Prestige Seeking Consumer Behavior and Evaluative Criteria of Premium Brand Jeans

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Leslie Davis Burns

Although designer brand denim apparel has been popular since the early

1980's, the term "premium denim" is a relatively new concept to the apparel industry.

This study investigated evaluative criteria used by female consumers when purchasing

premium denim jeans. Previous studies have examined evaluative criteria and its

importance in purchasing consumer items (Engel, Blackwell, &Miniard, 1993). This

study expanded the past research of clothing evaluative criteria by linking it to

prestige-seeking consumer behavior literature (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999).

Questionnaires which used a multi-measurement approach were used for data

collection. The multiple techniques included: likelihood Likert scale ratings,

importance rankings, conjoint-couplet trade-off scenarios, and open-ended questions.

The data were collected at Oregon State University in the Winter Term of 2008. A

purposive convenience sample of 90 students from the Department of Design and

Human Environment courses were surveyed. Frequency, percentage, cross-tabulation, and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data.

Respondents were asked to assess nine evaluative criteria including those prestige-seeking behaviors by rating the likelihood of usage and ranking the top three criteria used in a previous purchase. The nine criteria were: fit, price, brand name, style, fabric, brand awareness, uniqueness, friend/peer opinion, and quality. They also decided between shopping scenarios that presented trade-offs between price and another criterion. Lastly, participants provided written descriptions of their last premium denim purchase.

Results indicated that the criterion with the highest likelihood of usage in a premium denim purchase was fit, followed by quality and style. The rankings also revealed fit to be the most important characteristic when evaluating premium jeans. The trade-off shopping scenarios demonstrated that fit was largely preferred in a trade-off with price and that a lower price was preferred over the quality of a pair of premium jeans. Finally, the open-ended questions revealed that although most premium denim consumers chose fit to be their most important criterion, they actually were more likely to use secondary characteristics of the term fit in order to explain what factors actually influenced their previous purchase. The four objectives were fully explained by the collected data to provide better insight and knowledge into what is important to premium denim consumers.

The multi-measurement approach was helpful in accurately analyzing the evaluative criteria. It revealed that when an actual shopping simulation, or purchase

situation is presented, it can cause a difference in opinion when compared to the likelihood of a future purchase.

Premium denim manufacturers, retailers and buyers can draw implications from the study's results to develop future premium jeans in accordance with consumer's preferences. Furthermore, there is opportunity to further research the topic of premium denim as well as the opportunity to use this multi-measurement approach in other disciplines.

Prestige Seeking Consumer Behavior and Evaluative Criteria of Premium Brand Jeans

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Dean of the Graduate School

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Meagon M. Bell, Author

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Chapter I. Introduction

The staying power of high-end denim has been one of the greatest fashion trends in recent history. Although designer brand denim apparel has been popular since the early 1980's, the term "Premium Denim" is a relatively new concept to the apparel industry. In the past 10 years, it has taken the jean business by storm. The difference between the denim craze of today and the "Nothing comes between me and my Calvin's era of the early 80's is the distinction between marketing and advertising. The Sergio Valente / Calvin Klein years were driven by a signature look and vigorous ad campaigns, while today's brands are driven by differentiated product, word of mouth and other forms of promotion. For the consumer, this has helped foster an attitude of connoisseurship (Chensvold, 2006, p.6)." The industry-wide opinion is that premium jean lines are not going away; they have become and will evolve to be a dominating factor in the apparel industry. According to Women's Wear Daily, "sales of women's jeans priced at $150 or more soared 57 percent" in 2007. Indeed, Allen B. Schwartz, owner of a luxury denim line along with many other labels, says "Because it is still hard to find a great pair of jeans…. Women are willing to spend the money on a new pair of jeans regardless of how many they already have in their closets (Denim does it, 2007, p.2)." "Premium denim continues to command consumer dollars," and are here to stay in the fashion world (Tucker, 2008, p.20).

In this industry fit, price, and brand are among characteristics that create loyalties to the consumers of premium jeans. But what makes these consumers spend upwards of $300 to find the perfect new pair? Is it the quality of the jeans or their fit, or the uniqueness of style? According to Emily Lauriden, head designer of Odyn, a premium denim collection, says, "When it comes to denim, you get what you pay for" (Denim does it, 2007, p.2). With the technologies of fabric making continually evolving over the years, the ability for manufacturers to make specialized denim is what also attributes high prices. These fabrics are revolutionary and have made premium jeans just that, premium. More than 350 jean companies are vying to be the "next big thing," yet the industry is still trying to pinpoint what actually makes consumers succumb to those high price-points. This study comes at a time where this saturated market can benefit in knowing what these consumers are looking for in their premium denim and what factors they consider to be the most important when purchasing premium denim.

A great deal is known about the evaluative criteria consumers use when purchasing apparel. Previous studies by Martin (1971) and Stemm (1980) included the evaluative criteria of price, brand name, and fit. This study expanded the previous research of those common clothing evaluative criteria by linking it to prestige-seeking consumer behavior literature. It combines the standard evaluative criteria for clothing such as price, fit, fabric, and style with the five values associated with prestige seeking consumer behavior (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). These values include perceived conspicuous value, perceived unique value, perceived social value, perceived hedonic

value, and perceived quality value. As such, this study provides insight and knowledge into a world of fashion that is evolving right before our very eyes and gives information that will be important to the denim industry makers and buyers.

Research Question

What criteria do female purchasers of premium denim jeans use when evaluating premium denim jeans for purchase?

Statement of Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to investigate female shopper's evaluative criteria when purchasing a pair of premium denim jeans.

Objectives of this study include:

1. To describe how likely a consumer is to use available evaluative criteria when making a purchase decision for premium jeans.

2. To describe the evaluative criteria and prestige-seeking values consumers use when making a purchase decision for premium jeans.

3. To compare the use of and decision making between the classic evaluative criteria and the prestige-seeking consumer behavior factors when purchasing premium denim.

4. To compare multi-measurement methods for measuring consumer's use of evaluative criteria and prestige-seeking values when purchasing premium denim.

<u>Definition of Terms</u>

Consumer decision making process: The consumer decision making process is divided

into five stages: problem recognition, search, alternative evaluation, purchase,

and outcomes (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1993).

Evaluative criteria: "The standards and specifications used by consumers to compare

different products and brands" (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1993, p.51).

Premium: "of exceptional quality or amount; also: higher-priced" (Webster's

Dictionary, March 18, 2007, Internet Website).

Premium denim/jeans: High-priced denim jeans, priced over $100.00.

Prestige-seeking values/factors: Values dependent upon socioeconomic structure

(Vigneron & Johnson, 1999).

Chapter II. Review of Literature

In order to provide background regarding the chosen method and criteria, this section of past literature provides an outline of fashion theories, consumer behavior, and evaluative criteria. Each section gives historical references to articles, books, and publications that have given knowledge and insight into the topics related and applied to premium denim. The first section provides a broad overview of economic theories that have been applied to fashion. Next, the prestige-seeking consumer behavior factors that are analyzed in this study are introduced followed by a discussion of consumer decision making processes. The review of literature then includes an outline of research on evaluative criteria, and lastly, an overview of the past and present denim industry in the United States is provided.

Economic Theories of Fashion

Early research on the economics of prestige-seeking consumer behavior in consumer's premium purchasing behavior was done by Thorstein Veblem (1899). His focus was on luxury brands and the concepts of conspicuous consumption. Veblem defined conspicuous consumption as a frivolous use of money by individuals to show a higher status than others.

In the early 1960's Dwight Robinson (1961) expanded the historical work of Veblem and made a large contribution to how we look at the economics of fashion. Robinson's "Three Economic Foundations of Fashion" gives reference to fashion as an economic commodity. These foundations are ways in which the consumers are

shown to demonstrate their focus and involvement in the fashion industry and its economic demand results. The first foundation, developed by Robinson, is the *Pursuit of Rarity*, this is when highly distinguished goods are desired and are in small availability. In this case the ownership of these goods is significant. The second foundation is the *Factor of Demonstrability* in which consumers are affecting the demand by wanting to demonstrate possession of a fashion good. This is in order to show distinctive ownership of the item, often it is convenient to display. Lastly Robinson addressed *Fashion as Demonstrated Command over Current Factors of Production*. This is important in order to show current ownership and involvement in fashion. Consumers are here able to show that they are "with the times" and involved in the latest trends. Robinson takes into account that with constant changes in the fashion industry, the demonstrations of these current factors show status. It takes time and money in order to participate in this economic foundation.

At the end of the 1970's, George Sproles (1979) gave a clear explanation about fashion and consumer demand theories by providing a series of demand curves that describe the fashion consumer. The first of these fashion demand effects is the *Social Conformity* effect, which Sproles describes to be when consumers purchase a product because others are purchasing it. He explained that it has also been termed the Bandwagon effect. The second fashion demand curve is the *Social Rejection* effect. This is when consumers refuse to purchase because others have already purchased. They have no interest in joining the bandwagon and will not follow the trend. This is also referred to as the "snob effect." In this case the consumer demand becomes more

inelastic. The third and final demand curve that Sproles addressed in his research is the *Prestige-Exclusivity* effect. This is when consumers purchase a fashion item because the product bears a high price and visibly demonstrates the consumer's ability to pay. It is coveted for the sole purpose that it is expensive and can show the wealth of the consumer (Sproles, 1979).

The premium denim industry like almost any other retail facet is directly related and affected by consumer demand. In high-priced clothing, which is a commonly correlated idea with premium denim, there is a constant relation to high priced goods and the amount of prestige they crave. The idea is directly related to Sproles' idea of Prestige-Exclusivity. This is when consumers purchase goods because the product bears a high price and visibly demonstrates the consumer's ability to pay. The current fascination and high demand of these prestigious pants have hit the fashion world head on and the competition is at its peak. Premium jeans are admired because of their price and can exhibit the wealth of the purchasing consumer along with the other characteristics that are associated with their high price including fabric, fit, brand name, etc. The denim industry is a monopolistic competition with brands such as True Religion, Seven for all Mankind, Joe's Jeans, Rock & Republic, and Citizens of Humanity all vying for the top status among brands that all offer similar products to the retail world. When looking at a demand curve for the fashion industry, when the tastes of consumers are taken into account and as price goes up, so does the demand and quantity being sold.

