LOOK ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS
OPEN ACCESS

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL & SCIENCE EDUCATION
e-ISSN: 1306-3065
2019, Vol. 14, No. 4, 155-168

Millennial Consumers' Perceived Consumption Values and Purchase Intentions: Examining Effects of Made in USA and Traceability Labelling of Apparel

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how the country of manufacturing (i.e., Made in the USA) and the availability of the traceability feature will impact consumers' perceived consumption values and purchase intentions among Millennial consumers in the United States. This study utilized a 2 (country of manufacturing: Not Made in USA vs. Made in USA) x 2 (traceability: absent vs. present) between-subjects factorial design. Participants consisted of 307 college students who were Millennial-aged consumers with the mean age of 20.08 at the time of data collection. Findings regarding the effect of Made in USA on perceived consumption value and purchase intention showed that Made in USA jeans did not hold functional, monetary, emotional, or epistemic values, but did hold the social value. The effects of traceability were somewhat similar to those of 'Made in USA' in this study. Results showed that jeans with the traceability feature did not hold functional, monetary, emotional, or social values, but did hold the epistemic value. Discussion and implications were provided.

Keywords: apparel, Made in USA, millennial consumers, traceability

INTRODUCTION

In the recent years, there has been mounting evidence suggesting that apparel production is returning to America. According to the American Apparel and Footwear Association, domestic apparel manufacturing grew over 11 percent in 2011 (Kumar, 2013). Major manufacturers and retailers such as Walmart, New Balance, and Saks have made announcements that they are going to increase U.S.-based production for various product categories (Davidson, 2013; Heller, 2016; Johnson, 2017). According to a recent report by a consulting firm (Salmon, 2017), domestic apparel manufacturing will grow at an annual rate of four percent to six percent by 2017. Domestic productions have continued to grow for various reasons such as shorter lead time, higher-quality fabrics and apparel, and increasing level of control and operational efficiencies for American manufacturers and retailers.

Consumer demand for American made apparel has been witnessed, as well. Sales of Made in USA apparel have increased over the last few years (Davidson, 2013). According to the Cotton Incorporated 2014 Environment Survey, almost 70 percent of consumers indicated that reading labels indicating the garment as Made in the USA was influential to their apparel purchase decisions (Salfino, 2015). Similar findings were also reported in the 2013 Environment Survey that over 50 percent of consumers indicated that they would be willing to pay more for clothes or textiles with a Made in the USA label (Salfino, 2015).

Article History: Received 12 June 2019 ◆ Revised 19 July 2019 ◆ Accepted 19 July 2019

The cue of country-of-origin (COO) is usually considered an extrinsic product attribute and often helps consumers evaluate product quality (Veale & Quester, 2009). Past studies focusing on county-of-origin have provided insights as scholars in the 1980s and 1990s probed consumer responses to products made in and out of the United States. Recent research on country-of-origin has mostly focused on how different levels of COO (e.g., country of parts, country of manufacturing) influence consumer purchase preferences and price perceptions (Ha-Brookshire, 2012; Rothenberg & Matthews, 2017).

Further, in an attempt by marketers to differentiate products, a new product attribute called traceability has also become increasingly central to corporate sustainability. The concept of traceability has existed in the meat, dairy, seafood, and wood industries for over a decade and has attracted attention from researchers around the world (Appelhanz, Osburg, Toporowski, & Schumann, 2016; Bradu, Orquin, & Thøgersen, 2014; Charlebois & Haratifar, 2015; Chen & Huang, 2013). Currently, little work has been conducted that assesses American consumers' perceptions and the relative benefits of traceability in the context of apparel products. Thus, it is unknown how the traceability attribute or label affects consumers' perceptions about manufacturers, retailers, or the apparel products. It is also not clear whether inclusion of traceability related to sustainability throughout the product supply chain will influence consumers' intent to purchase such products.

Considered socially oriented, Millennials hold significant buying power and have been the focus of considerable research concerning their attitudes, interests, and opinions; however, there has been limited research focused on their apparel purchase behavior. In a qualitative study, Yan and Podmore (2014) found that American college-age students as part of the Millennial generation associated Made in USA products with both affective attitudes (e.g., enhancing social image) and cognitive attitudes (e.g., support for the US economy; sustainability; product quality and safety). Investigation of value perceptions and purchase intentions toward American made products was not the focus of their study, however.

