

# ColorProse™

Nov. 2, 2001

Communicating Color Expertise To Color Professionals Worldwide

6/2001

## Megatrends: Globally Positioned Retailers Become Dye Specifiers

Major retail organizations, dependent on global vendor networks to supply their stores, are beginning to see the value in **specifying dyes** for a particular shade in addition to the more traditional specifications.

To avoid many of the common color-related problems, shades sourced from different vendors must have the same spectral (reflectance) data. Fabrics dyed with the same dyes will have identical spectral curves. Different dyes will result in different spectral curves. If the difference is great enough, significant --perhaps embarrassing -- color management problems will occur.

### What are the key advantages of specifying dyes?

**1. Places control of brand image in the hands of the retailer, where it rightfully belongs.** Cost of coloring a garment is a very small part of its overall cost. However, the color and the brand image are often the principal reason a potential buyer first looks at a garment. Variations in color among "same" garments in the store, coordinates that fail to match, metamerism under different viewing conditions, etc., work against a favorable brand image.

### **2. Eliminates metameric matches.**

Even though the average consumer has no idea what metamerism is, eliminating "metamerism" will improve customer satisfaction and reduce unfavorable publicity. (See *ColorProse*, "The Cure For Metamerism.")

**3. Eliminates many color management problems.** Retail color management teams typically spend many hours approving lab submits and bulk submits from suppliers around the world, all in an effort to satisfactorily match a standard shade developed by their design group.

The design group's palette of shades is painstakingly developed -- and wrapped in security -- to provide optimum competitive advantage in the coming seasons.



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All too often, color management settles for “best can do” matches from suppliers under time pressure to meet the season’s releases. The probability of multiple suppliers using the same dyes (a highly beneficial situation) without the retailer influencing them to do so is very low. (See *ColorProse*, “How Many 3-Combinations Are There? Or, How Lucky Do You Feel?”)

#### **4. Reduces administrative demand and frees valuable time for greater creativity and productivity.**

Administration and staff are valuable resources. Color management processes and principles that served the organization well in days of single-sourcing can be cumbersome and management-intensive in today’s world of multi-vendor, global sourcing. Engineering color standards, beginning with the design process and specifying to the vendors, is a more rational use of valuable organization time.

**5. Compresses the time cycle for color development.** Time-to-store is increasingly important to most retail organizations. Much of the time required to get the season’s garments in front of the consumer is spent on color development, management and communication. Specifying dyes, through the use of Engineered Color Standards™ such as those pioneered by Archroma Global Services, cuts time from the development cycle in at least these ways:

- **The shade is matched only once!** Matching just once through the use of an engineered color standard is far quicker than matching at each and every vendor source;

- **Submit approval is faster!** When all vendors use the same dyes, there is no need for the time-consuming process of coordinating metamerism and harmonizing submits among various vendors.

- **Best match is developed up-front!** In reality, there is only one “best match” for a particular shade on a particular substrate within a set of specifications and from a population of dyes. Engineered Color Standards™ from Archroma discover best match formulations within agreed-upon specifications through the use of Archroma’s proprietary, innovative software. This reduces the immense challenge of discovering the “best match” from the traditional days and weeks to a few points and clicks of the computer mouse.

### The Mills’ Response To Retailers’ Specifying

What has been the mill response to retailers specifying, or at least recommending, dyes for shades as well as the other parameters typically specified?

Perhaps surprising to some in the industry, many mills embrace the idea without objection. Their objective is to meet the retailer’s requirements in a timely and cost-effective manner. Having the dye formulation saves time in their laboratory matching the shade, and maximizes the probability that bulk production will satisfy and delight the retailer, both for shade and timeliness.

The most serious objection appears to come from mills that have a large infrastructure devoted to a competitive bidding process among dye suppliers.

In reality, mills, retailers and intermediaries that are leading-edge in another textile/apparel megatrend -- that of achieving success through developing multi-lateral relationships -- will work through the process changes required to embrace and adopt the mutual advantages of cooperation in dyes specification.

Modern requirements for the apparel/textile supply web, are challenging to master, especially by fine-tuning and optimizing old, inadequate paradigms.

Although there are many places in the supply web, there is only one customer: the consumer who ultimately purchases the garment from the retail shelf. And that consumer’s purchasing decision is strongly influenced by the color of the garment.

In the megatrend evolving and gathering momentum, the retailer is assuming the role of “channel captain,” specifying dyes (and other parameters) to create new competitive advantages through managing supply web dynamics and to boost consumer satisfaction.