In addition, premium products are considered one that is highly involved in decision making. Premium, meaning exceptional and quality, is most likely infrequently purchased. This means that commonly the consumer will be highly-involved when making this purchase. Rossiter, Percy, and Donovan (1991) developed an involvement model which helped distinguish premium and prestigious products to normal products; they concluded that the division amid high and low involvement was dichotomous rather than continuous. They also introduced "informational-transformational" which states that premium products are high-involvement and that transformational brand choices like social approval, sensory gratification and stimulation are the key reasons in purchasing a premium product. It is also important to expect that individuals perceive objects differently therefore the perceived level and involvement will be different to all consumers.

Prestige-Seeking Consumer Behavior

Premium is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as an adjective meaning of exceptional quality or amount; also: higher-priced. Premium items whether those may be clothing or any other form of consumer product are frequently related to prestige and quality. The difference between premium brands and non-premium brands heavily relies on key qualities that relate to the consumer and the product. Vigneron and Johnson (1999) did extensive work on prestige-seeking consumer behavior; they related the distinction between premium and non-premium

brands to five perceived values, dependent upon socioeconomic structure. Their developed framework consisted of:

"1. The consumption of prestige brands is viewed as a signal of status and wealth, and whose price, expensive by normal standards, enhances the value of such a signal (perceived conspicuous value).

2. If virtually everyone owns a particular brand it is by definition not prestigious (perceived unique value).

3. The role-playing aspects and the social value of prestige brands can be instrumental in the decision to buy (perceived social value).

4. For a brand which satisfies an emotional desire such as a prestige brand, a product's subjective intangible benefits such as aesthetic appeal is clearly determining the brand selection (perceived hedonic value).

5. Prestige is derived partly from the technical superiority and the extreme care that takes place during the production process. For instance, a Rolex Sea-dweller works 1,220 meters underwater and is hand-crafted (perceived quality value)."

In the selection of denim, price seems to be continuously important and helps the consumer establish whether or not the jeans are considered "premium." If a consumer's buying strategy consists of bargain shopping, this is a task that may be more costly in the long run, other factors such as time and resources may not make this strategy of bargain shopping worthwhile in the end. Research has shown that the strategy selected to make a judgment or choice is a function of an exchange between the cost associated with the use of that strategy and the benefit that strategy provided.

Cost and benefits of the strategies vary among tasks; a strategy that is easy to use and provides a "correct" solution to one task may be difficult to use under different circumstances (Bettman, Johnson, & Payne, 1990). This is important because it provides framework explaining why different strategies of assessing denim may result in different decision outcomes. The selection of a "premium" factor may hinder the consumer's actual buying experience. The factors that are chosen may actually make the expensive denim more costly.

The relationship between price and quality is an association that can be related back to Sproles demand theories. Consider that the labeling of denim is proven to attract customers; if jeans are being labeled as premium this is sure to have an effect on the perceived price and quality. With regards to price and quality being the hypothesized criteria for premium jeans, Kardes, Cronley, et al. (2004) suggested that consumers typically believe that they price of a product is predicative of its quality. Jeans such as Paige Premium Jeans, have a name that conveys the fact that they are "premium." But who is to say that many jean manufacturers could not attach the word "premium" to the end of their denim name. With the name "premium" attached to jean names, the message being sent to the consumer is a costly one. Monroe and Chapman (1987) developed a model of the relationships among quality, value, and price using the concept of perceived value. According to the model, positive relationships exist between price and perceived quality and between price and perceived sacrifice. In turn, perceived quality is positively related to perceived value and perceived sacrifice is negatively related to perceived value. The greater the perception of value, the greater

the likelihood the consumer will be interested in purchasing the product (Creyer &

Ross, 1997). This is the goal of premium denim companies; they want their

consumers to have a high perception of value in turn creating more sales. This is how

the association of price and quality benefit these denim labels.

Consumer Decision Making Process

Consumer behavior reflects "consumers' decisions with respect to the

acquisitions, consumption, and dispositions of good, services, time, and ideas by

decision-making units" (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2003, p.3). A model of the decision

making process was developed by Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell in 1968 and revised

periodically since then. It was named the EKB model. The EKB model a

comprehensive model that shows the components of consumer decision making and

the relationships and interactions among them. The five distinct parts of consumer

decision making presented are: input, information processing, a decision process,

decision process variables, and external influences. (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard,

1993) The original model has had revisions to include the dynamics of consumer

behavior with four dimensions: information input, information processing, decision

process, and variables influencing decision process (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard,

1993). There are five stages of the decision process which include 1) needs

recognition, 2) information search, 3) alternative evaluation, 4) purchase, and 5)

purchase outcome (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: The EKB Model
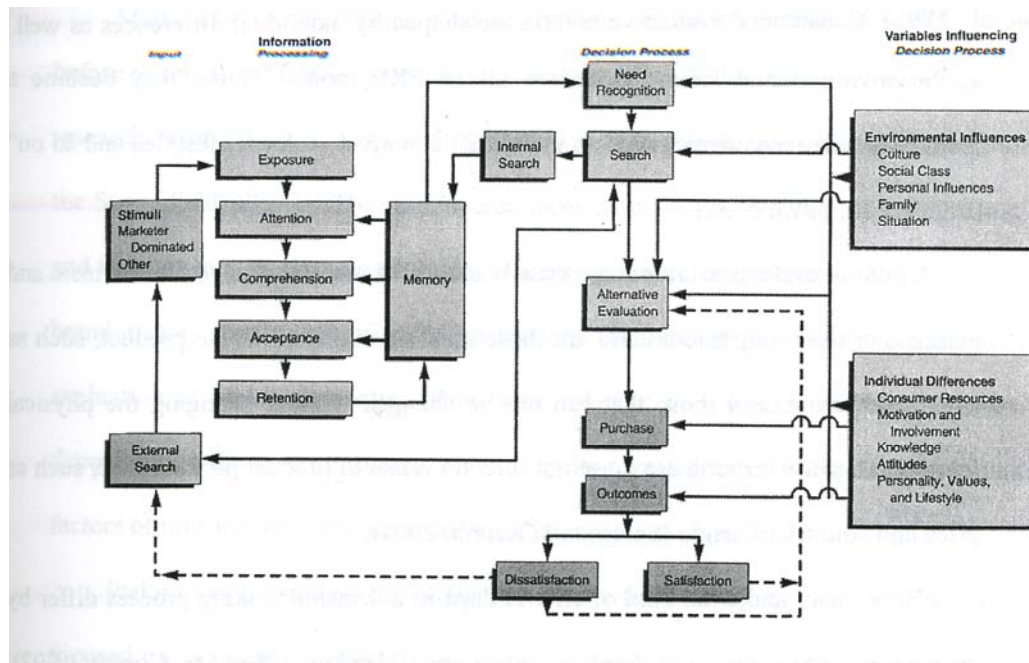
The first stage of this consumer behavior model is need recognition. In this

stage, consumers decide that there are problems to be solved and have desires that they

wish to satisfy. "The consumer (in this stage) sees a significant difference between his

or her current state of affairs and some desired or ideal state" (Solomon & Rabolt,

2003, p.356). The second stage, information search, is when consumers search for the

needed information to solve this problem or desire. This information can be an internal

information search or an external information search. The internal search involves the

recovery of knowledge from memory while the external information search involves

the collecting of information from the marketplace and outside sources (Engel,

Blackwell & Miniard, 1990). In cases where the internal information would be

inadequate, the external information search would then take over. The alternative

evaluation stage uses evaluative criteria as "the standards and specifications to

compare different products and brands." "These are the desired outcomes from purchase and consumption and are expressed in the form of preferred attributes" (Engel et al., 1993, p.51). The fourth stage of this consumer decision making model is the purchase. This is occurs after all alternatives have been taken into consideration and after the internal and external information has been processed. Lastly, the fifth and final stage is the purchase outcome. This outcome can be one of dissatisfaction or satisfaction depending on the whether or not the consumers' expectations have been met. Consumers' satisfaction occurs when "a post-consumption evaluation that a chosen alternative at least meets or exceeds expectations" (Engel et al., 1993, p.571). When the purchased item fails the consumers' expectations, the consumer is then dissatisfied and the product in turn does not fulfill the need as recognized in the first stage.

All stages in consumer decision making are influenced by external (environmental) and internal (individual distinction) factors as shown in the Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell model. The external factors include culture, situation, social class, personal influences, and family. The internal factors include consumer resources, motivation and involvement, knowledge, attitudes, and personality, values, and lifestyle characteristics. This decision making model shows the consumers' thought processes, leading them through the evaluative criteria used in their purchase of products. For the present study that product will be premium denim. According to Engel et al. (1993), several factors serve as deciding factors of evaluative criteria.

These factors include situational influences, motivation, involvement and knowledge. The following section reviews the previous studies on evaluative criteria.

Evaluative Criteria

According to Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1993) evaluative criteria is defined as "the standards and specifications used by consumers to compare different products and brands" (p.51) Evaluative criteria play an important role in the evaluation stage of the decision making process. These criteria are used by the consumer to judge the potential purchase and shape the outcome of the shopping experience. Consumers choose criteria that can reflect personal values, knowledge, attitudes, and personal characteristics (Jenkins & Dickey, 1976). Consumers frequently apply evaluative criteria to critique alternatives when involvement in the product is high (Engel et al., 1993). Clothing and apparel products are categories of consumer goods that are more experiential than other product categories (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). The following sections review the previous studies on evaluative criteria used in purchasing apparel goods.

Martin (1971) determined what information consumers of fashion need to acquire before purchasing clothing products. In this study, consumers looked at line drawings of shirts, dresses and coats. For each item Martin provided nine clothing evaluative criteria characteristics including: price, color, content of material, store, brand name, department of store, instruction for care of garment, and salespersons evaluation of style and quality. The sample was comprised of women from the

Springfield, Illinois area. The results showed that the top three criteria were price, color, and the content of material.

