



Investigating Fashion Leaders' and Non-Fashion Leaders' Perception Toward Trade-Offs in Eco-Friendly Clothing

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It was recently found that non-fashion leaders are more likely to trade-off hedonic attributes (rather than utilitarian) for eco-friendliness when purchasing eco-friendly clothing (EFC), whereas fashion leaders are not willing to trade-off either utilitarian or hedonic attributes for eco-friendliness (Hyun & Kim, 2018; Hyun et al., 2019). Although intriguing, one limitation of the study above was that the 'price' attribute was not tested – despite multiple researchers' emphasis on price as an important attribute that impacts EFC consumption behavior (e.g., Gam, 2011). According to the pretest conducted by Hyun et al. (2019), the relative hedonic / utilitarian content of the price attribute was close to the scale midpoint: 4.13 on a bi-polar scale of 1 being utilitarian and 9 being hedonic. The researchers mentioned that the price attribute could not be clearly categorized as either utilitarian or hedonic, and therefore, the attribute was considered to be beyond the scope of their study.

Given the above, our purpose was to extend Hyun and Kim (2018) and Hyun et al. (2019) by investigating how fashion leaders and non-leaders respond to trade-offs between price and eco-friendliness. Specifically, extending upon the results from Hyun et al.'s (2019) pretest, we tested price as an independent construct that is separate from either utilitarian or hedonic attributes. Such an approach was further supported by previous studies showing that consumer perception toward price is significantly related to both hedonic (e.g., smart shopper feeling) and utilitarian (e.g., transaction utility) values (e.g., Babin et al., 1994; Grewal et al., 1998; Thaler, 1984). In all, our guiding research questions were:

- RQ1. How do fashion leaders and non-leaders respond to EFCs that trade-off price for eco-friendliness?
- RQ2. Are fashion leader and non-leaders more or less willing to trade-off price rather than other hedonic or utilitarian attributes?

Method

Hyun and Kim (2018) and Hyun et al. (2019) recruited approximately 100 participants for each attribute that was tested. Accordingly, to test the price attribute, we also recruited 101 participants online via Amazon Mechanical Turk. The online questionnaire was also identical to the previous studies. The first section of the questionnaire rated the participants' level of fashion leadership using scales adopted from Gutman and Mills (1982). In the second section, each participant was asked to make a choice between two jeans varying in terms of its price attribute and eco-friendliness on a scale ranging from 0 (poor) to 10 (excellent). Specifically, the participants were placed in a choice situation involving a trade-off between price and eco-

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friendliness by having them choose between one jeans that was superior in terms of its eco-friendliness (Jeans A) and the other that was superior in terms of its price (Jeans B).

Results

Prior to separating the participants into fashion leaders and non-leaders, we ran a chi-square analysis to review the overall choice tendency. Our results were then combined with and compared to the results from Hyun et al. (2019). As shown in Table 1, the choice tendency for the price trade-off condition was similar to the hedonic trade-off condition: there was no significant difference in numbers between those who chose Jeans A and Jeans B, whereas for the utilitarian trade-off condition, significantly more participants chose Jeans B. This result suggests that participants were more likely to choose an eco-friendly option (Jeans A) when they had to trade-off price or hedonic attribute than when they had to trade-off utilitarian attribute.

Table 1. Overall responses to different trade-off types

	Jeans A		Jeans B	Statistics
Price trade-off	50	=	51	$\chi^2 = .01$ $p = .92$
Utilitarian trade-off ^a	48	<	156	$\chi^2 = 57.18$ $p < .001^*$
Hedonic trade-off ^a	91	=	111	$\chi^2 = 1.98$ $p = .16$

^a These results are from Hyun et al. (2019); * $p < .05$.

Next, we split the participants into two groups (leaders and non-leaders) based on a fashion leadership score of 3.16 – a threshold score identified by Hyun et al. (2019), then ran another set of chi-square analyses. As shown in Table 2, fashion leaders were more likely to choose an eco-friendly option (Jeans A) when they had to trade-off price than when they had to trade-off hedonic or utilitarian attribute. Non-fashion leaders, on the other hand, were more willing to trade-off price or hedonic attribute rather than utilitarian attribute.

Table 2. Fashion Leaders' and Non-Fashion Leaders' Choices by Type of Trade-Offs

	Jeans A		Jeans B	Statistics
Fashion Leaders				
Price trade-off	17	=	10	$\chi^2 = 1.82$, $p = .18$
Utilitarian trade-off ^a	14	<	45	$\chi^2 = 16.29$, $p < .001^*$

Hedonic trade-off ^a	13	<	32	$\chi^2 = 8.02, p = .01^*$
Non-Fashion Leaders				
Price trade-off	33	=	41	$\chi^2 = .87, p = .35$
Utilitarian trade-off ^a	34	<	111	$\chi^2 = 40.89, p < .001^*$
Hedonic trade-off ^a	78	=	79	$\chi^2 = .01, p = .94$

^a These results are from Hyun et al. (2019); * $p < .05$.

Discussion

Our results present useful implications for EFC retailers in terms of prioritizing certain product attributes during the planning and development process. For targeting fashion leaders, it may be unnecessary for a retailer to prioritize establishing a competitive price point. Instead, the emphasis should be placed on developing an EFC that bears not only superior utilitarian but also hedonic attributes. For targeting non-fashion leaders, priority should be given to offering an EFC that bears superior utilitarian attribute. In all, even though our findings reveal that both fashion leaders and non-leaders are relatively more willing to trade-off price for eco-friendliness, retailers should still be mindful about the price point. That is, price can be positioned lower down the priority list of product attributes, but it cannot be ignored or overlooked.

One of our study limitation is that the specific threshold price point is unclear. To reveal additional pragmatic implications for EFC retailers, future study should investigate the range of threshold price point (e.g., zone of tolerance [Teas & DeCarlo, 2004]) that consumers are willing to trade-off.

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