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Anabel Hoult
CEO
Which?
2 Marylebone Road London NW1 4DF

Dear Anabel

Re: Which? Review of Ebac Washing Machines

In 2016, Ebac made the decision to enter the Washing Machine Market. We wanted to offer a better washing machine for the UK public that was reliable, robust and repairable with exceptional cleaning.

We committed over 200,000 hours on research and development and £8m in investment to achieve this. Within 5 years of launch our washing machine brand is the highest rated on Trustpilot.

Despite this investment and extremely good customer feedback, we were perplexed to receive a less than satisfactory review from Which?. We set out to understand why we were rated so poorly and if we needed to improve our machine.

First we had to understand why our score was so low. We were alarmed to find out the real reasons Ebac had been scored poorly. We recreated the Which? test with other manufacturers models in our laboratories. We discovered the following issues with the Which? Washing Machine test protocol:

- 1. The Which? test of washing machines only tests for severe stain removal.**
- 2. Which? prioritise severe stain removal above all other features and factors.**
- 3. The Which test is open to manipulation by other washing machine brands.**

1. The Which? test of washing machines only tests for severe stain removal.

Which? tests for 6 extreme stains – blood, coffee, grass stains etc. However, these stains occur very rarely. 99% of washes do not contain stains like this. Most washing loads only need to remove mild or minor dirt. By only testing machines for stains that occur rarely - you are not performing an appropriate test. By making the assumption that washing machines that can remove extreme stains are equally as good at washing everyday loads – you are misleading consumers.

All washing machines can remove extreme stains by washing for a longer period of time on higher temperatures. This is no secret. But this is not typical of everyday washing. In order to really test a washing machine, you should do a comparative test on all programmes – not just extreme stain removal. Additionally, most consumers use a stain removal product like Vanish or use a prewash or intensive wash for extreme stains. That also should be included in your tests – but is not.

In our view, Which? should be testing washing machines on a range of programmes – not just a stain removal programme. By only testing severe stain removal, you are knowingly misleading the public.

2. Which? prioritise severe stain removal above all other features and factors.

By prioritising stain removal over all other factors in the Which? scoring methodology, you are again misleading consumers. Stained clothing, bedding, towels etc. only occur once in every 100 washes. Most washing is general dirt or freshening up – even when the family has children.

By prioritising stain removal and basically ignoring all other factors like elapsed time, water consumption, microfibre release and energy consumed - you are providing a very distorted view to consumers and encouraging them to purchase washing machines that are not actually suited to their needs. By promoting machines that consume more water, energy and time you are actually costing consumers a lot of money and promoting washing machines that wear out faster.

3. The Which test is open to manipulation by other washing machine brands.

All other washing machines brands have recognised that the Which? test prioritises stain removal on a 40 degree cotton wash as the basis for a high test score.

In our laboratory tests, a number of Which? Best Buys appear to have elongated their wash programme to wash for longer and remove more severe stains. It appears they do this to get a higher score from the Which? test – not because consumers want it or the washing load needs it. Indeed, in our tests the majority of standard loads were clean well before the programme ended.

By elongating the programme time - these machines run too long, wear out components prematurely, use too much water, too much detergent, release billion of unnecessary microfibres and create thousands of tonnes of CO₂. Only for the purpose of manipulating a high Which? test score and conning consumers into buying their product.

The Which? Washing Machine test is directly responsible for washing machines releasing up to 60% more microfibres per year than is necessary, for using up to 90% more water than is necessary and for releasing over 237,000 tonnes of unnecessary CO₂ from over running washing machines.

Ebac refuse to participate in this charade - even though having a low Which? score has undoubtedly and unfairly damaged our reputation. We hope consumers will see that Ebac has taken the moral high ground. We have manufactured an excellent washing machine that does not over wash, does not consume needless water, energy and releases less microfibres than any Which? Best Buy. Most importantly it cleans as well if not better than other machines – including stains.

We would implore you to reconsider changing the Which? test to be more representative of how consumers routinely use their washing machine. We would urge Which? to stop encouraging other washing machine brands to abuse the test and damage the planet and consumers finances.

Yours sincerely,
John Elliott MBE DL