Building upon Sheth, et al.'s (1991) theory of perceived consumption values, this study aimed to examine whether Millennial consumers' value perceptions about apparel products and purchase intentions would vary by provision of two specific product attributes: Made in the USA and traceability. This paper reviews existing literature related to country of origin (or country of manufacturing), traceability, perceived consumption values, and reports regarding Millennial consumers' beliefs and values related to apparel with a specific focus on the product category of denim jeans. Jeans were chosen as the product category for this research for two reasons. First, jeans are considered a significant item of apparel for Millennial consumers. Second, the denim market has been one of the few growth categories for Made in the USA apparel (Salfino, 2015).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Drawing on both the country-of-origin and traceability literature, as well as the theory of perceived consumption values, this study proposes that apparel products, in terms of country-of-origin and traceability features, will evoke different levels of consumer responses among Millennial aged consumers. Specifically, this study examines how two sustainability-related product features: country of manufacturing (i.e., Made in the USA) and traceability will impact consumers' perceived consumption values and purchase intentions.

Country of Manufacturing - Made in the USA

Although extensively researched, most of the country-of-origin findings date back to the 1980s and 1990s. Due to the global characteristics of the apparel and textile industry, the country-of-origin concept has been revised to include various levels such as country of design (COD), country of parts (COP), country of assembly (COA), and country of manufacturing (COM) (Essoussi & Merunka, 2007; Veale & Quester, 2009). Specifically, COM considers the country where the final product is manufactured (Essoussi & Merunka, 2007). Examining various product categories such as portable stereos, jeans, sneakers, and watches as stimuli, Iyer and Kalita (1997) suggested that COM influenced consumer assessments about product quality, value, and willingness to buy. Further, Essoussi and Merunka, (2007) found that overall COM image was the most influential regarding consumers' perceptions of product quality.

Numerous studies have been conducted to understand the effects of country-of-origin information on consumer's attitudes and product evaluations. Heimbach, Johansson, and MacLachlan (1989) suggested that consumers would use the country-of-origin cue as product information to help simplify information processing and facilitate the evaluation process. Further research has examined the relation between consumer stereotypes of countries and product evaluation and suggested that domestically made products tend to be

favored, over similar brands from foreign manufacturers, and products made in advanced countries are perceived of better quality than those made in developing countries (Seaton & Vogel, 1981). Specifically, the 'Made in…' label or country of manufacturing has been found to have a significant impact on consumers' quality perceptions and buying decisions (Zain & Yasin, 1997). In the current study, country of manufacturing would refer to the 'Made in the USA' label.

With the recent economic recession and political environment in the United States and the rising 'Made in USA' movement, it is critical to continue the research stream to learn whether or not the 'Made in…' label still has a significant effect on consumer behavior. When studying traceability and country of manufacturing, Goswami (2014) found that consumers perceived products manufactured in the U.S. to be of higher quality and had better purchase intentions toward them than products made in China. Using a conjoint analysis approach, Rothenberg and Matthews (2017) also suggested that Millennial consumers preferred Made in America T-shirts over imported ones not only because of the quality perception associated with American made products but also because of social pressure experienced from family and friends to support those products. Although the authors explained such preferences for American made products using the consumption value framework by Sheth et al (1991), no direct statistical testing was conducted to support that statement. It is still unknown whether or not and what value(s) consumers perceive from purchasing those products, although they have expressed that they are interested in buying USA made apparel products.

Traceability

Originated from the food industry, the concept of traceability emerged in the 1990s (Charlebois & Haratifar, 2015). There have been different definitions of traceability in circulation. Traceability is commonly defined as the capability to chronicle the direct properties of a product once the product has undergone specific value-adding processes associated with production, and involving associated environmental conditions (Regattieri, Gamberi, & Manzini, 2007). The idea of traceability is to track a product's flow throughout the production and supply chain process. As Popper (2007) described for food, "traceability offers the promise that the individual can know the full story -- the places, people, processes, and practices -- of items raised and routed all over the world to end up in one's own mouth."(p. 366). Egels-Zandén, Hulthén and Wulff (2015) proposed that traceability involves three dimensions, including the disclosure of 1) the names of the suppliers who produce the company's products, 2) information about sustainability conditions at those suppliers, and 3) the buying companies' purchasing practices. The increase in international trade and the numerous food related scandals such as mad cow disease and food recalls has led to further focus on traceability in nutritional products due to safety concerns (Olsen & Borit, 2013).

General findings from related studies on food traceability suggest that consumers are willing to pay more for food if they are provided with the ability to trace their food and are aware of how it relates to food quality and safety. Studies also concluded that traceability should be extended to other product categories (Cheng, et al., 2013; Dickinson & Bailey, 2005). Given the interest in knowing where our food is sourced and produced, this research intends to answer the question of whether the interest in food traceability would translate in a similar manner to consumers wanting to know more about where apparel is sourced and produced. Further, does the ability to trace apparel products help inform consumers' purchase decisions?