In Jenkins and Dickey's (1976) research, apparel evaluative criteria were separated into two categories: product-related and person-related. Variables which impacted apparel evaluation were found in both product-related and person-related categories. Jenkins and Dickey focused on consumer types and within those types' classified consumers into different segments based on evaluative criteria used in the consumers' decision making. In their study, economy consciousness was described as "exhibitive of eagerness to get the best clothing value for the money" (p. 154). For these consumers, price was a necessary consideration in getting a "good buy." The study illustrated that economy-consciousness influenced attitude toward clothing value.

Stemm's (1980) research looked at working womens attitudes and personal evaluative criteria for apparel. The evaluative criteria consisted of fifteen clothing variables: color, good buy, good fit, sexy, ease of care, pleasing to others, fabric type and quality, suitability to individual, brand and store name, quality of construction, fiber content, comfort, beautiful or attractive, and appropriateness for occasion. The respondents were asked to think of the last clothing item they purchased for work and rate it for each of the presented variables. This was done using a 7-point Likert scale. The evaluative criteria were grouped into three factors: pragmatic, aesthetic, and quality. The pragmatic evaluative variable was comprised of good fit, comfort, suitability to individual, and appropriateness for occasion. The aesthetic variable was comprised of beautiful or attractiveness, fashionable, pleasing to others, and color.

And lastly, the quality evaluative variable consisted of fabric type and quality, fiber content, and quality of construction. The conclusions stated that good fit was the most prominent criteria for a work and social clothing item, and the most determinant for work clothing. Appropriateness is the most important determinate of a social clothing piece, and as a whole, newly single women placed more significance on the aesthetic variables than women who were married.

Cassill and Drake (1987) examined lifestyle and clothing criteria to better understand female consumers' apparel selections. The findings supported Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell's model in associating lifestyle and evaluative criteria together. Lifestyles were found to be linked with an individual's evaluative criteria for both social apparel and employment apparel. For female consumers the most important evaluative criteria in regards to social and employment apparel included self-confidence, attractive/fashionable, and purchasing a product made in America.

Forsythe (1991) looked at the effects of private, designer, and national brands on consumers' evaluations of apparel products with reference to quality and price. "Quality conscious" consumers (seeking the best quality) and "brand conscious" consumers (beliefs that higher priced means better quality) were identified as the two samples looked at in the study. Quality conscious and brand conscious consumers did not differ in terms of their demographic characteristics (gender, income, and education). The results showed that brand name does make a considerable difference in consumers' perceptions of price, yet not in terms of the quality perceptions. The

study found that consumers more commonly used garment characteristics such as color, style, fabric, etc. to determine garment quality.

The importance of brand name when associated with which type of store it is found at was researched by Norum and Wang (1994). This study found that brand name is important to the shoppers of department stores and specialty stores, yet it was valued as less important in second-hand stores and discount stores.

Abraham-Murail and Littrell (1995) performed a qualitative study with three functions: 1) to produce a collective list of apparel attributes, 2) to assemble these characteristics in conceptual groups and dimensional levels, and 3) to examine the attributes in ways helpful to different formats of retailers. Focus groups were used to collect information; the sample consisted of thirty-one female consumers who were separated into 5 different focus groups. These groups were conducted with either photographs or real apparel which represented the catalog retailers and the store retailers. The focus group interviews generated seventy-nine attributes with four themes concluding from the attained data. These attributes included characteristics such as length, color, construction, durability, and suitableness to the wearer. The four concluding themes were 1) physical appearance, 2) physical performance, 3) expressive, and 4) extrinsic. The conclusions of the study showed that when using photographs, respondents were more concerned with physical and expressive themes, while when respondents were shown the actual product they were more concerned with attributes referring to the physical appearance characteristics.

Forney, Pelton, Caton, and Rabolt (1999) conducted an exploratory study investigating the importance of evaluative criteria and country of origin in purchasing decisions. The sample consisted of female university students from two United States locations and one Canadian urban area. The objectives of this study were to determine which evaluative criteria were critical, to determine the importance given to multidimensional evaluative criteria, and to determine the importance of country of origin. There were twenty-one evaluative criteria variables that were selected: twelve were intrinsic (color, style, comfort, durability, fit, care fiber, fabric quality, construction quality, trim/motion quality, product quality, and design originality) and nine were extrinsic (country of origin, label, store image, price, wardrobe coordination, attractiveness, prestigious image, suits my personality, and appropriateness for occasion). From these evaluative criteria five multidimensional factors were concluded: quality, cost, appearance, image, and personal style. The study concluded that for Canadian consumers the most prominent evaluative criteria was fit, for the Southwest consumers it was fit and attractiveness and for the West consumers, suits my personality was most critical. Cultural and regional differences were credited to the differences of apparel evaluative criteria used amongst the three groups; different importance was placed on diverse multidimensional factors by all three sample groups.

Evaluative criteria has been found to influence evaluation of apparel including aesthetics, usefulness, performance, intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics in the research previously mentioned; however, few researchers have specifically focused on evaluative criteria linked with premium denim. In addition, few researchers have

linked those characteristics to those of prestige-seeking consumers and their consumption values.

<u>Denim Industry</u>

The present study focused on consumers' use of evaluative criteria and prestige-seeking factors when purchasing premium denim jeans. Trousers known as "jeans" were created by Levi Strauss. Moris Levi Strauss, a Bavarian peddler who came to America in 1853 at the age of 24 and began importing cotton from Nimes in France, partnered with Latvian tailor Jacob Davis to make sturdy, riveted pants. Strauss wrote the $68 check necessary to receive patent number 139,121 from the United States Patent and Trademark Office for Levi's, later called the "501 Jeans." The patent was issued May 20, 1873. Thus the US saw its first pair of blue jeans. The phrase "blue jeans" did not become popular until the 1960's when the Baby Boom generation adopted the moniker for its favorite clothing item worn by film and music stars (Gerber, 2006).

Ever since then, consumers in the United States have had a close relationship with the sturdy cotton of the color blue. With denim once only seen for mine workers it has made its way from the blue collar workforce into the white collar workers. A once upon a time faux-pax is now a huge exception to the old office rule of no denim in the office (The New Business Casual, 2007). We have come a long way and now denim is worn by everyone and everywhere you go. It has become the vital apparel item, making it available to everyone at almost every price point. As reported in

Women's Wear Daily in November 2006, a report by Cotton Inc. on denim apparel trends indicated that denim maintained its status as a top performer and dominant category in apparel throughout 2006. Cotton Inc. Lifestyle Monitor found that on average consumers owned an average of 7.9 pairs of denim jeans ("Jeans on the Rebound," 2006). "Denim has earned its place in the workplace, particularly when it comes to clean and dark wash versions," says Paige Adams-Gellar founder of Paige Premium Denim. "When you have a clean and sophisticated jean it can be a staple of your wardrobe for work or any place else" Denim is a favorite pick for women in personal and professional pursuits. According to Cotton Inc. Lifestyle Monitor female respondents wore jeans 3.94 days a week (The New Business Casual, 2007, p.2). The rise in women's fashion choice to wear denim to the office has shown its increasing popularity and acceptance as the ultimate staple to the American woman's wardrobe.

In the last 10 years we have seen a rising trend, the introduction of "premium denim." According to Webster's dictionary "premium" is defined as "of exceptional quality or amount; also: higher-priced." Today launching a premium denim line to cash in on the consumers growing infatuation for jeans is a temptation for anyone remotely connected to the apparel industry (Chensvold, 2006). There is no doubt that consumers have an attraction and love for these high priced trousers. High end, premium denim represents only 3 percent of the total market, yet experienced a 138% growth in 2006 (Nolan, 2006). With a market such as this one, this study was developed to find out what these consumers are looking for in their "premium jeans" and what points of reference are they looking at.

Denim jeans can be looked at as serving a purpose; whether that is functional or aesthetic. Jeans have extrinsic as well as intrinsic value, in that they are considered to fulfill a purpose outside of the product itself; that of durability, longevity of wear and utilitarian function. But jeans are admired and work for their intrinsic value as well; flattering fit and right color, as part of the whole ensemble that a person enjoys wearing, providing positive aesthetic experiences (DeLong, et al., 2002). These values add to the admiration and dedication of one's own jeans.

Jeans also have an admiration quality; this may be sought by individuals who choose to wear designer jeans to show off the status association that comes with wearing a high priced pair of jeans with the designer label emblazoned across the back. Research by Workman (1988) examined symbolic quality related to types of jeans. Inferences made about an individual were based on choice of a particular type of jeans. Participants were presented with a shopping list for clothing that differed only by brand type of jeans. They reported a more socially desirable image for the designer jeans at the time of the study. Individuals concerned with the designer denim seek admiration for their fashion choices and expect to be associated with premium products.

Summary

In summary, the early research of economic theories including Veblem (1899) and Sproles (1979) have given a historical background into consumer decision-making and purchasing behaviors. These theories have provided an influence into the choices

and reference of the chosen method. In addition to the economic theories, the prestige-seeking characteristics developed by Vigneron and Johnson (1999) have given this study additional consumer quality information. The prestige-seeking characteristics were then related to the presented previous evaluative criteria research. The evaluative criteria research has shown that consumers have external and internal cues that influence their decision making which had been presented by Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1993), and shown in the EKB Model.

Prestige-seeking characteristics in addition to the historical literature of consumer's buying decisions and behaviors have given confirmation to this study that will attempt to demonstrate a link the prestige-seeking consumer behaviors and the evaluative criteria consumers use for premium jeans. This study relied on the presented past literature to describe how likely a consumer is to use available evaluative criteria when making a purchase decision for premium jeans, to describe the evaluative criteria and prestige-seeking values consumers use, to compare consumer's use of evaluative criteria factors and prestige-seeking consumer behavior factors, and to compare methods for measuring consumers use of evaluative criteria and prestige-seeking values when purchasing premium denim.

Chapter III. Method

The objectives of the present study were to: 1.) to describe how likely a consumer is to use available evaluative criteria when making a purchase decision for premium jeans, 2.) to describe the evaluative criteria and prestige-seeking values consumers use when making a purchase decision for premium jeans, 3.) to compare the use of and decision making between the classic evaluative criteria and the prestige-seeking consumer behavior factors when purchasing premium denim, and 4.) to compare multi-measurement methods for measuring consumer's use of evaluative criteria and prestige-seeking values when purchasing premium denim. To achieve these objectives questionnaires were administered to a sample of Oregon State University students. In this chapter, the questionnaire development, sample collection, and data analysis are discussed.

