

EXPERIENCE STUDENTS LAUNDRY

Dirty clothes were stored in bags or boxes around the students room. No care was taken to sort them out, they were simply 'dumped' in the same location after being used.

After packing items into a bag the subjects found it difficult to carry them through doors; nearly every user had to use both hands to carry their laundry.

One subject in particular had trouble with the number of doors she had to pass through, causing her to kick, push and bump her way to the laundry facilities.

In the launderette finding a machine was an issue. Several times the facilities were all used, and other machines were unusable, either out of order or filled with washing powder.

Students admitting to having very little knowledge about how to wash clothes. Several had been taught how to wash only a few times and then had used that knowledge to wash all their clothes since. The launderette washing machines seemed to be designed with this in mind and offered simplified settings such as 'colours' or 'whites'. However for those students who had some knowledge of the task this was confusing as it was impossible to translate the settings into temperatures or washing times.

When asked, the majority of students would opt to share a load with friends or housemates if it were beneficial e.g. when several students put all their white clothes together to make enough for a load. However this rarely translated into reality as most simply did their own washing when they had enough to wash. This highlights the personal aspect of the task, even with friends the social interaction observed only reached the point of doing laundry at the same time.

Most users chose a medium setting, but several admitted to doing this out of habit or not knowing what to use.

The difficulty in carrying the clothes was partly due to a lack of proper carrying equipment, many users used supermarket bags, while those who used a proper bag still found it awkward for the task. Products that exist for the joint task of storage and carrying were also only useful for small loads and failed to account for the diversity of users needs.

The majority of students live in University Halls accommodation and use the launderette services, usually found in the common areas of each hall. While observing students who lived in halls, it was clear that many found the task of transporting clothes to and from the launderette the most difficult part of

Every user decided to use the dryer available. The lint collectors did not need to be cleaned every time, but they were always checked as part of the routine.

When returning to the washed clothes, users found it difficult to move wet clothes from washer to dryer. Most had not left their bags in the launderette and so moved them via small bundles in their hands.

Every observed user left during the wash cycle, either checking the time to return or setting a timer on their phone.

The choice of cleaning product was largely based on cost, although again there was some indication of habit from some users. Most would simply go for the product on offer at shopping time whether this was liquitabs, washing powder or liquid. Others would buy the cheapest option for the product they were used to, e.g. cheapest box of liquitabs. Interestingly many would not buy a larger quantity even though it would save money in the long run. Many would only buy a few months worth of product regardless of the savings.

Drying cycles were deemed to be too short, and extra money had to be put in to pay for extra time. This was the case even with small loads. There was no accurate way of deciding how much time was needed, so it was guessed, but there seemed little concern for drying for too long and shrinking clothes.

Again subjects were unwilling to wait in the launderette for the drying to finish, even though it could be a 10 minute walk away.

After drying, some of the clothes were not fully dry, but users did not want to spend more time drying and so carried them back still damp. This caused problems with weight and users found bags very difficult to handle. Users did not bother with ironing and instead hung up clothes straight away to reduce the risk of creasing.

Laundry seemed to be a very personal experience for most users, although it was a chore the subjects seemed emotionally attached to their clothes and were unwilling to risk ruining their clothes. This led to many habits, such as using the same trusted settings or only washing certain items together, which may not have been the best for their particular clothes.