Although there have been studies examining traceability in different contexts, there are various reasons to expand research on apparel traceability. First, due to the global characteristics of the apparel industry, it could be a more complex issue than in other product industries in terms of identifying and tracking all of the suppliers involved in the apparel supply chain. For instance, cotton may grow in the United States; yarns may be spun in China; findings and zippers may come from India; and production could be carried out in Vietnam. A complete garment is often made through a process that includes multiple suppliers in various countries. Second, food-related traceability has immense implications for safety, sustainability, and human health. Unlike food products, apparel has not been considered a category which could cause serious harm to individual health. Whether consumers value the traceability information and base their decision-making on traceability for apparel purchases still needs further investigation.

Garment production transparency and traceability have been emerging issues in the textile and apparel industry (Choi, Cheung, Yang, & Yang, 2014; Goswami, 2014). A number of domestic manufacturers are implementing a marketing strategy providing consumers with the capacity to trace the raw materials and production locations. Such strategy has emerged with intentions to generate an interest among consumers in following the supply chain evidence and ultimately providing a competitive advantage over foreign producers.

Research in traceability related to the apparel industry has been limited. Early research by Guercini and Runfola (2009) concluded, from evidence of studying five fashion companies, that traceability is used by fashion organizations as a tool for inter-organizational control and as a tool for market power. Recently, Macchion, et al. (2015) also suggested that traceability can be a powerful marketing tool to protect brands against counterfeits, to control logistic efficiency, and improve the manufacturing process. Nonetheless, traceability has been examined mostly from a global supply chain perspective to eventually help companies obtain competitive advantages (Macchion, et al., 2015). Scarce literature has investigated the issue of traceability from consumers' perspectives. One exception was the study by Goswami (2014) who conducted an experiment to examine the effect of traceability on consumers' attitudes toward apparel advertising and purchase intention; however, no significant results were generated by this study. The positive impact of traceability seen in the food industry such as boost of consumer confidence and trust in products has not been witnessed in the apparel industry, warranting further investigation through various methodologies and samples (Goswami, 2014).

Millennial Consumers

The Millennials (or Generation Y) are people who were born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2018). It is reported that millennials comprised approximately 75 million young consumers in the U.S. alone (Smith, 2008) and that they spent $100 per week on disposable purchases such as food and entertainment (Apresley, 2010). Millennials are recognized as the most consumption oriented of all generations (Sullivan & Heitmeyer, 2008), and are considered a powerful consumer group in the marketplace (Farris, Chong, & Dunning, 2002).

There is evidence to show that Millennial consumers are sensitive to ethical issues (Smith, 2011) and often characterized by social and environmental consciousness (Bhadduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011). There are two conflicting theories, however, when looking at Millennial consumers' brand loyalty. On one hand, some researchers suggest that Millennials are not brand loyal and only seek products that match their personality and lifestyle (Caplan, 2005; Ritchie, 1995); on the other hand, studies have concluded that Millennial consumers tend to be loyal to brands that are in line with their social and community values (Beirne & Howe, 2008).

Although little research has been conducted to examine Millennial consumers' responses to specific socially responsible or ethical sourcing practices such as the use of traceability, industry research has suggested that Millennial consumers' purchase decisions may be influenced by a company's socially responsible business practices (e.g., Alloy Media & Marketing 2006; Cone Inc. 2006), including fair labor related-marketing strategies (e.g., Iwanow, McEachern, & Jeffrey, 2005) and advertising message appeal and message source (Yan, Ogle, & Hyllegard, 2010). Though Millennials are cognizant and have attempted to make ethical decisions, research has found that higher prices serve as a barrier to purchasing environmental friendly products, particularly apparel products (Hill & Lee, 2012). In summary, it is suggested that socially responsible practices may not be as important to many Millennial consumers as are other product attributes such as brand, price, or quality. Further understanding of Millennial consumers' value perceptions about domestic sourcing (i.e., Made in USA) and the traceability label may provide implications for apparel manufacturers and retailers in refining their sourcing and marketing strategies.

Perceived Consumption Values

The concept of consumer perceived value has drawn considerable attention from consumer behavior researchers (e.g., Babin, Darden, & Griffin 1994; Sweeney & Soutar 2001; Woodruff 1997; Zeithaml 1988). From Zeithaml's (1988) perspective, value is perceived from an overall evaluation of what is exchanged for what is received with value representing somewhat of a tradeoff. The unidimensional approach has since been broadened to a multidimensional approach to include the experiential side of perceived value, and thus value is considered to hold both cognitive and affective qualities. For this research, the framework of consumption values proposed by Sheth et al. (1991) is adopted because the framework of consumption value has its application for both goods and services and thus permits wide-ranging applications compared with other existing value frameworks. Additionally, unlike the unidimensional approach of perceived value, the multidimensional approach of consumption value framework has not been widely examined as an outcome of either COO or traceability.