Questionnaire Development

The survey method, using a paper and pencil self-administered questionnaire, was used for data collection. The multi-measurement questionnaire consisted of six sections. The multiple measurements used in the questionnaire included: likelihood Likert scale ratings, importance rankings, conjoint-couplet trade-off scenarios, and open-ended questions.

The first section of the questionnaire was used to screen participants that would not be used as part of the sample employed for analysis. This first question of the questionnaire asked if the respondent has ever purchased a pair of premium brand

jeans. All those participants that answered "yes" were included in the sample; those that selected "no" were eliminated. There was a note following question number one to inform the participant that if they had selected "no" to the above question there was no need to continue on to further questions. The following questions in this first section asked the respondents what was the most they have paid for a pair of premium denim jeans and how luxury items were viewed in their family.

The second section of the questionnaire focused on the likelihood of using the presented evaluative criteria in making a decision for purchasing premium denim. The evaluative criteria and prestige-seeking factors included: fit, price, brand name, style, fabric, brand awareness, uniqueness, friend/peer opinion, and quality. These nine variables were chosen in congruence with the prestige-seeking consumer behavior framework (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999) and with the previous research conclusions on the most commonly used evaluative criteria information (Martin, 1971) (Stemm, 1980) (Forney, Pelton, Caton, & Rabolt 1999), I had adapted each of the five perceived prestige-seeking values into evaluative criteria important to the purchase of premium denim. The values represent the following criteria:

> Perceived Conspicuous Value: Brand Awareness
> Perceived Unique Value: Uniqueness
> Perceived Social Value: Friends/Peer Opinion
> Perceived Hedonic Value: Brand Name
> Perceived Quality Value: Quality

These attributes are all possible in the shopping environment and were chosen to help simulate respondent's actual shopping experiences. The section asked for the respondents to imagine they were shopping for a pair of premium denim jeans and that

these were the available characteristics that they could asses while shopping. They were then asked to rate each characteristic as to how likely they are to use it in their purchase decision. Each criterion was rated on a five-point Likert scale with 1 representing not likely and 5 representing very likely.

Next, the survey used rank order measurement technique to assess the evaluative criteria and the prestige-seeking characteristics. This rank order section gave introductory instructions stating:

> Think about the last time you purchased premium denim. Of the characteristics listed in the previous section, what are the top three characteristics that you used to evaluate the jeans when shopping?

The evaluative criteria and prestige-seeking factors listed after these instructions were the same as in the previous section: price, fit, brand name, style, fabric, brand awareness, uniqueness, friends/peer opinion, and quality.

The next section included five shopping scenarios presented in the form of couplets. These scenarios were roughly based on a conjoint analysis method using choice data sets (Maddala, Phillips & Johnson, 2003). These choice sets were made with minimal overlap within the given attributes. Maddala, Phillips and Johnson stated that attribute overlap is "defined as offering the same level of an attribute as a choice in both scenarios being compared." In this case, each scenario had minimal overlap within each couplet. The design of these couplets was based on the variable, price. Premium denim, for the purpose of this study, was denim costing more than one hundred dollars. In compliance with that definition these consumers had already conformed to the price variable in a way; therefore, the section presented scenarios

where participants were asked to make a trade-off between price and the other evaluative criteria. Considering the respondents had already chosen to pay more than one hundred dollars for their premium denim, this section looked at what variables they were willing to trade-off in comparison to the price they were willing to pay. The shopping scenarios also served as a check for validity to the rating and rank order techniques.

The first shopping scenario couplet presented a trade-off between price and fit. The second shopping scenario couplet presented a trade-off between price and uniqueness. The third presented a trade-off between price and quality; the fourth presented a trade-off between price and brand awareness; and the fifth presented a trade-off between price and style. These couplets were used to gain information on what this "shopper" is willing to trade, lose, or gain when being forced to make a decision between alternatives.

Following the shopping scenario section of the questionnaire, the next portion included three demographic questions: age, gender and ethnicity.

The final section of the questionnaire was comprised of two open-ended questions. The first question asked the respondents to identify their favorite brand name of premium jeans. The second question went a bit more in depth asking the respondent to describe the last time they had purchased premium denim for themselves, where they purchased them, and what factors they thought contributed to that purchase. There was sufficient room on the questionnaire for the respondent to write about their experience in detail.

A small group (n=4) of potential subjects pre-tested the questionnaire before data collection began. In doing the pre-test, verbal and non-verbal feedback was received about potential problems. After gaining this information, modifications were made to the questionnaire including word choice, answer options, and layout to better suit the larger sample. The amount of time required by the participants to complete the questionnaire was established as well as the clarity of design.

Sample

A convenience purposive sample of female premium denim consumers was used for the study. The sample consisted of 151 participants. The sample was drawn from students at Oregon State University. This included both graduate and undergraduate female students enrolled at Oregon State during the Winter Term. Considering this sample was of convenience to the research and consisting primarily of students from the department of Design and the Human Environment, the results of this study cannot be generalized beyond this sample. It was purposive in that only consumers of premium denim jeans were used in the analysis.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was administered to students in two courses in the Department of Design and Human Environment (DHE 400 (three sections) and DHE 240) who volunteered to participate along with any Design and Human Environment graduate students whom were willing to participate. The permission for the use of

these students was sought from the corresponding instructors. Once permission was granted I attended the classes on days allowed by the professors and distributed the questionnaires to the students at the beginning of the class period. Before the respondents began the questionnaire they were asked to sign an Informed Consent form (see Appendix B) which gave them information explaining the study and assured them that it was confidential and they were allowed to stop at anytime or choose to not answer any question asked. This informed consent was kept separate from the questionnaire. The collected questionnaires had no affiliation with the respondent's signature or name. The survey took no longer than fifteen minutes to complete and turn back. The participation of the study was voluntary; those who wished to complete the questionnaire and participate in the DHE 400 classes received extra-credit through their class instructor, and those who participated in DHE 240 or participating graduate students did not receive any extra-credit. Considering the questionnaire was distributed in class, the response rate was very high (see questionnaire response rate section in Chapter IV).

Data Analysis and Procedure

The data were analyzed according to the objectives stated at the beginning of the study. I used descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages to describe the collected quantitative information from the questionnaire. Qualitative data were analyzed for themes that emerged from the open-ended questions.

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 15.0 was used for the statistical analysis. All collected quantitative data was entered in SPSS for analysis. Demographic information collected was analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The likelihood Likert Scale section was analyzed using means and standard deviations for each of the evaluative criteria in that section. Evaluative criteria rank choices were summed to show the percent and number of subjects for each rank according to each available criteria (Example: eighty-three point three percent of respondents chose fit as their most important criteria, ranked number one).

The shopping scenarios also used descriptive statistics to show the frequency and percentage of respondents that chose each scenario. Lastly, the open-ended favorite brand name question and the previous purchase experience question were analyzed. The favorite brand names were tallied and reported in a table with frequency and percentage of responses. The open-ended shopping experience question was used to provide information on experiences and gave insight into trends and emergent themes in these evaluative criteria's. These analyses helped to describe the evaluative criteria and prestige-seeking values consumers use when making a purchase decision for premium jeans. I then was able to evaluate and compare prestige-seeking consumer behavior factors and evaluative criteria factors used by consumers and to compare the measurement techniques used in this study.

Chapter IV. Results

The purpose of this research was to investigate premium denim consumers' use of evaluative criteria and prestige-seeking factors. In this chapter, the demographic information of the participants is first presented. The questions asking the highest amount each participant paid for a pair of premium jeans and the question regarding luxury item consumption are reported next. A descriptive analysis of the rated evaluative items, rank characteristics, shopping scenarios, and open-ended question conclusions are then reported. Because a multi-measurement format was used, the results are discussed for each objective of the study in the discussion section.

Response Rate and Selection of Cases

Data were collected from four undergraduate courses in the Department of Design and the Human Environment and from Design and Human Environment graduate students during the Winter Term 2008. A total of one hundred and fifty-one respondents were asked to respond to a questionnaire. In three of the four courses the completion of the survey resulted in extra-credit for participation. All one hundred and fifty-one respondents participated resulting in a response rate of 100%.

 To determine the usable cases for analysis, the first question on the questionnaire asked if the respondents had ever purchased premium denim. If respondents answered "yes" to this question, their responses were used for analysis purposes. Ninety-five respondents answered "yes" to the first question. This study was

focusing on premium denim purchasers; therefore, the fifty-six respondents who answered "no" to this question were eliminated for analysis purposes.

The second criterion for usable cases was to eliminate all males from the sample since this study focused on women's premium denim jeans. Of the ninety-five participants who had purchased premium jeans, four of those respondents were male, thus resulting in the elimination of those surveys and resulting in a sample size of ninety-one. Lastly, one respondent failed to respond to the demographic questions of the survey; as a result that survey was eliminated from the sample as well, resulting in a final sample size of ninety.

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The demographic profile of the sample is shown in Table 1. Among the 90 respondents, ages ranged from 18 to 33 years with the average age of 21.01. More than half of the respondents were ages 20 or 21 (54.4%). Regarding ethnicity, 77 of the 89 individuals were of Caucasian ethnicity, followed by 6 individuals of Asian American ethnicity, 3 respondents chose "other", 2 individuals of Hispanic ethnicity, and 1 African American. Caucasian ethnicity represented 85.6% of the sample (see Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Sample (n= 90)

Variable	Descriptions	Frequency	Percentage* (%)
Age	18	4	4.4
	19	11	12.2
	20	20	22.2
	21	29	32.2
	22	11	12.2
	23	11	12.2
	24	2	2.2
	25	1	1.1
	33	1	1.1
Ethnicity	Caucasian	77	85.6
	African American	1	1.1
	Asian American	6	6.7
	Hispanic	2	2.2
	Pacific Islander	0	0.0
	Other	3	3.3

*Some of the percents may not be equal to 100 due to missing data

Premium Denim Purchases and Luxury Items

To better understand the respondents, two questions were asked in the first section of the questionnaire. The first question asked how much these premium denim purchasers had spent on a single pair of premium denim jeans. A second question

asked, how common premium branded products were in their families. The descriptive statistics for each of these questions is presented in Table 2.

