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## What ECP's Think: Essilor Study Assesses Internet's Impact on Eyecare Profession

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DALLAS—Essilor of America announced the results of a study that evaluates the emerging Internet marketplace and its potential impact on the eyecare profession. The research reviews the current Internet marketplace environment and assesses ECPs' perception of the issues and challenges of this channel.

Among the key findings of the survey: While two-thirds of ECPs surveyed believe online purchasing is a growing trend in the eyecare industry, only about one-third of respondents see online purchasing as the future of the eyecare industry.

“Essilor is using the research results to clearly evaluate and determine how to best help Essilor and ECPs address this imminent trend,” said Howard Purcell, O.D., F.A.A.O., Dipl., vice president, customer development for Essilor. “We are proactively working to help ECPs better understand the changing marketplace and shift in consumer attitudes, bridge these gaps and to integrate this offering into their toolbox in a way that expands their businesses.”

As part of the research initiative, Essilor assembled groups of ECPs to learn more about how they perceive the issues and challenges of this channel, as well as to understand their experiences, frustrations, successes and fears. ECPs had an opportunity to share key insights and personal perspectives through forums held in conjunction with research partner, Jobson Medical Information, in Las Vegas, Dallas, Atlanta, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Miami, and New York City. The feedback from these forums will be applied to the ultimate direction of future Essilor programming and planning resulting from the research, Essilor said.



Jobson Optical Research conducted 354 online interviews with ECPs nationwide from September 26 to October 16, 2008, through a grant from Essilor. Participants represented independent groups or practices and held titles of optician, optometrist, technician, store manager or ophthalmologist.

Other key findings of the study include:

## Growing Consumer Demand

Within the next two to three years, ECPs predict patients will be most interested in using the Internet for re-filling an order for contact lenses (97 percent very or somewhat interested), ordering non-prescription sunglasses (90 percent) and having the ability to upload their picture to virtually try on frames (84 percent).

## The Comfort Gap

Even though ECPs believe consumers will increasingly demand online services, most ECPs are not prepared for this shift. Nearly one quarter of ECPs surveyed said their practices do not have a Web site (23 percent), and those who do, tend to use it primarily to provide basic information. Almost all Web sites show information about the practice (97 percent), but only a third offer products for purchase (31 percent).

## Online Drivers and Barriers

The main factors contributing to selling eyewear products via the Internet in the future include convenience for patients (80 percent), the opportunity to generate more revenue (70 percent), and the opportunity to bring in more patients (64 percent). In contrast, the main obstacle is the perception of patients' preference for personal interaction (71 percent).

## Impact on the Industry

Sixty-four percent of eyecare professionals believe consumer online purchasing trends will impact the eyecare industry over the next three years. Just over four in ten eyecare professionals believe the impact of consumer online purchasing will be positive or neither positive nor negative (17 percent positive, 24 percent neither positive nor negative), while 59 percent believe the impact will be negative.

## Jury Is Still Out

Two-thirds (67 percent) of respondents believe online purchasing is a growing trend in the eyecare industry. Yet, only about one-third (31 percent) see online purchasing as the future of the eyecare industry. While the majority believe patients prefer the personal touch of in-store service to purchasing eyewear online (85 percent), six in ten (61 percent) also agree that many patients will be interested in purchasing eyecare products online in the near future.

*Comments or questions about Essilor's Eyecare Professional Internet Usage & Attitude Study should be addressed to [TellHoward@essilorusa.com](mailto:TellHoward@essilorusa.com) <<mailto:TellHoward@essilorusa.com>> .*

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