Sheth et al. (1991) presented a multidimensional theoretical approach proposing that consumers buy products to obtain various benefits. For this study, four specific types of consumption value were examined. First, *functional value* refers to the utility acquired through utilitarian or physical performance. Sheth et al.

(1991) stated that functional values may be attained from product attributes, such as price, durability, and reliability. Second, *social value* can be derived from associating with specific social groups on a basis of demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural-ethnic groups. That is, products that allow consumers to share with each other or enhance their social image possess higher social value. Third, *emotional value*, the capacity of a product to arouse feelings or affective states toward the product. Emotional value is usually associated with hedonic value and experiential consumption. Fourth, *epistemic value* refers to the utility obtained from a product's "capacity to arouse curiosity, provide novelty, and/or satisfy a desire for knowledge" (Sheth et al., 1991p. 162). Usually, epistemic value is acquired from stimuli that are unfamiliar and somewhat ambiguous or complex.

Research has previously been conducted to examine the effects of COO on consumer perceived value and product evaluations (e.g., Kumar & Gautam, 2017; Ladipo & Agada, 2016; Yang, 2016). For instance, Ladipo and Agada (2016) concluded that COO (Made in Itay vs. Made in China) influenced Nigerian consumers' value perceptions of apparel products regarding quality (functional value), status (social value), and stylish features (emotional value). Examining both the effects of COO and traceability in the context of beef consumption, Loureiro and Umberger (2007) found that consumers perceived less value for beef with those features than with USDA certification. Focusing on dairy products with traceability, Charlebois and Haratifar (2015) later confirmed that traceability information was considered more valuable to consumers when those products were organic.

Literature has suggested that consumers may perceive Made in USA products and/or products with the traceability attribute to have functional values as Made in USA tends to be associated with quality and traceability may signal reliability and trust to consumers (Yan & Podmore, 2014). Research also suggests that American consumers, with strong social values, may experience enhanced social image, positive feelings, unfamiliar and yet novel spirits for products that are made in USA and/or with the traceability feature as these two product attributes are somewhat new in the context of apparel products (Rothenberg & Matthews, 2017).

Purchase Intentions

Consumers' value perceptions have been found to influence purchase intentions (Zeithaml, 1988). For instance, Sweeny and Soutar (2001) found that when a consumer perceives a product to have high value, he or she would likely be more willing to buy the product (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). In a similar vein, Williams and Soutar (2009) found a direct, positive relationship between consumption values and customer purchase intentions. Utilizing the Sheth et al. framework, Rahnama (2017) further confirmed that consumption values such as functional value and epistemic value predicted Iranian women's purchase intentions toward organic yogurt.

Prior research has shown that consumers were willing to pay more for country-of-origin labeling of meat (Loureiro & Umberger, 2003), and that consumers were also willing to pay more for fiber origin, type and production method in apparel products (Hustvedt & Bernard, 2008). Goswami (2014) concluded that American consumers preferred the American made products to Chinese made products, hence confirming the country-of-origin (or country of manufacturing) effect. Research has also suggested that Millennial consumers have been influenced by country-of-origin information on products (Zdravkovic, 2013). Drawn from above literature, four hypotheses are developed below:

H1: *There will be higher levels of a) perceived consumption values and b) purchase intentions among Millennial consumers toward apparel products Made in USA than for those NOT Made in USA.*

H2: *There will be higher levels of a) perceived consumption values and b) purchase intentions among Millennial consumers toward apparel products with traceability features than for those without traceability features.*

H3: *There is an interaction between Made in USA and traceability features that will influence a) perceived consumption values and b) purchase intentions among Millennial consumers.*

H4: *Perceived consumption values will influence purchase intentions among Millennial consumers.*

METHOD

Stimulus Development

This study utilized a 2 (country of manufacturing: Not Made in USA vs. Made in USA) x 2 (traceability: absent vs. present) between-subjects factorial design. The experiment was developed to examine the effects of Made in USA and traceability product attributes on Millennial consumers' perceived consumption values and their purchase intentions toward apparel, specifically jeans in this study. In the experiment, participants were asked to imagine a scenario describing a hypothetical shopping situation in which they were to shop for a pair of jeans. The specific product information provided in the scenario was varied among the participants. To manipulate the Made in USA attribute, participants were told that the product they would be considering was either Not Made in USA or Made in USA. The manipulation of the traceability feature involved whether traceability related information was either mentioned in the scenario or not (present vs. absent). Accordingly, four scenarios were developed. Scenario #1 included the descriptions about jeans that were NOT made in USA without the traceability feature; scenario #2 included the descriptions about jeans that were NOT made in USA with the traceability feature; scenario #3 included the descriptions about jeans that were made in USA without the traceability feature; and scenario #4 included the descriptions about jeans that were made in USA with the traceability feature. An example scenario (i.e., scenario #4) with full descriptions was listed here.