The results show that 71.1% of respondents had spent at least $150.01 on a pair of premium denim jeans. With regards to familiarity with premium branded products, 47 individuals (52.2%) said that luxury items were purchased on occasion in their family; with another twenty-eight individuals (31.1%) considered these items ordinary and common. The majority of these respondents are considered to have purchased luxury items at least on occasion. A small percentage of the sample, 14.4%, responded that premium branded products and luxury items are considered unusual and showy in their family. This means a large percentage of these premium denim purchasers likely have other luxury items in their households as well.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Premium Denim Questions

Variable	Descriptions	Frequency	Percentage* (%)
If you have purchased a pair of premium brand jeans, what is the most you have paid? (n=89)			
	$100.00 to $150.00	**25**	**27.8**
	$150.01 to $200.00	**38**	**42.2**
	$200.01 to $250.00	**19**	**21.1**
	$250.01 to $300.00	**6**	**6.7**
	$300.01 to $350.00	**1**	**1.1**
	$350.01 or over	**0**	**0.0**
In my family, premium branded products and luxury items are considered to be? (n=88)			
	Ordinary and Common	**28**	**31.1**
	Purchased on Occasion	**47**	**52.2**
	Unusual and Showy	**13**	**14.4**

Some of the percents may not be equal to 100 due to missing data

In order to look more closely at the luxury family question, a cross-tabulation

was performed to assess the differences between those respondents who answered

ordinary and common and those who answered unusual and showy. In Table 3, each

of the nine variables is presented. The results of comparing those individuals who

consider luxury items to be ordinary and common in their family and those who

consider luxury items to be unusual and showy are fairly similar. One variable that

seems to have contradicting results differentiating the two types of luxury consumers

is the variable quality. In the cross-tabulation for quality, those who selected that

luxury items were considered to be unusual and showy tended to rate quality higher,

thus inferring that this variable may be more important to a consumer who is not

accustomed to having premium branded products. Also in looking at the cross-

tabulation results, price has a slightly higher mean among those who view luxury

items as unusual and showy opposed to those who see them as ordinary and common.

Those who view luxury items, in their family and household, to be ordinary and

common most likely have the finances to purchase such items, thus are not as

concerned with the price variable when making a purchase.

Table 3: Cross Tabulations for Premium Products Question and Evaluative Criteria
Rating Results.

		Fit			
		4	5	Total	
Premium Products	Ordinary and common	2	26	28	
	Unusual and showy	1	12	13	
Total		3	38	41	

		Price					
		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Premium Products	Ordinary and common	0	2	19	4	3	28
	Unusual and showy	1	0	4	5	3	13
Total		1	2	23	9	6	41

		Brand Name					
		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Premium Products	Ordinary and common	2	1	7	13	5	28
	Unusual and showy	1	2	2	5	3	13
Total		3	3	9	18	8	41

		Style				
		2	3	4	5	Total
Premium Products	Ordinary and common	0	0	12	16	28
	Unusual and showy	0	1	4	8	13
Total		0	1	16	24	41

		Fabric					
		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Premium Products	Ordinary and common	0	2	12	7	7	28
	Unusual and showy	0	0	4	6	3	13
Total		0	2	16	13	10	41

		Brand Awareness					
		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Premium Products	Ordinary and common	2	7	7	9	3	28
	Unusual and showy	1	2	5	2	3	13
Total		3	9	12	11	6	41

		Uniqueness				
		2	3	4	5	Total
Premium Products	Ordinary and common	3	9	12	4	28
	Unusual and showy	2	2	8	1	13
Total		5	11	20	5	41

		Friend/Peer Opinion					
		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Premium Products	Ordinary and common	1	8	11	6	2	28
	Unusual and showy	2	4	2	3	2	13
Total		3	12	13	9	4	41

		Quality				
		3	4	5	Total	
Premium Products	Ordinary and common	0	10	18	28	
	Unusual and showy	1	1	11	13	
Total		1	11	29	41	

Evaluative Criteria Rating

In the second section of the questionnaire, there were nine chosen evaluative criteria variables presented with an explanation of rating the following criteria. The directions instructed the respondent to imagine they were shopping for a pair of premium brand jeans. They were asked to rate each characteristic as to how likely they were to use it in their purchase decision. Table 4 contains the descriptive characteristics for each of the presented variables.

The variable with the highest mean was fit. It had a mean of 4.86, and a standard deviation of .35. The second highest rated variable used when making a purchase for premium brand jeans was quality with a mean of 4.62. The third highest rated variable was style. The lowest rated variables were brand awareness and friend/peer opinion. See Table 4 for descriptive statistics for additional likelihood ratings.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for the Rating of Evaluative Criteria

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Fit	90	4	5	4.86	.35
Quality	89	3	5	4.62	.55
Style	90	2	5	4.51	.71
Fabric	90	1	5	3.71	.90
Price	90	1	5	3.66	.87
Uniqueness	90	2	5	3.59	.87
Brand Name	90	1	5	3.50	.96
Brand Awareness	90	1	5	3.03	1.11
Friend/Peer Opinion	90	1	5	3.00	1.02

Evaluative Criteria Ranking

In the third section of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to think about the last time they purchased a pair of premium denim jeans. They were asked to list the top three characteristics they used to evaluate premium jeans when shopping. The available characteristics were: fit, price, brand name, style, fabric, brand awareness, uniqueness, friend/peer opinion, and quality.

Table 5 shows the results for the first variable choices for rank order number one. The variable, fit, was chosen by seventy-five of the respondents for their first choice in using to evaluate premium denim jeans when shopping. The second most frequently chosen variable was style which was chosen by five respondents.

Table 5: Descriptive Characteristics of 1st Rank Order

Variable	Descriptions	Frequency	Percentage *(%)
Rank #1			
	Fit	**75**	**83.3**
	Style	**5**	**5.6**
	Price	**4**	**4.4**
	Brand Name	**3**	**3.3**
	Fabric	**1**	**1.1**
	Quality	**1**	**1.1**

Some of the percents may not be equal to 100 due to missing data

In Table 6 are the descriptive characteristics for the second raking among the available nine premium denim evaluative criteria variables. The variable with the highest frequency among the second choice was style, it was chosen by thirty-five respondents. The second most chosen variable that respondents use when shopping for premium denim jeans is price, with a frequency of eighteen. The third variable was quality; it had a frequency of twelve, and consisted of 13.3% of the total percent of chosen second rank variables.

Table 6: Descriptive Characteristics of 2nd Rank Order

Variable	Descriptions	Frequency	Percentage *(%)
Rank #2			
	Style	35	38.9
	Price	18	20.0
	Quality	12	13.3
	Fit	8	8.9
	Brand Name	8	8.9
	Uniqueness	5	5.6
	Fabric	2	2.2
	Friend/Peers Opinion	1	1.1
	Brand Awareness	1	1.1

Some of the percents may not be equal to 100 due to missing data

The third ranking for the evaluative criteria offered in shopping for premium brand jeans, had a closer range in frequencies. The most chosen third variable was price, with twenty-five respondents choosing it as their third most important variable. The second was style with a frequency of twenty-two. Thirdly, quality was chosen sixteen times followed closely by brand name with a frequency of fourteen.

Table 7: Descriptive Characteristics of 3rd Rank Order

Variable	Descriptions	Frequency	Percentage *(%)
Rank #3			
	Price	25	27.8
	Style	22	24.4
	Quality	16	17.8
	Brand Name	14	15.6
	Uniqueness	5	5.6
	Fit	3	3.3
	Friend/Peers Opinion	2	2.2
	Brand Awareness	1	1.1
	Fabric	1	1.1

*Some of the percents may not be equal to 100 due to missing data

Shopping Simulation

A shopping simulation section using couplets was presented as the fourth section in the questionnaire. It gave paired choices to the respondents with two different scenarios. The respondents were instructed to choose the scenario they were most likely to choose if they were presented with the described situation when buying a pair of premium brand jeans. Table 8 gives the descriptive statistics of the couplet choices made by the respondents.

In shopping simulation one, 93.3% of the sample chose scenario A in the couplet. This couplet dealt with the two variables of fit and price. An overwhelming percentage chose A, meaning they chose fit over price. They are willing to pay a higher price for a better fit. In simulation two, 48 respondents chose B, and 40 respondents chose A. This scenario focused on the trade-off between the variable uniqueness and the variable price. Thirdly, the participants were presented with a shopping simulation with the variables for quality and price being represented in the shopping scenarios. In shopping simulation three, 73.3 % of the respondents selected scenario B, which offered average quality for $160.00 opposed to selected scenario A, which offered excellent quality for $240.00. The respondents preferred lower price to superior quality. Shopping simulation four had mixed results with 43 respondents choosing scenario A, and 45 respondents choosing scenario B. This couplet showed a trade-off between the variables brand awareness and price. Lastly, simulation five had 56.7% of the respondents chose scenario B, which had traditional style at a price of $142.00, while scenario A with 42.2% had the newest styles with a price of $192.00. This simulation focused on style and price, price was marginally more important with regards to style in this simulation.

