



CAPABILITIES OF AND IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCH NEEDS IN AMERICAN APPAREL MANUFACTURING FIRMS

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A survey consisting of 31 binary and six open-ended questions was mailed to 300 cutting and contracting members of the American Apparel Manufacturers Association (AAMA). The survey sought current advanced technological capabilities of pre-production and production departments, management practices in quality and waste, and current or anticipated problems of the firm. One hundred twenty responses were analyzed (37% return rate). Frequency and cross tabulation statistical tests were administered to the data to assess significant issues as related to the size of the company (as measured by number of employees).

The majority of manufacturers utilized advanced technological equipment (CAD, computerized marker making systems, automated or programmable sewing equipment) to a great degree in Design and Pattern Development, Marker Making, and Sewing departments. A minority of manufacturers utilized automated spreading and cutting equipment in that department. An intent to increase implementation of technology was greatest in the quality management area. Manufacturers indicated that technology was very important for the profitability of their companies.

Fifty-two percent of the respondents did not practice quality control inspection, yet 83% intended to implement formal quality processes within two years. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents did not have a waste management process, yet 61% intended to implement or increase waste management within two years and felt the area was very important to the profitability of their company.

Cross tabulations (95% probability level) revealed that, the larger the company, the greater the firm's use of computerized and automated equipment and the greater the establishment of a quality and waste management area.

Research is needed for early detection of fabric flaws and standards of quality are necessary. All firms cited skilled personnel as the single major need of the industry.