> *Imagine you are shopping for a new pair of jeans. You find one with an appealing style, which fits you well, and has a good price, so you consider purchasing it. The jeans are made of 90% cotton and 10% spandex, can be machine washed and dried, and are made in the USA. A traceability feature also comes with the jeans, which allows you to enter this pair's unique code on the retailer's website to show you the geographic origin of the raw materials and where the product was manufactured.*

Procedure

The participants were selected from a large western university in the U.S. Students who were enrolled in business and social sciences related courses were invited via email to complete an online survey in exchange for two to five extra credit points in various courses they enrolled in with their instructors' approval. A follow-up email was sent to students a week after the initial invitation as a reminder to participate in the study.

Instrument Development

To obtain background information regarding the level of importance placed on apparel product attributes, the survey started with general questions asking the participants' importance ratings on 21 apparel product attributes using a 7-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 = "Not Very Important" to 7 = "Very Important." Next, the participants were asked to view each of the four scenarios and then answer a list of questions regarding perceived consumption values and their purchase intentions based on the scenario. Perceived consumption values, modified from Sweeney and Soutar (2001) and Williams and Soutar (2009) were measured with 21 items on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1= "Strongly Disagree" to 7 = "Strongly Agree." (e.g., "I consider the product to help me to feel accepted"; "I consider the product to be one that I would be proud to wear"). Purchase intention was measured with three items also on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1= "Strongly Disagree" to 7 = "Strongly Agree." (e.g., "I intend to buy the product"). The last section of the online survey included demographic questions and apparel purchasing behavior related items.

RESULTS

Participants consisted of 307 college students who were Millennial-aged consumers with the mean age of 20.08 at the time of data collection. Approximately 91.5 percent of the participants were female and 77 percent of them were Caucasian. Majors of the participants included apparel and merchandising, art, communication, family and consumer sciences, psychology, and social work. On average, the participants reported a monthly expenditure of $84.95 on apparel products. Among the 21 apparel product attributes, the top five attributes rated by the participants were fit (M = 6.46), comfort (M = 6.00), price (M = 5.84), durability (M = 5.75), and fashionable style (M = 5.56). The least important attributes rated by the participants included country of origin (M = 2.68), raw materials (M = 2.71), where manufacturing takes place (M = 2.98), organic cotton (M = 3.20), and Made in USA (M = 3.29).

Table 1. Factor Analyses

Factors	Scale items	Standardized factor loading	Cronbach alpha
Functional value	I consider the product to be consistent in quality.	0.90	0.91
	I consider the product to be well made.	0.92	
	I consider the product to have an acceptable standard of quality.	0.91	
	I consider the product to not last a long time.[a]	0.75	
	I consider the product to perform consistently.	0.81	
Monetary value	I consider the product to be reasonably priced.	0.85	0.77
	I consider the product to offer value for the money.	0.86	
	I consider the product to be economical.	0.78	
Emotional value	I consider the product to be one I would enjoy.	0.89	0.88
	I consider the product to be one that I would be proud to wear.	0.93	
	I consider the product to give me pleasure.	0.88	
Social value	I consider the product to help me to feel accepted.	0.94	0.95
	I consider the product to improve the way I am perceived.	0.94	
	I consider the product to help me make a good impression on other people.	0.89	
	I consider the product to be give me social approval.	0.93	
Epistemic value	I consider the product to offers me a unique experience.	0.86	0.89
	I consider the product to be interesting because it is outside of the norm.	0.91	
	I consider the product to be a change of pace from regular/average apparel products.	0.86	
	I consider the product to allow me to be a part of establishing a new trend.	0.83	
Purchase intention	I would be interested in purchasing the product.	0.94	0.93
	I intend to buy the product.	0.96	
	I would be willing to recommend the product to my family/friends.	0.92	

Note: [a] revere coded item

Preliminary Analyses

Manipulation checks were conducted to ensure that participants responded to survey questions while comprehending the scenario details. Results showed that the manipulation of the "Made in USA" attribute was successful as the participants rated significantly different the two items, "I consider the product to help with the USA economy." ($M_{\text{not Made in USA}} = 3.75$ vs. $M_{\text{Made in USA}} = 4.54$, $t = -4.34$, $p < 0.001$) and "I consider the product to be made by USA workers." ($M_{\text{not Made in USA}} = 3.14$ vs. $M_{\text{Made in USA}} = 4.34$, $t = -6.11$, $p < 0.001$). The manipulation of the traceability was also confirmed with two questions, "I expect the product to have traceability-related information" ($M_{\text{no traceability}} = 3.51$ vs. $M_{\text{traceability}} = 4.61$, $t = -5.57$, $p < 0.001$) and "I expect the product to include a traceability feature (i.e., knowing the origin of the manufactures and raw materials" ($M_{\text{no traceability}} = 3.39$ vs. $M_{\text{traceability}} = 4.57$, $t = -5.97$, $p < 0.001$).

