

Provision of Full Disclosure Practices for Gem Trade

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What type of gem should I buy? Is it natural or synthetic stone? How is its quality? Is it a reasonable price? Is it worth buying? Where should I buy? These are among frequent questions one usually has in mind before he or she decides to buy a piece of gem or jewelry. This is because that piece of gem or jewelry is sometimes not only being considered a valuable belonging but it could also be an asset for long-term investment. Hence, general knowledge of gemstone is an important aspect that should be informed to all customers. It can build up customers' confidence to buy the stones. In fact, the more customers educated in the right way, the better incomes the industry could benefit. Apart from customers, all traders should also be educated and updated their knowledge in this field because gem markets have been developed rapidly within the last decade. New types of gem products have been supplied into the market. Therefore, correct communication is really needed for the recent trading situation. This information, including treatment, quality and gem type, should be fully disclosed to the customers.

The gemstone treatment is a process, except cutting and polishing, of improving the appearances of a stone to a level being acceptable in the trade. These enhanced appearances include color, clarity, transparency, phenomenon and resistance. Consequently, gemstones undergone any type of treatment should be durable, unaltered and beautiful enough to be acceptable in the gem market. Any treatment must yield the permanent appearance; otherwise, the product will be unacceptable. Therefore, gem buyers should have at least the general information and knowledge about pieces of gemstone or jewelry before buying. As a result, we would like to introduce the following options to all gem traders who willing to disclose their products to the consumers.

Option 1

Gem traders should explain and categorize gemstones into 4 groups based on treatment process and related matters:

No treatment: may use a disclosure code, for example, N (Natural or No treatment) to signify that this stone has never been undergone any treatment. This code should be used for any gemstone in which there is a factual evidence(s) to show that the stone has never been undergone

any treatment. Of course, certification with stated code and/or comments from a well known and reliable gem testing laboratory must be given to the stone (Figure 1).

As for the gem materials in which currently there is no known treatment ever applied to them, for examples, black spinel, colour-change garnet, or hauyne. In this case the disclosure code, **NN** (Natural and No known treatment), may be used to signify such stones instead. An example of certification with comments is shown in Figure 2.

General treatment: using the code, such as **H** (Heating) or **E** (Enhancement) or **TE** (Thermal Enhancement). This code stands for gemstones undergone general treatments acceptable in the trade, e.g., conventional heat-treatment. This code should be used for any gemstone in which there is a factual evidence(s) to show that the stone has been undergone such treatment. The following remarks, such as “simple heat-treatment is a common practice for corundum and is acceptable in the trade”, or “indication of heating with residue in fissures” may be given to the stone as appropriate. An example of certification with such stated comments is shown in Figure 3.

Specific treatment: using a specific code to denote the treatment that has been proven or known, and has been applied to such stone. For examples, Code **B** is for bleaching, Code **C** for coating, Code **D** for dyeing, Code **F** or **FG** for heating with glass fillers of various types of glass, Code **I** for impregnation, Code **O** for oiling, Code **P** for opticon filling, Code **S** for resin infusion, Code **W** for waxing, Code **R** for irradiation, Code **U** for color diffusion, etc. Similarly some of such specific disclosure tag codes have also been recommended by the JJA (Japan Jewellery Association), and AGTA (American Gem Trade Association). Regarding stability of stones undergone some specific treatments such as filling with glasses, a special care sentence(s) should be clearly stated along with the code **FG** for such stone, and traders may also want to inform their customers, accordingly. An example of certification with comments is shown in Figure 4.

Un-proven treatment: using a code, such as **XP** (Un-Proven or undeterminable). This code stands for gemstones in which a number of treatment processes are commonly known to apply to those types of stone but are still difficult to identify in laboratory or unclearly proved, for examples, heat-treated tanzanite, irradiated topaz, low-temperature-heated ruby or sapphire. An example of certification with comments is shown Figure 5.

Option 2

Traders may also use information provided by the LMHC (Laboratory Manual Harmonization Committee) to inform customers continuously. LMHC have been co-operated by six gem testing laboratories of the world class and widely well known institutions. They are CISGEM (Italy), GAAJ Laboratory (Japan), GIA-Gem Trade Laboratory (USA), GIT-Gem Testing Laboratory (Thailand), Gubelin Gem Lab (Switzerland), SSEF Swiss Gemmological Institute (Switzerland). All information sheets (IS) approved by this committee have been acceptable internationally. Customers can update the recent IS for international gem trades. LMHC has currently issued 9 ISs (see www.lmhc-gemology.org). Moreover, an IS on pearls is currently under consideration.

Option 3

Gem traders working together as association should apply information supplied by CIBJO (World Jewellery Confederation); CIBJO has distributed an international procedure of gem and jewelry trading in the form of manuals so called 'Blue Books' that are accepted by all related parties worldwide. These Blue Books are, for examples, the Diamond, the Gemstone, the Pearl, and Precious Metals ones. These manuals are actually useful for all sectors including traders and buyers in the gem and jewelry market (see www.cibjo.org).

In conclusion, we propose to the gem traders to consider adopting the above options and provide your customers with those disclosure codes as well as use such information in order to show the transparency of your business. With this general practices the industry would rather gain more confidences from buyers or public as a whole. Please visit us and use our services daily at Booth 29A-32A, Challenger Hall 3, IMPACT, Muang Thong Thani in the 46th Bangkok Gem and Jewelry Fair. For more information, please contact Gem Testing Laboratory-Gem and Jewelry Institute of Thailand (GTL-GIT) or visit our website: www.git.or.th