

# HOUSE DRESSING

## Seasoning Apparel And Home Fashions To Taste

She has her investment pieces, dresses things up with a few accessories, changes certain things out seasonally and takes a dare with inexpensive and easy to replace items.

Assuming we are looking inside the average woman's closet? Perhaps, but think outside that proverbial box; the aforementioned scenario applies to the average female consumer's approach to decorating her home.

Is the home an extension of one's wardrobe or do her surroundings influence how a woman dresses? It's often a mix of both, say those in the know.

"These outlets are two ways in which we try to tell the world who we are today," observes Denell Pepin, a Product Trend Analyst with Cotton Incorporated. "One's taste level definitely translates."

"Taste is the same no matter what it's for, whether it's clothes, cars, or decorating. We use these things to say something about ourselves. For example, take women who like tailored clothes; they tend to favor a more straightforward and minimalist sense of design, as in fewer ruffles, tassels and embellishments in their furnishings," relates Shari Horowitz, a stylist who has worked in both fashion and home decor. "I think taste is taste and it crosses all spectrums."

"The motivation for the consumer is the same," adds Kenneth Hirst, founder of Hirst Pacific, a strategic design firm that provides global solutions to a wide range of international brands. "From my point of view, the consumer is shopping and making decisions based on who they are and what they would like to present to the world whether it is on themselves or in their homes. Today's best apparel brands are evolving into lifestyle brands for that very reason."

"It really does come to a specific level of personal style," tells Sandi Summerson, Vice President of Merchandising for Land's End. "Whether you are trendy, romantic, or traditional in dressing, you often carry that over in the choices you are making for your home."

And certainly, taste levels and styles do vary among women. When asked by the **Cotton Incorporated Lifestyle Monitor™** about the current style of their homes, 32% of female respondents stated traditional, 27% stated eclectic, 20% stated contemporary and 19% stated country.

One's tendency towards style in dressing and decorating might come down to whether a woman seeks inspiration from her past or her present. Couple traditional and country to present a conventional approach to home decorating (51%) and couple eclectic and contemporary to indicate a modern approach (47%); and women are almost evenly divided on their preferences for the past and the present in home fabric choices. That closely parallels women's feelings about their clothing. When asked by the Monitor about whether it was important to keep their wardrobes updated, 50% disagreed and 48% agreed.

"There are far more similarities in women's approaches to buying clothing and their home fabrics than there are dissimilarities," affirms Pepin, the trend analyst. She cites color as a key characteristic that catches the average woman's eye first and foremost when shopping for either category, yet points to some slight nuances in their preferences thereafter. "The home is all about color and texture and how something feels. For women, color strikes them first and then the item--- be it a duvet, a pillowcase or a slipcover---then they test it for feel," Pepin states. "When it comes to apparel, the motivators are color, fit, quality and price point, in that order."



### LIFESTYLE MONITOR STATISTICS: PLANNED CHANGES IN THE NEXT THREE MONTHS

	Apparel	Home Fabric
More	52%	26%
Less	35%	60%
Same	12%	12%

"Customers can be very literal, particularly when it comes to color," Summerson from Land's End relates. "In our catalog, when we show a top on a model, we anticipate that particular color will do very well." According to the Monitor, one in three female respondents pointed to catalogs as a source of inspiration for their clothing ideas; catalogs were the third most popular answer following clothing that consumers already own and like (65%) and store displays (51%).

Another commonality between apparel and home fashion is fiber choice. Nearly 60% of Monitor respondents are willing to pay more for apparel containing natural fibers such as cotton. In the home sector, that percentage rises to nearly 70%.

The connection between home décor and wardrobe diverges, however, on reaction time. When they are ready for a change in their personal look, women tend to act quickly. More than one in two women plan more changes in their apparel in the next three months, according to the Monitor. Approximately one in three plan less than they did a year ago.

On the home front, only one in four female respondents planned more changes in their homes in the next three months. Three out of five planned less changes in their selection of home fabrics than they did a year ago. Ironically, an equal 12% of female respondents stated that they planned the same amount of changes in both their wardrobes and home fabrics.

The experts believe that an explanation for that is straightforward; a wardrobe is all your own and a home is likely to be shared among many individuals. "Women have an easier option to change their look than they do for their houses as their homes are probably shared by a few people and as many opinions," Summerson from Land's End concludes. "It's generally a shared environment."

Whether it's her wardrobe or her home, today's woman is staying true to her sense of style.

*This story is one in a series of articles based on findings from Cotton Incorporated's Lifestyle Monitor™ tracking research. Each story will focus on a specific topic as it relates to the American women's wear consumer and her attitudes and behavior regarding clothing, appearance, fashion, fiber selection and many other timely, relevant subjects.*



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