A two-step factor analysis was conducted for the multi-item measures using IMB SPSS version 25. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was first conducted to identify the number of constructs and the underlying factor structure of a set of variables, which cannot be measured directly (Child, 1990). Next, a partial confirmatory factor analysis (PCFA) was performed as the number of factors for the consumption value measure was expected, but the specific pattern of factor loadings was not (Bollen, 1989). As a result of the EFA, five factors emerged from the 21 items. Partial confirmatory factory analysis (Gignac, 2009) further revealed that the five-factor structure reached acceptable fit (NFI = 0.92; CFI = 0.95; FLI = 0.91; RMSEA = 0.07.) Specifically, results (see **Table 1**) showed that the functional dimension consisted of five items ($\alpha = 0.91$); the monetary dimension consisted of three items ($\alpha = 0.77$); the emotional dimension had three items ($\alpha = 0.88$); the social dimension consisted of four items ($\alpha = 0.95$); and the epistemic dimension included four items ($\alpha = 0.89$). Purchase intentions included three items ($\alpha = 0.93$). Composite scores for each of the variables were then calculated for further analyses.

Hypothesis Testing

To test H1a and H2a, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with the two manipulated variables of Made in USA (H1a) and traceability (H2a) attributes as independent variables and five dimensions of consumption values as dependent variables (see **Table 2**). Results showed that both main effects of country of manufacturing and traceability were significant (Wilks' Lambda = 0.93, $F = 4.20$, $p < 0.01$;

Table 2. Effects of Made in USA and Traceability on Five Consumption Values

Variables	Means for Functional Value	Means for Monetary Value	Means for Emotional Value	Means for Social Value	Means for Epistemic Value
Made in USA					
No	5.70	5.24	5.57	4.09	3.91
Yes	5.65	5.09	5.66	4.50	3.63
F-value	0.18	1.36	0.45	5.05*	2.92
Traceability					
Absent	5.69	5.14	5.70	4.31	3.57
Present	5.66	5.19	5.53	4.28	3.97
F-value	0.05	0.16	1.50	0.02	6.26*
Made in USA x Traceability					
No x Absent	5.68	5.15	5.54	4.03	3.55
No x Present	5.72	5.33	5.60	4.15	4.26
Yes x Absent	5.70	5.13	5.85	4.59	3.59
Yes x Present	5.60	5.05	5.47	4.42	3.68
F-value	0.38	0.99	2.68	0.62	3.72

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table 3. Effects of Made in USA and Traceability on Consumers' Purchase Intentions

Variables	Means for Purchase Intention
Made in USA	
No	5.02
Yes	5.09
F-value	0.20
Traceability	
Absent	5.15
Present	4.95
F-value	1.72
Made in USA x Traceability	
No x Absent	5.11
No x Present	4.92
Yes x Absent	5.19
Yes x Present	4.98
F-value	0.00

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Wilks' Lambda = 0.96, F = 2.60, p < 0.05, respectively). Univariate analyses further indicated that the Made in USA product attribute only influenced participants' perceptions of social value (F = 5.05, p < 0.05). Specifically, participants who viewed the Made in USA shopping scenario reported higher perceived social value (M = 4.50) than those who viewed the Not Made in USA shopping scenario (M = 4.09). Univariate analyses also showed that the traceability feature influenced participants' perceptions of epistemic value (F = 6.26, p < 0.05). Specifically, participants who viewed the shopping scenario with the traceability feature included reported higher perceived epistemic value (M = 3.97) than those who viewed the scenario without the traceability feature (M = 3.57). Thus, H1a and H2a were partially supported.

Regarding their future purchase intentions toward the jeans (H1b and H2b), ANOVA was conducted with the two manipulated variables of Made in USA (H1b) and traceability (H2b) attributes as independent variables and purchase intention as the dependent variable (see **Table 3**). No main effect of either country of manufacturing or traceability was found (F = 0.62, p > 0.05). There was no significant difference for the Made in USA (H1b) product attribute between the two groups of participants in relation to their purchase intentions ($M_{\text{Not Made in USA}}$ = 5.02 vs. $M_{\text{Made in USA}}$ = 5.09, F = 0.20, p > 0.05). Similarly, there was no difference for the traceability (H2b) product attribute between the two groups of participants in relation to purchase intentions toward the jeans ($M_{\text{no traceability}}$ = 5.15 vs. $M_{\text{traceability}}$ = 4.95, F = 1.72, p > 0.05). Thus, H1b and H2b were not supported.

