difference between the percentages was only 3.5 per cent which would give a ratio ( $D/\sigma_p$ ) of 1.17. The chances are then about 87 in 100 that the difference is significant. The percentages of labels which were thoroughly read varied only 1.0 per cent. This difference is obviously not significant.

Findings of this study can be compared to a certain extent with other studies of consumers' buying habits. Smith (11) in a Denver City, Texas store found that "only 6 per cent" of 215 customers paid any attention to informative labeling." Assuming that paying attention to labels meant reading them, her findings compared quite closely with the 5.2 per cent in this study who read the labels. However, an additional 6.2 per cent of the women in this study noticed the labels but did not read them making a total of 11.4 per cent who noticed the presence of or read the labels. Both studies verify the statements made by Coles (4) and Reid (10) that consumers do not read labels. Bowen (1) using questionnaires filled out by 100 subjects concluded that consumers were influenced by labels; however, only 1.2 per cent of the choices made in this study were influenced by labels. The difference in these findings suggests that consumers think they are influenced by labels but their actions do not verify it.

Table 8. The number and percentage of women interviewed who selected each garment.

Type of Garment:	Number	Percentage	Inadequately Labeled:	Number	Percentage	Not Labeled:	Number	Percentage	Total
Slip	86	43.0	17	8.5	96	48.0	199	100	
Panties	76	58.0	89	44.5	35	17.5	200	100	
Shirt	85	42.5	92	46.0	25	11.5	200	100	



Table 8 gives the number and percentage of women interviewed who selected each garment. These numbers are relatively unimportant except in showing that those who made selections did not agree in their choices. The attention given to labels shown in Table 7 and in Fig. 2 are more important than are the numbers choosing each garment.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

1. A study was made of the reactions of 200 selected women to informative labels on garments and their responses to queries concerning the information desired on labels and the sources from which information was acquired.

2. The labels were read in only 5.2 per cent of the instances, and in only 1.2 per cent of all the choices were they named as an influencing factor in the selection. In an additional 6.2 per cent of the instances, labels were noted but not read.

3. Style was the reason given most frequently for choosing a particular slip or pair of panties. In the selection of boys' shirts quality of material was the only factor named more frequently than style. Trade-mark or brand was given as a reason for choice of shirt considerably more often than for choice of slip and panties. One shirt was of a well-known brand while none of the brands of panties and slips was widely advertised, this fact may account for

the results obtained.

4. Inability to judge quality of material by inspection was indicated by the lack of agreement as to which garment in each group was made of the best quality of material.

5. When asked to give the factors which influenced them in purchasing clothing, the women named most frequently price, quality of material, style, and trade-mark or brand. A number of other factors were mentioned by a few individuals.

6. When actually making choices, 88.7 per cent did not even notice that some garments were labeled. However, when asked whether or not they wanted informative labels, 86.5 per cent stated definitely that they did. Information desired most frequently included fiber content, shrinkage, color permanence, and cleaning directions.

7. Magazines were given by the largest number as providing information on labeling. A number of women who wanted informative labels said that from experience they had become aware of the need for such labeling.

8. The results of this study indicate that although many women state that they want informative labels, many do not read the labels that are made available.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## APPENDIX

Date \_\_\_\_\_

FORM I  
Record of Observation

37

	Slip	Panties	Shirt
<u>Garment Selected</u>			
Informatively labeled			
Inadequately labeled			
Not labeled			
<u>Reasons given for choice</u>			
Price			
Trade mark or brand			
Style			
Quality of material			
Quality of Workmanship			
Size			
Probable Fit			
Label			
<u>Attention given to label</u>			
Thoroughly read			
Noted but not read			
Not noticed			
<u>Questions concerning labels</u>			
Fabric construction			
Thread count or			
bursting strength			
Fiber used			
Yarn slippage			
Methods of laundering			
Sanforized			
Color-fastness			
Garment construction			
Full cut			
Seam construction			
Special features			

- ( ) Married--Occupation of husband \_\_\_\_\_  
 ( ) Unmarried--Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Do you ordinarily purchase these garments? ( ) Slips  
 ( ) Panties  
 ( ) Shirts

Where do you usually purchase clothing? ( ) Local market  
 ( ) Large city  
 ( ) Mail-order house

What influences you when you shop for clothing?  
 ( ) Trade mark or brand ( ) Price  
 ( ) Labels which give information ( ) Quality of material  
 ( ) Fabric analysis ( ) Quality of workmanship  
 ( ) Directions for cleaning ( ) Style  
 ( ) Measures of serviceability ( ) Name of reputable dealer  
 ( ) Other \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to find informative labels on garments? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
 If so, what information would you like?

- ( ) Price ( ) Workmanship  
 ( ) Fiber content ( ) Type of seams  
 ( ) Name of fabric ( ) Resistance to slippage at seams  
 ( ) Yarns per inch ( ) Shrinkage  
 ( ) Weight (oz. per sq. yd.) ( ) Color permanence  
 ( ) Breaking strength ( ) To washing  
 ( ) Weighting and sizing ( ) To sunlight  
 ( ) Social finishes ( ) To perspiration  
 ( ) Size ( ) Cleaning directions  
 ( ) Cut of garment ( ) Name and address of manufacturer  
 ( ) Others \_\_\_\_\_

From what sources have you acquired information concerning adequate labeling?

- ( ) Home Economics in high school  
 ( ) Other courses in high school (Name) \_\_\_\_\_  
 ( ) Home Economics in college  
 ( ) Other courses in college (Name) \_\_\_\_\_  
 ( ) Adult classes  
 ( ) Daughter taking Home Economics  
 ( ) Magazines \_\_\_\_\_  
 ( ) Newspapers \_\_\_\_\_  
 ( ) Bulletins  
 ( ) Government publications  
 ( ) Consumer group publications  
 ( ) Commercial publications  
 ( ) Clubs and study groups  
 ( ) Radio Programs \_\_\_\_\_  
 ( ) Other sources \_\_\_\_\_