

# Thread Price Versus Thread Cost

## Introduction

Thread price and thread cost are terms that are sometimes used synonymously but may actually have very different meanings. Thread price usually refers to the price you pay to get the thread to your plant and may or may not include shipping and transportation charges. The cost refers to all the costs related to thread performance including the purchase price.

Thread, whenever it is given any consideration at all, is often treated as the primary item where a manufacturer or contractor can cut costs. Many think, "All threads are equal in performance and the same - so what colors do you have and what is your price?" However, consider that, "Thread generally makes up only a small percent of the total cost of a sewn product, but shares fully 50% of the responsibility of the seam."

For example, a manufacturer in the Far East was making cargo pants and then subjecting them to a stone-wash finishing process. They were averaging 48 percent repairs after laundering. After evaluating their situation, we recommended that they switch from a locally produced low-priced spun polyester thread to a poly-wrapped core thread. Initially, they were very resistant to even consider this change due to the higher selling price, but they agreed to a large garment trial. When this sewing trial was completed the analysis showed that they were now averaging less than 2% repairs after laundering using the higher performance thread. They also had fewer thread breaks on the sewing floor so they had fewer restitched seams and produced a better quality garment ... not to mention that their sewing operators were able to achieve production output and therefore lower their overall sewing costs!

The plant manager still hesitated in purchasing this higher performance thread and stated that labor costs in his country was very inexpensive and he could afford to repair the garments. During our discussion, we acknowledged that the core thread was more expensive and his labor rates were low, however, we pointed out that there were other costs related to the thread performance. They included:

- More equipment & operators required: Additional sewing machines are costly anywhere in the world.
- Higher overhead costs: Floor space, utilities and power, training costs, and higher maintenance costs.
- Longer In-process times.
- Penalties due to shipment delays.
- Charge-backs from Retailer when poor quality is found.

- Seconds due to poor quality that could not be repaired: Material and other trim costs are very expensive.
- Being recognized as a low quality producer.

The realization of these 'hidden' costs convinced this customer to make the right choice by switching to the higher performing thread to minimize their overall thread cost. Furthermore, there are additional ways to reduce thread costs without compromising sewability and seaming performance.

### ***How to Reduce Overall Thread Cost***

The following list includes practical ways to reduce thread cost other than just using a cheaper thread:

- Use natural or white wherever possible.
- Change to a less expensive thread type on loopers and on inside overedge seams.
- Change to smaller thread sizes wherever possible: Looper threads on chainstitch, overedge and coverstitch operations and generally on component parts like cuffs, and pocket flaps.
- Reduce thread consumption.

### ***Changing to Smaller Thread Sizes***

Smaller thread sizes are generally less expensive than larger thread sizes and, therefore, smaller thread sizes should be used whenever possible. Below shows the difference in thread cost by going to a smaller thread size in the Topstitching only.

Jean Thread Cost Comparison	
Alternatives	% Savings
T-120 Perma Core	0.0%
T-105 Perma Core	- 9.4%
T-80 Perma Core	- 18.8%
T-60 Perma Core	- 22.6%

On chainstitch and overedge seams, smaller looper threads can be used without sacrificing seam strength.

**Example:** Using different Tex Sizes on different operations for making Jeans.

Operation	Thread Size
Topstitching Thread	T-80 or T-105
Seaming & Loopers	T-60
Overedge Seams	T-40

In many cases this can reduce the thread cost for a sewn product by 10 to 15%.

### ***Using White or Natural Instead of Dyed Thread***

White or natural threads are generally less expensive than dyed threads because they don't have to be wet processed. The least expensive cotton or cotton wrapped core thread is natural or an "off-white" color. Since the natural color of polyester thread is white, then the least expensive polyester thread is white and not "natural" color. If a "natural" or "off-white" thread is specified, the white polyester thread will have to be dyed increasing its cost.

#### **Thread Cost Comparison**

Men's Zipper Fly - Relaxed Fit Jean  
T-105 Topstitch, T-60 & T-40 Seaming & Overedging

Alternatives	% Savings
100% Dyed Cotton Wrapped Core	0%
Dyed CW Core with Natural in loopers	6.5%
100% Dyed Poly Wrapped Core	6.9%
Dyed PW Core with White in Loopers	11.8%

### ***Change to a Less Expensive Thread Type***

Changing to a less expensive thread type is always an alternative, however, as stated above, this can detract from the finished quality of the sewn product unless considerable testing is performed. Generally, inside threads can be changed with less of an impact on the seam quality or sewability. For example, a spun polyester, air entangled, or textured polyester looper thread can replace a more expensive core spun thread on loopers and overedge seams to reduce the total thread cost.

***Reducing Thread Consumption to Minimize Thread Cost***

Another alternative to reducing thread cost is to minimize thread consumption. This can be done by changing stitch types, using automatic start/stop devices on the sewing machines, and monitoring thread waste. A two thread overedge stitch consumes approximately 21% less thread than a three thread overedge. If this stitch is only being used to cover the edge to prevent it from unraveling, this might be a good alternative particularly considering that overedge stitches make up a large percentage of the total thread consumed in a sewn product.

**Summary**

As you can see from the information presented above, there are many ways to reduce thread cost other than just using the cheapest thread. There is a difference between thread price and thread cost. Any thread company worthy of your business should have training professionals who can help you make the right choice to optimize your quality