Table 8: Frequency of Shopping Simulation Choice

Variable	Descriptions	Frequency	Percentage* (%)
Shopping Simulation #1 (n=90)	Premium jeans that are $174.00 with a perfect fit for your body type.	84	93.3
	Premium jeans that are $132.00 that fit o.k.	6	6.7
Shopping Simulation #2 (n=88)	Premium jeans that are considered standard with few details that can be replicated by any denim company and that cost $168.00.	40	44.4
	Premium jeans that have a unique pocket style unlike anything that others are wearing and that cost $192.00.	48	53.3
Shopping Simulation #3 (n=90)	Premium jeans that have excellent quality and are $240.00.	24	26.7
	Premium jeans that have average quality and are $160.00.	66	73.3
Shopping Simulation #4 (n=88)	Premium jeans that are not a well recognized brand and have a retail price of $149.00.	43	47.8
	Premium jeans that are a well known brand sold in most department stores nationwide and retail for $186.00.	45	50.0
Shopping Simulation #5 (n=89)	Premium jeans that are the newest styles of wash, cut, and color which cost $192.00.	38	42.2
	Premium jeans that are the standard wash, cut, and color of most premium jeans and cost $142.00.	51	56.7

*Some of the percents may not be equal to 100 due to missing data

<u>Brand Name Favorites</u>

   Participants were presented with an open ended question on the survey that asked them to identify their favorite brand name of premium denim jeans. The results are presented for that question in Table 9. Twenty-two different brands were named by the respondents. Thirty-four percent of participants answered *7 For All Mankind* when writing their favorite brand name of premium denim jeans. The second most chosen brand name was *Citizens of Humanity*. It was elected fourteen times. Tied for third were the brands *Paige Premium Denim* and *Joe's Jeans*. Eight respondents were not specific in their selection or named numerous brands and therefore were concluded to be "not specific" considering the question asked for the favorite brand name.

Table 9: Favorite Brand Names (n=90)

Brand Name	Frequency	Percent (%)*
7 For All Mankind	31	34.4
Citizens of Humanity	14	15.5
Paige Premium Denim	5	5.5
Joe's Jeans	5	5.5
Lucky Brand Jeans	4	4.4
True Religion	4	4.4
Diesel	2	2.2
People's Liberation	2	2.2
Rock & Republic	2	2.2
Chip & Pepper	1	1.1
Hudson Jeans	1	1.1
J & Company	1	1.1
Stitches	1	1.1
Ksubi	1	1.1
Taverniti	1	1.1
Miss Sixty	1	1.1
William Rast	1	1.1
David Kahn	1	1.1
Apple Bottom Jeans	1	1.1
Antiq Denim	1	1.1
Blue Bee	1	1.1
Gap	1	1.1
Not Specific	8	8.8

*Percent may not equal 100, due to rounding

Previous Purchase Experience

The final portion of the questionnaire gave an opportunity for the respondent to describe the last time they purchased a pair of premium denim jeans. It also asked where they purchased them and what factors contributed to this purchase. The open-ended written question provided an opportunity to asses themes and patterns that emerged from the collected data. The first theme corresponded to the number one ranked evaluative criteria, fit. Under the variable of fit came secondary characteristics that were commonly expressed in the responses. These included "I bought them because of the length, I am tall," "move ability," "they were not too tight, and did not gap in the back," and "they were good for my body shape."

Style characteristics also proved to be important criteria when respondents recalled their previous shopping experiences. Not only was, "I liked the style," mentioned, but "They are the fashion trend of jeans right now," "I like the butt pockets," "I needed some with no pocket detailing," "I needed a standard everyday jean" gave information into what the shopper is looking for specifically in terms of the visual and construction style of the denim.

Price often had a pattern of proving not to be an important issue of consumption within the previous purchase section which was quite different from the previous measurement sections. Multiple respondents expressed that they "didn't even look at the price until after I tried them on," the "better the fit, the more I will spend." These "feel much better than cheap jeans" reported one respondent. Yet, in a few cases participants purchased their particular pair of jeans because they "were on sale"

and a "good deal." For some individuals, they received an employee discount which was the primary factor in contributing to their purchase. This in turn would affect the price they would be paying.

Uniqueness as a prestige-seeking behavior was shown to affect the consumer's previous purchases as well. These respondents were concerned with whether or not the denim is "on everyone else," and if they "didn't own anything similar." These respondents expressed that they wanted to be the sole bearer of a particular style and/or brand. In contrast, some respondents desired a "standard everyday jean," "a replacement pair" to what they have previously owned. Expanding on this variable "if others have them, they felt cool." These are un-unique characteristics that some respondents felt were important to their purchase.

Fabric was listed a potential evaluative criteria that respondents may have found vital to their decisions of premium brand denim. In this section, numerous responses involved aspects of fabric; yet, the name fabric itself was only mentioned four times throughout the ninety questionnaires. Instead of respondents classifying fabric as important, they frequently mentioned "wash." These consumers often sought out specific denim jeans according to their wash. "I needed a dark wash jean," "I like light washes," were familiar responses to what factors contributed to the purchase.

Finally when asking the respondent where they acquired the denim jeans they had previously purchased an overwhelming number responded with Nordstrom's. Thirty-six out of the ninety questionnaires cited Nordstrom's as their place of purchase. In addition to the Nordstrom's department store, Macy's and Saks Fifth Avenue

department stores were also mentioned. A trend that emerged from the location descriptions was the large number of purchases made from smaller boutique stores. Some respondents simply stated that they had made their previous "purchase at a boutique," while others gave the names of these clothing shops. These boutiques include Blake, Malange, Shoetini, Sway and Cake, GK1, Urban Laundry, Hot Box Betty, Karri K, Local Joes, Blue Bee, and Vanilla. Four individuals identified that their purchases were made online. Another emerging trend was the purchase of premium denim jeans at off-price locations or websites. These respondents who previously mentioned price as being the factor that contributed to their purchase, made purchases from retailers such as Marshall's, Nordstrom's Rack, and EBay. Lastly, "Jean's Party" was mentioned as the purchase location for premium denim jeans as well. In conclusion, most purchases were done "in-store" at familiar locations to the Oregon State community.

Chapter V. Discussion

The objectives of this study were to: 1.) To describe how likely a consumer is to use available evaluative criteria when making a purchase decision for premium jeans, 2.) to describe the evaluative criteria and prestige-seeking values consumers use when making a purchase decision for premium jeans, 3.) to compare the use of and decision making between the classic evaluative criteria and the prestige-seeking consumer behavior factors when purchasing premium denim, and 4.) to compare multi-measurement methods for measuring consumer's use of evaluative criteria and prestige-seeking values when purchasing premium denim. In this chapter, the results are interpreted and implications of this research are presented.

Objective #1

The questionnaire gave insight into how likely consumers are to use the chosen evaluative criteria's when shopping for a pair of premium denim jeans. The likelihood of using fit resulted with the highest mean among all of the available criteria, thus when shopping for premium denim, consumers are most likely to be using the fit of the denim as the most important factor when purchasing. This also implies that in order to accurately gauge the variable of fit, most consumers are trying on their denim in the location before purchasing. This is in congruence with the first shopping simulation which paired price and fit together to see the trade-off between the two variables. Fit was chosen over price; therefore the participants were willing to pay a higher price for a better fit. Fit also was the number one ranked criteria when shopping

for a pair of jeans. If all three rankings were to be tallied, fit was chosen eighty-six times. This means that only four respondents did not chose fit among their top three rankings. In the previous purchase question respondents frequently used secondary characteristics of fit, including "I bought them because of the length, I am tall," "move ability," "they were not too tight, and did not gap in the back," and "they were good for my body shape." The results from this section also showed that fit was of reoccurring importance. This outcome validates previous evaluative criteria done by Stemm 1980) and Forney, Pelton, Caton, and Rabolt (1999) where fit was the resulting most important factor.

The second variable with the largest mean among the likelihood section was quality. Theoretically, because these consumers are choosing to pay a high price for premium denim jeans, an observer would most likely assume that price is indicative of quality, yet although quality has a larger mean among the likelihood of use, in the shopping simulation section respondents chose price over quality meaning they chose to pay less money for a pair of average quality jeans, as opposed to spending more for high quality. These results would suggest that although the likelihood of using quality may be higher than price; consumers are more concerned with the price of the denim than the quality when making a purchase. Price was ranked as the third most used evaluative criteria when making a purchase of premium denim.

Following quality, style received the third largest mean. It also was ranked as the second most used evaluative criteria in the rank portion of the questionnaire. Style has many secondary characteristics that stemmed from the previous purchase question

as well, including detailing, "rear pocket design," and the "aesthetic appeal." One respondent purchased their jeans because of the "fashion trend." In the shopping simulation section price was marginally chosen over style, the frequency of choices respondents made were in favor of purchasing a cheaper priced pair of premium denim jeans that were a standard style as opposed to a pricier pair of jeans with the newest styles. This sample slightly preferred price to style, yet with such a small difference, accurate interpretations of consumers' choice in a simulation cannot be concluded. Within the likelihood and rank sections that style is more important than price, yet when it was given in the simulation section, the respondents had mixed results that were too close to interpret which they would prefer in an actual shopping situation. This inconsistency may be attributed to the multi-measurement approach, respondents may think about the likelihood and ranking of certain evaluative criteria's when shopping but when posed with a simulation of decision among trade-offs and two different pairs of premium denim jeans, this may equate to a change in decision or a different level of involvement with decision making.

The results indicated the three variables with the least amount of likelihood to be used were brand name, brand awareness, and friend/peer opinion. Brand name although having one of the lowest likelihood means was ranked either third or fourth in each of the top three ranks. It was used to evaluate the respondent's previous purchase of premium denim far more than fabric or uniqueness which both had higher likelihood means. The brand name variable can also be indicative of brand loyalty and "brand trust." In the previous purchase section of the questionnaire a respondent

identified that the contributing factor to their purchase was "brand trust." If this idea of

"brand trust" was established with premium denim consumers this would heighten the

brand name variable as well as the boost sales for the brand that can capture this

consumer. "Brand trust" would involve several of the evaluative criteria's that have

been addressed in this study. Shopping simulation number four gave a trade-off

between brand awareness and price, although price was by far more likely to be used

in purchase and ranked much higher than price, in the simulation the results only

differed by two respondents. This may mean that in an actual purchase situation these

variables may differ. Consumers may be willing to pay more for the recognizable

brand name, or when using their most important variable of fit, when a pair of jeans fit,

they may not be concerned with the brand name. With the varied results among the

simulation, this may be an area for future research to see how price and brand

awareness and brand name actually influence the purchase decision when presented

with trade-offs.

