

BEDDING GIANTS

Better displays give beds an edge, study says

BY DAVID PERRY

HIGH POINT — Good-looking mattress displays help consumers choose which beds they will try out on retail floors, a research study commissioned by Colonial LLC reveals.

Consumers generally say that more elaborate product displays make them favor one mattress over another with a less elaborate display. They also generally expect the top quality brands to have better-looking displays than less well known brands. And most consumers say that knowing how a mattress is made is very important to them, the study found.

Another key finding: Most consumers said they don't want to watch a mattress video while they are in the store.

Mark Hobson, Colonial's president, said the study can help bedding marketers zero in on displays that work, an important point since retailers have many options when it comes to bedding displays.

"There are so many opinions as to what 'looks best' when it comes to mattress displays," he said. "Yet few marketers have unlimited budgets nor the desire to gamble with their presentation and sales results. Having knowledge of what the consumer thinks about the category should help us figure out what really 'works best.'"

The qualitative consumer research study, with a qualified, female-oriented consumer population that plans to buy a mattress in the next 12 months, was conducted by America's Research Group.

Qualified consumers were interviewed by professional research associates in sessions that lasted 20 to 30 minutes, the company said.

Britt Beemer, chairman of America's Research Group, said the study, conducted over a three-day weekend at the Charlotte, N.C., Home Show earlier this year, breaks new ground in the field.

"To my knowledge," Beemer said, "this is the very first research study of its kind. No one before Colonial has invested as many resources to interview mattress shoppers in this fashion."



These were some of the bedding displays that consumers evaluated in a research study recently commissioned by Colonial LLC.

The study was designed to provide insights into the key display areas that most impact the mattress consumer when shopping in a retail store environment. Areas studied included branding and visibility, fabric and design preferences, product and specification card usage, and pricing strategies, officials said.

The displays varied in style, design, color, fabric, brand execution, sales aids and collateral materials. They were selected to provide the broadest cross section of available display products and materials commonly used on retail floors across the country.

These were some of the key findings in the study:

- Three in five consumers want to see and know as much as possible when shopping for a new mattress.

- Three in four consumers said they would like to try out luxury mattresses as well as the ones in the price range that they were originally planning to shop.

- Seven in 10 consumers said that the more elaborate product displays made them want to lie down on a particular mattress more than another with a less elaborate display.

- Three in four consumers said they expect the top quality bedding brands to have better-looking displays than lesser-known brands.

- Two in three consumers said that mattress displays with nice fabrics and embroidered branding and messaging made them want to touch the beds more than beds without those features.

- Four in five consumers said that pillows are an important part of the mattress shopping experience.

- Seven in 10 consumers said that knowing how a mattress is constructed is very important to them.

- One in two consumers said that hanging pockets and signs on the beds do the poorest job of providing the product information they need.

- Three in four consumers said they would not want to watch a mattress video while in the store, either on a smart phone, tablet or computer monitor.

Hobson offered several reasons for lack of consumer interest in videos.

"The consumers told the interviewers that they did extensive online research before they went to a store to shop," he said. "Their primary purpose for being in store was to test out the mattresses to find the best comfort that fits within their expected budget. Watching a video (or downloading an app) was not desired as they would get



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distracted from their main testing mission. And some mothers also commented that watching videos would prevent them from keeping an eye on their kids. Bottom line: Video watching is preferred at home rather than shopping in a store."

Hobson said the insights revealed in the study will help Colonial's customers craft displays that will stand out on retail floors.

"The insight and knowledge that we learned from this unique study was immense," he said. "We now have consumer research to help our clients increase their brand visibility, communicate product quality, and provide just the right amount of sales information to help the retail sales associates close more sales."

The study complements a quantitative study Colonial

conducted in 2013. That study examined the impact that various designs and colors had on the consumers' perceptions of quality, value, appeal, and their likelihood to stop and look at a particular mattress.

"When we combine what we have learned in this study with the information from our previous research, we have effectively increased our ability to accomplish our main mission — to help our clients sell more mattresses," Hobson said.

Beemer said research is a valuable tool to help retailers boost their sales.

"Understanding what the mattress consumer is thinking when they are shopping in a mattress showroom can go a long way to help retailers exceed customer expectations and sell more beds," he said.