



**News & Information**

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**ESSILOR STUDY ASSESSES IMPACT OF EMERGING INTERNET MARKETPLACE  
ON EYECARE PROFESSION**

*Findings Reinforce ECP Desire for Integration and Solutions*

**DALLAS** – (May 08, 2009) – Essilor of America, Inc., the nation’s leading manufacturer of optical lenses, announced the results of an Eyecare Professional (ECP) Internet Usage & Attitude 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. While two thirds (67%) of ECPs surveyed believe online purchasing is a growing trend in the eyecare industry, only about one third (31%) 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, Inc., 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.

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## **Survey Methodology**

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.

## **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% very or somewhat interested), ordering non-prescription sunglasses (90%) and having the ability to upload their picture to virtually try on frames (84%).
- **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 website (23%), and those who do, tend to use it primarily to provide basic information. Almost all websites show information about the practice (97%), but only a third offer products for purchase (31%).
- **Online Drivers and Barriers:** The main factors contributing to selling eyewear products via the Internet in the future include convenience for patients (80%), the opportunity to generate more revenue (70%), and the opportunity to bring in more patients (64%). In contrast, the main obstacle is the perception of patients' preference for personal interaction (71%).
- **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% positive, 24% neither positive nor negative), while 59% believe the impact will be negative.

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- **Jury Is Still Out:** Two thirds (67%) of respondents believe online purchasing is a growing trend in the eyecare industry. Yet, only about one third (31%) 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%), six in ten (61%) also agree that many patients will be interested in purchasing eyecare products online in the near future.

As we continue to probe this issue, Essilor will inform the industry of any significant findings or future developments. Any comments or questions about this Internet initiative should be addressed to [TellHoward@essilorusa.com](mailto:TellHoward@essilorusa.com).

Essilor is the leading manufacturer of optical lenses in the United States and is the market leader in progressive, high-index and anti-reflective coated lenses. A pioneer in the development and production of ophthalmic lenses, Essilor employs more than 9,000 people throughout North America. Essilor manufactures optical lenses under the Varilux<sup>®</sup>, Crizal<sup>®</sup>, Thin&Lite<sup>®</sup>, Xperio<sup>™</sup> and DEFINITY<sup>®</sup> and other Essilor brand names. Essilor Laboratories of America (ELOA) is the largest, and most trusted, optical lab network in the U.S. and offers a wide choice of services and lens brands, including Essilor premium lenses, to eye care professionals across the nation. Essilor of America, Inc. (Essilor) is a subsidiary of Paris-based Essilor International, S.A., a publicly held company traded on the Euronext Paris stock exchange (Reuters: ESSI.PA).

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