To test H3a and H3b, interaction effects of the Made in USA and traceability attributes were further examined (see **Table 2** and **Table 3**). Results did not reveal interaction effect of Made in USA and traceability on any of the consumption values. Univariate analyses did reveal that participants reported the highest mean score in perceived emotional value for the shopping scenario in which jeans were made in USA without the traceability (M = 5.85) and the lowest mean score in perceived epistemic value for the shopping scenario in

which jeans were not Made in USA without the traceability feature (M = 3.55). Additionally, no interaction result was found between Made in USA and traceability on purchase intention ($F = 0.00$, $p > 0.05$). Descriptives based on the univariate analyses revealed that purchase intentions toward the jeans were the highest among those who viewed the "Made in USA without traceability" scenario (M = 5.19) and the lowest for those who viewed the "Not Made in USA with traceability" scenario (M = 4.92). Thus, H3 was not supported.

Regarding H4, multiple regression was conducted to investigate whether the five types of consumption values held by the participants would impact their purchase intentions toward the jeans products included in the four shopping scenarios. Normality test on skewness and kurtosis and multicollinearity statistics revealed that data were normally distributed with no multicollinearity as the variance inflation factor (VIF) for relevant regression models ranged between 1.56 and 1.70 and the tolerance values ranged between 0.58 and 0.64 (Hair, Tatham, Anderson, and Black, 1995). Regression results showed that the overall regression model was significant ($R^2 = 0.57$, $F = 73.43$, $p < 0.001$). Specifically, only functional value ($\beta = 0.27$, $t = 4.29$, $p < 0.001$) and emotional value ($\beta = 0.45$, $t = 7.72$, $p < 0.001$) influenced participants' purchase intentions toward those jeans. Monetary value ($\beta = 0.06$, $t = 1.02$, $p > 0.05$), social value ($\beta = 0.06$, $t = 1.20$, $p > 0.05$), and epistemic value ($\beta = 0.07$, $t = 1.39$, $p > 0.05$) did not predict participants' purchase intentions. Thus, H4 was partially supported.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was designed to understand Millennial consumers' perceptions of consumption values and purchase intentions toward apparel products promoted with specific sustainability-related features (i.e., Made in USA and traceability). Beyond the unexpected and limited significant findings from the data, this study holds merit in providing insights into the nature of the complex consumer decision making in the areas of COO and traceability with a specific focus on apparel products. Findings also hold importance for shaping manufacturers' and retailers' marketing strategies.

In exploring the Millennial consumers' general perceptions of apparel product attributes, the Made in the USA attribute was not rated as important as other product attributes. Similarly, product attributes regarding where the product is made and what the product is made of were of least concern among participants in the Millennial generation. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003; Yan & Podmore, 2014), traditional product attributes such as price, fit, style, and comfort were still more important to the Millennial participants in this study. Numerous research has suggested that Millennial consumers are more likely than non-Millennials to buy products that support fair trade principles or a particular cause (Barton, Fromm, & Egan, 2012); however, the finding of this study seems to suggest that Millennial consumers may rely on advertising campaigns to help them make decisions as to which products/brands with social causes to support without delving into specific product attributes such as where the products are made, and what they are made of, which are often associated with fair trade principles.

Findings regarding the effect of Made in USA on perceived consumption value and purchase intention showed that Made in USA jeans did not hold functional, monetary, emotional, or epistemic values, but did hold the social value. In this study, social value was measured with four items pertaining to feeling accepted, improving perceptions by others, making good impressions, and generating social approval. That is, participants in the Millennial generation considered that the Made in USA attribute would help enhance their social image, which was consistent with the research suggesting that Made in USA apparel reflects consumers' affective attitudes regarding social image (Rothenberg & Matthews, 2017; Yan & Podmore, 2014). The effects of Made in USA on other types of consumption values were not significant perhaps because Made in USA may have implied higher prices as it has been found to be associated with product quality and sustainability in prior studies (e.g., Yan & Podmore, 2014).

The effects of traceability were somewhat similar to those of 'Made in USA' in this study. Results showed that jeans with the traceability feature did not hold functional, monetary, emotional, or social values, but did hold the epistemic value. Epistemic value was measured with items related to having novel and unique experience when consuming the product. Thus, findings suggested that participants in the Millennial generation considered the traceability product attribute to possess novelty and could possibly satisfy their desire for knowledge. Often paired with the concept of transparency, the traceability system may be a key element regarding transparency and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Slob, 2008) and may serve as an educational message to consumers for clarifying where the products are made, how they are made, and of what they are made.