Objective #2

In the second objective, I looked to describe the evaluative criteria and

prestige-seeking values consumers used when making a purchase decision for

premium jeans. These criteria and values were selected from previous research. In the

results section when looking at all four sections; likelihood of use in purchase decision,

rank of previously used criteria when shopping, shopping scenarios, and the

description of the respondents past purchase, the most important variable that seemed

to have the largest impact on consumers when making a purchase of premium brand jeans was fit. Furthermore, besides fit, it seemed as though other characteristics were important in the different sections of the questionnaire. Quality and style were most likely to be used in a purchase decision. Price and style were the top ranking among previously used criteria when shopping. In the shopping simulations which all contained possible trade-offs with price, price was preferred over the presented trade-off variables. Brand awareness and uniqueness both had larger frequencies than price, but because of the small differences between them, they cannot be concluded as more likely to be chosen over price. And lastly in the descriptions of past purchases style and price were the most referred to as contributing factors of purchase.

The observed results are indicative of what consumers will use when making a premium denim purchase. They will be most concerned with fit, style, price, quality. There was not an overwhelming concern with the consumers peer's opinion, brand awareness, or the fabric of the denim, yet each individual had different concerns and factors that were unique to their purchase. The lack of concern with these variables may be due to consumers focus on fit and style as opposed to what others may think, and if others are aware of the brand. Friends/peer opinion and brand awareness can be looked at as the two potential variables that are linked to others perception, considering these two variables received low scores in each method of the questionnaire, it is reasonable to say that when consumers are purchasing premium denim they are not concerned with others opinion of the denim or how recognizable the brand is by others. Based on the data, the results show that these consumers will

use fit, style, price, and the quality of the jeans to assess the potential jeans they will be purchasing. According to this study these are shown to be the most important variables when making a purchase.

Objective #3

The third objective was to compare the use of and decision making between the classic evaluative criteria and the prestige-seeking consumer behavior factors when purchasing premium denim. It appeared as though when shopping for this prestigious premium apparel product, consumers were more involved with the classic evaluative criteria as compared to the prestige-seeking characteristics. The classic evaluative criteria available: fit, style, fabric, and price were given stronger importance compared to the prestige-seeking factors of brand name, brand awareness, uniqueness, friend/peer opinion, and quality. Quality can be considered a cross-over criterion. It fits into Vigneron and Johnson's (1999) prestige-seeking consumer behavior factors as the perceived quality value, but also has been discussed in previous evaluative criteria research. This seems to contradict assumptions that a prestigious consumption item would draw out the consumer behavior factors developed by Vigneron and Johnson (1999). Vigneron and Johnson's work discussed these five behavioral factors related the distinction between premium and non-premium brands dependent upon socioeconomic structure that would elicit certain behavioral motives in purchasing. The reasons for these factors presence lacking in this study may be due to consumer's knowledge of criteria that they have learned to pay attention to when

shopping, and past experiences with purchases. In consumer purchasing, the experiences that these consumers have had are likely to shape their buying decision in the future. The traditional evaluative criteria are presented to shopper's everyday in any type of apparel. They are referred to in magazine advertisements and consistently alluded to by apparel sales staff. Also, denim jeans have not always been associated with the prestigious-side of apparel; they once were a very mundane product. Jeans were not always as coveted as they are today. Vigneron and Johnson's (1999) behavioral factors may not have been widely used because of their internal psychological aspect. At the root of each of their behaviors is a described way of thinking. Respondents (and consumers) may not choose these variables because they simply are unaware that they are using them. They are not fully aware of the use and cognition of these five described behaviors. An explanation of why these factors were not overwhelming chosen in comparison to the others available for choice on the questionnaire is a possible area of further research.

Objective #4

The fourth objective of this study was to compare methods for measuring consumer's use of evaluative criteria and prestige-seeking values when purchasing premium denim. By using likelihood Likert scale ratings, importance rankings, conjoint-couplet trade-off scenarios, and open-ended questions it gave each section of the questionnaire results that could be compared to one another. Results appeared to be similar for the likelihood scale ratings and importance rankings, in the concluding

most selected criteria. When respondents were asked to circle a one to five number in correspondence with how likely they were to use a criteria, the criterion that were highly ranked (four or five on the scale) were in most cases similar to the top three variables that they wrote for the variables used to evaluate the last pair of premium jeans they purchased.

In addition, the conjoint-couplet trade-off scenarios provided a deeper look into actual shopping situations. It gave the opportunity to pair trade-offs and compare those trade-off preferences to the ratings and rankings in the previous sections. Although respondents may have overwhelmingly selected price over uniqueness in the previous two method sections, there was a marginal difference between uniqueness and price. A difference of eight responses separated the choices between higher cost and greater uniqueness among a pair of jeans. Within this shopping simulation, the results are too close to conclude that uniqueness would be selected over price, yet it is important to note that within the scenario uniqueness is a of greater importance than in the ranking or rating sections. This shows that possible shopping situation motives and options can change when presented with a specific selection.

Finally, using an open-ended question as a form of collection was beneficial in collecting additional information that would have not appeared if only the first three measurements were used. This allowed respondents to present other variables or situations that caused them to purchase a pair of premium denim jeans. This also allowed for the analysis of secondary characteristics of each evaluative criterion. It demonstrated that although the respondent may not have had fit as their number one

ranked criteria, when explaining their previous purchase and what factors contributed to it, they may have responded "they were long, and I am very tall." This I consider to be a secondary characteristic of the variable fit, therefore this measurement of an open-ended question allowed further detail into what constitutes each evaluative criteria and each prestige-seeking value.

By using this method of four distinct measurement processes, it allows for advantages in data collection. Each measurement was asking for similar data in different forms. The likelihood Likert scale has its advantage of simplicity and numerical results, it is easy for most respondents to accurately understand and perform the requested task. In opposition to using the Likert scale it did not provide any additional detailed data into why numerical choices were made and did not give any insight into which were more important if two variables were both at the same point on the scale. There is no way to rank among variables with the same score. Furthermore, the ranking section took into account this disadvantage of the likelihood Likert scale. This measurement was able to rank the variables against each other resulting in a list of the top three criteria. The ranking disadvantage was that it also did not give any additional detailed information into why the respondent made their choice. Thirdly, the shopping simulation measurements gave the advantage of a realistic purchase choice and allowed an opportunity to see the trade-offs between variables. The disadvantage of this measurement is again the lack of possible details, and the opportunity for a respondent be unwilling to purchase either presented pair of jeans because of the trade-offs. Lastly, the open-ended question allowed for further

details which were missing from the first three measurements, yet the disadvantage to this measurement is the lack of trade-off and numerical ranking among all criteria. In conclusion, selecting a multi-measurement questionnaire gave an increased validity to the concluding results and allowed the comparison of each measurements result for respondent accuracy.

Implications

The results of this study have important implications for the premium denim industry. The premium denim industry can improve sales and marketing to their consumers with the knowledge of this information. Currently hundreds of premium denim companies are flooding this market. In order for a company to excel they need to focus on fit, their selected styles, and developing "brand trust." This may lead to increasing the customizable feature of denim with regards to fit. Currently Levi Strauss has been a leader in customized fit, yet with the information provided by this research further development of this feature would benefit the denim industry, and allow this most important variable of fit be highlighted and focused upon by the industry.

This research can also provide theoretical implications for further research in the denim and prestigious consumption fields. The use of a multi-measurement approach allows researchers to better understand the collection of data and the ability to use each method in comparison for cross validation. Prestige-seeking characteristics have proven to not be crucial in understanding purchases for premium denim, yet as

for a continuation in research this may allow researchers to test these prestige-seeking values with other consumer goods to see if they may have a greater influence in other areas. For the purpose of this study, the prestige-seeking factors did not prove to be important to the understanding of evaluative criteria or to purchasing premium or prestige items. Furthermore, the prestige-seeking characteristics may be useful as an addition in the EKB Model when using it in the context of status symbol decision making to further understand the psychological and sociological aspects of consumer's decisions on premium items.

Chapter VI. Conclusion

This study focused on the connection between evaluative criteria and the prestige-seeking characteristics of premium brand denim. This was the first time that these variables have been combined and applied to premium denim. In conclusion, it was important to use both evaluative criteria and prestige-seeking characteristics to analyze the behavioral factors of the consumption of premium denim and to analyze the common evaluative criteria's that have been recognized previously with apparel items. Although the use of prestige-seeking characteristics were important to use in order to make conclusions, the five behavioral factors proved to be insignificant as compared to the classic criteria when making a purchase for premium denim jeans. The results demonstrated that, although not significant, prestige-seeking factors did have an impact on some consumer's premium denim purchases in addition to the common apparel criteria. This study has given further insight into premium denim as well as consumer purchasing in general.

The results of the multi-measurement questionnaire gave the ability to collect more information, and the option for further analysis comparing each method. Each measurement has its own advantages and disadvantages, yet for the analysis of this study, a combination of the four measurements proved to give the most comprehensive results. In a continuation of this study, recommendations to conduct in-store post purchase interviews would be recommended. It would give the opportunity to directly

assess the criteria immediately after a purchase, which would result in more accurate answer as compared to asking respondents to recall their last purchases.

In conclusion, fit was the most used evaluative criteria when shopping for premium brand jeans. The results would suggest that although the likelihood of using quality may be higher that price; consumers are more concerned with the price of the denim then the quality when making a purchase. Furthermore, besides fit, it seemed as though other characteristics were important in the different sections of the questionnaire. Quality and style were most likely to be used in a purchase decision. Price and style were the top ranking among previously used criteria when shopping. In the shopping simulations which all contained possible trade-offs with price, fit was chosen over price, and price was chosen over quality. The additional three scenarios gave mixed results with a small number differentiating the simulation choices. Lastly in the descriptions of past purchases style and price were the most referred to as contributing factors of purchase.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The first limitation of this study is in regards to the purchase of prestige or premium items. These decisions are not always rational and therefore actual purchase decisions may not have included the criteria available within this study. The issue of comsumption of these types of items is complex. It is very hard to distinguish why some individuals are willing to pay large amounts of money for items. These behavioral factors are hard to measure quantitatively and therefore conclusions tend to

be inferred as compared to being backed by statistical expressions and numerical results. This is an area where this study may need to be further researched or analyzed to provide and expanded set of criteria's and to develop a better way to capture the motives behind purchasing prestigious items.