Unexpectedly, purchase intentions toward the jeans demonstrated in the shopping scenarios were not different regardless of the presence of Made in USA and traceability attributes. Smith (2014) reported that less than half of American consumers ages 18 to 34 said they would pay more for Made in USA products, and that buying American made products would be a financial burden to them if the price was not right. In a similar vein, although research has suggested that inclusion of traceability in the global food system may be associated with consumers' perceived food quality, food safety, and food credence related to social responsibility (Poghosyan, Gonzalez-Diaz, & Bolotova, 2004), findings of this study with a focus on apparel products showed no relationships between provision of the traceability attribute and consumers' purchase intentions. The findings were, however, consistent with a previous study examining the effects of traceability on consumers' attitude, purchase intention toward apparel products (Goswami, 2014). Based on an online survey data collected from 552 consumers with diverse backgrounds, Goswami reported that consumers did not show more positive attitudes and purchase intentions toward products with traceability features. Considering the increasing interests in documenting traceability in the apparel and textiles industry, data from this study seemed to suggest that apparel firms might not benefit greatly from presenting traceability-related information as part of the marketing strategy. Because of its newness, traceability has possibly not captured many Millennial consumers' attentions, warranting future research.

To our surprise, this study did not reveal any interaction effect between Made in USA and traceability product attributes on Millennial consumers' perceived consumption value and purchase intentions; however, higher value perceptions and purchase intentions were observed when the jeans product was made in the USA without the traceability feature. It is likely that when products are Made in the USA, consumers may not feel the need to trace the products in the supply chain due to their trust in their home country as the place of manufacturing. Further, research has suggested that product attributes such as traceability and the "Made in…" label may be of value to consumers when other more important attributes are well established (e.g., organic certification or price) (Loureiro & Umberger, 2007; Rothenberg & Matthews, 2017).

Examinations of the relationship between perceived consumption value and purchase intention revealed that, for this sample Millennial population, only perceived functional and emotional values impacted participants' intent to purchase the jeans product; monetary, social, and epistemic value had no significant impact. These findings indicate that when participants perceived the product (e.g., jeans) to convey utilitarian benefits, and when they enjoyed wearing the product, they were more likely to purchase the item. Similar to previous research (Willams & Soutar, 2009), this study confirmed that the influence of consumers' value perceptions in their purchase intentions could vary across product categories. This study also suggests the important role of functional value in predicting consumers' purchase intentions toward jeans with Made in the USA and traceability attributes, which confirmed the findings by Rahnama (2017).

The findings of this study provide theoretical and practical implications that will help academicians and apparel companies understand the varying levels of benefits involved in seeking apparel production in the United States and for including traceability features as a marketing tool for Millennials. First, this study adds to the literature in understanding how consumers associate the Made in the USA and traceability features with different types of consumption values. Findings suggest that inclusion of both Made in the USA and traceability do help influence consumers' perceived consumption values of the product (social value and epistemic value, respectively), although further research is warranted in understanding how these two values may affect consumers' purchase intentions. Second, the nonsignificant findings regarding the interaction between the Made in the USA and traceability attributes provide implications and future research opportunities. Although this study suggests that either of the attributes provides some value to consumers, it might be more meaningful and valuable to consumers when other more important attributes (e.g., price) are well established before the addition of either Made in the USA or traceability. Further investigations should be conducted to examine whether and how either COO or traceability might moderate the relationship between existing important attributes and purchase intentions in consumer decision making.

Managerially, this study provides apparel companies further insights into the benefits of producing products in the United Sates (social value) and of adding the traceability feature for consumers to keep track of the materials and the supply chain process (epistemic value). Even though social value and epistemic value may not directly influence consumer's purchase intentions, the inclusions of both Made in USA and traceability attributes can still be beneficial to companies that emphasize the societal impacts of corporate social responsibility standards to earn consumer trust and to enable consumers to choose good products and good companies.

There are several limitations of the study that should be mentioned. First, the proportionately large participation of female participants is a noted limitation of this study. A more balanced gender and a wider array of Millennials (i.e. non college students, varied ethnicity, and geographic locations) are suggested for future research. Second, although the manipulation checks were successful, the variable Made in the USA (vs. Not Made in the USA) may not have fully captured the vast reality of sourcing in the apparel industry. Prior research has suggested that consumers tend to have more positive evaluations about products made in more developed countries (e.g., Germany) than those made in developing or under-developed countries (e.g., Bangladesh or India) (Zhang, 2013). It would be beneficial in future research to separate the non-USA countries into developed and developing countries and examine how consumers' perceived consumption values of products made from those countries would vary.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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