Secondly, the collected information does not pertain to premium denim for men, although it may have similarities. This sample was comprised of only female respondents. Further recommendations for research may include a replicated study for male respondents, this may allow researchers to also compare and contrast the differences between gender purchases of premium denim.

As with most experimental research, the environment of this study is artificial and only a simulation, this can cause biases and unrealistic decision making from outside influences. With this method the participants were aware that they were being studied and therefore may have lead to a bias response or decision. These results cannot be generalized to other groups or populations considering this convenience purposive sample method. The participants were all students of Oregon State University, and were also attendees of Design and Human Environment classes. It may be argued that the sample may have had a larger knowledge of prestigious consumer items and were more likely to have purchased premium denim compared to other classes on campus. A possible follow-up study may include sampling from each college at Oregon State University, this would allow the researcher to examine the difference between the colleges and conclude whether or not students of the Design and Human Environment have different purchasing behaviors due to required courses.

Lastly, the use of a multi-measurement approach was beneficial in comparing each variables result among the four techniques used in the questionnaire. Each technique has its advantages and disadvantages. For further research, I would recommend using this approach when seeking to compare variables. This method provides more information for the researcher to evaluate, and provides information to assess trade-offs between the presented variables.

Despite limitations, this study does provide insight and knowledge into the prestige-seeking consumer behaviors of consumers and gives information on the most important evaluative criteria used by premium denim consumers.

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Appendix

Appendix A: IRB Approval

TO: Leslie Davis Burns
          Design and Human Environment

IRB #:   3887 – Prestige Seeking Consumer Behavior and Evaluative Criteria of Premium
             Brand Jeans (Student Researcher: Meagon Bell)

Level of Review: Exempt

Expiration Date: 3-3-09

Approved Number of Participants: 60

The referenced project was reviewed under the guidelines of Oregon State University's
Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has **approved** the:

(X) Initial Application   ( ) Continuing Review   ( ) Project Revision
with a (if applicable):   ( ) Waiver of documentation of Informed Consent   ( ) Waiver
of Consent

A copy of this information will be provided to the full IRB committee.

- **CONSENT FORM:** All participants must receive the IRB-stamped informed consent
  document. If the consent is in a format that could not have stamp placement (i.e. web
  site language, email language, etc), then the language must be **<u>exactly</u>** as the IRB
  approved it.
- **PROJECT REVISION REQUEST:** Any changes to the approved protocol (e.g.
  protocol, informed consent form(s), testing instrument(s), research staff, recruitment
  material, or increase in the number of participants) must be submitted for approval before
  implementation.
- **ADVERSE EVENTS:** Must be reported within three days of occurrence. This includes
  any outcome that is not expected, routine and that result in bodily injury and/or
  psychological, emotional, or physical harm or stress.
- **CONTINUING REVIEW:** A courtesy notice will be sent to remind researchers to
  complete the continuing review form to renew this project, however – it is the
  researcher's responsibility to ensure that continuing review occurs prior to the expiration
  date. Material must be submitted with adequate time for the office to process paperwork.
  If there is a lapse in approval, suspension of all activity including data analysis, will
  occur.
- **DEVIATION/EXCEPTIONS:** Any departure from the approved protocol must be
  reported within 10 business days of occurrence or when discovered.

 Forms are available at: http://oregonstate.edu/research/osprc/rc/humansubjects.htm.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Human Protections Administrator at
IRB@oregonstate.edu or by phone at (541) 737-8008.

Elisa Espinoza Fallows
IRB Human Protections Administrator

Date: 3-4-08

Appendix B: Informed Consent

Oregon State | College of Health and
UNIVERSITY | Human Sciences
Department of Design and Human Environment
Oregon State University, 224 Milam Hall,
Corvallis, Oregon 97331-5101
T 541-737-3796 | F 541-737-0993
HTTP://WWW.HHS.OREGONSTATE.EDU/DHE

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: **Prestige Seeking Consumer Behavior and Evaluative Criteria of
                       Premium Brand Jeans**
Principal Investigator: **Leslie Davis Burns, Design and Human Environment**
Co-Investigator(s):   **Meagon Bell, Graduate Student Design and Human
                       Environment**

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
You are being invited to take part in a research study designed to expand current
research of evaluative criteria in the clothing industry. The research objective is to
determine pre-purchase information search processes that consumer's use when
making a purchase decision for premium jeans. The study seeks to describe the
evaluative criteria and prestige-seeking values consumers use when making a purchase
decision for premium jeans and to compare which prestige seeking consumer behavior
factors and which evaluative criteria factors are most important to consumers when
purchasing a pair of premium denim. These results are intended for use in a Master's
Thesis. We are studying this because there is yet to be research done linking prestige
seeking consumer behavior and evaluative criteria in the area of premium denim.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?
This consent form gives you the information you will need to help you decide whether
or not to participate in the study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask any
questions via email or telephone call about the research, the possible risks and benefits,
your rights as a volunteer, and anything else that is not clear. When all of your
questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to participate in this study.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to take part in this study because you are a college student and
18 years of age or older. **You must be 18 years of age or older as well as an OSU**

student to participate in this study. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to answer any question or stop the shopping simulation at any time.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY AND HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

If you choose to participate in this study, you will view a shopping simulation matrix; it will be in the form of a large poster board. You will be told in a short debriefing what to do with the cards on the board. After viewing the informational board, you will be asked to take part in a short survey.
If you agree to take part in this study, your involvement will last for approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS STUDY?

There are no foreseeable risks associated with your participation in the study.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

There are no direct benefits to participants. In the future, we hope that other people might benefit from this study because the results will help denim apparel buyers, makers, as well as retailers learn how to convey a better image and product to their customers in order to stimulate higher sales. In addition, we hope you find the study interesting.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will not be paid for participating. You may be eligible for extra credit from your instructor for participating. You do not have to complete the survey for extra credit; your instructor will provide other opportunities in lieu of completing the survey.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?

The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. To help protect your confidentiality, no where on the survey asks for any identifying information. Also, all information collected will be securely locked in a filing cabinet and out of view to the public. Your name on the sign-up sheet will be stored separately and destroyed right after extra credits are given. If the results of this project are published your identity will not be made public.

DO I HAVE A CHOICE TO BE IN THE STUDY?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering. You are free

to skip any question you prefer not to answer. Choosing not to participate or withdrawing will not affect your grade in the course or your standing in the class or at the university. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researchers may keep information collected from you and this information may be included in study reports.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact:
Leslie Davis Burns, 541-737-3796, leslie.burns@oregonstate.edu
Meagon Bell, 541- 737- 0991, bellm@onid.orst.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at (541) 737-4933 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu.

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed): _____

_____ _____
(Signature of Participant)   (Date)

Appendix C: Questionnaire

Please take a moment to complete this survey on Premium Denim Jeans.

Premium Jeans

Have you ever purchased a pair of premium
jeans for yourself (Premium Jeans are defined,
for the purpose of this survey, as a pair of
jeans costing more than $100.00)?

☐ Yes
☐ No

*If you answered "No" to the above question,
There is no need to continue to the next
questions. Thank you for your participation!

If you have purchased a pair of premium
brand jeans, What is the most you have paid?

☐ $100.00 to $150.00
☐ $150.01 to $200.00
☐ $200.01 to $250.00
☐ $250.01 to $300.00
☐ $300.01 to $350.00
☐ $350.01 or over

In my family, premium branded products and
luxury items are considered to be?

☐ Ordinary and common
☐ Purchased on occasion
☐ Unusual and showy

Please rate the following:

Imagine you were shopping for a pair of premium denim jeans for yourself. These are the available characteristics that you can assess when shopping for a pair of premium jeans. Rate each characteristic as to how likely you are to use it in your purchase decision. Please circle your response (1 meaning you are not likely to use the characteristic in your purchase decision, 5 meaning you are very likely to use that characteristic in your purchase decision).

Fit (For example: How well they fit your body?)	1	2	3	4	5
Price	1	2	3	4	5
Brand Name (For example: 7 for all Mankind, True Religion, Paige Premium Jeans, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Style (For example: Wash, Color, and Cut of the Jean)	1	2	3	4	5
Fabric	1	2	3	4	5
Brand Awareness (For example: How well this name brand is known to you and others, Is it often seen? Is it a signal of status and wealth?)	1	2	3	4	5
Uniqueness (For example: Is it unlike other jeans? Unique details, colors, designs, etc.? Does everyone own this pair of jeans?)	1	2	3	4	5
Friends and Peer Opinion (For example: What do your friends think? Do they think they look good?)	1	2	3	4	5
Quality	1	2	3	4	5

Please rank the following:

Think about the last time you purchased premium denim. Of the characteristics listed in the previous section, what are the top three characteristic that you used to evaluate the jeans when shopping?

Characteristics: Fit, Price, Brand Name, Style, Fabric, Brand Awareness, Uniqueness, Friend/Peers Opinion, and Quality

1st _____

2nd _____

3rd _____

Please choose between the following:

Following are pairs of shopping scenarios that you may have in shopping for a pair of premium denim jeans, please choose which pair of premium jeans you would buy if presented with the situation.

Shopping Scenario #1
- ☐ Premium jeans that are $174.00 with a perfect fit for your body type.
- ☐ Premium jeans that are $132.00 that fit o.k.

Shopping Scenario #2
- ☐ Premium jeans that are standard with few details that can be replicated by any denim company and that cost $168.00.
- ☐ Premium jeans that have a unique pocket style unlike anything that others are wearing and that cost $192.00.

Shopping Scenario #3
- ☐ Premium jeans that have excellent quality and are $240.00.
- ☐ Premium jeans that have average quality and are $160.00

Shopping Scenario #4
- ☐ Premium jeans that are <u>not</u> a well-recognized brand and have a retail price of $149.00.
- ☐ Premium jeans that are a well known brand sold in most department stores nationwide and retail for $186.00.

Shopping Scenario #5
- ☐ Premium jeans that are the newest styles of wash, cut, and color which cost $192.00.
- ☐ Premium jeans that are the standard wash, cut, and color of most premium jeans and cost $142.00.

Demographics

What is your current age? _____

What is your gender?
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Transgender

What is your ethnicity?
- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Asian American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other

Please Identify your favorite Brand Name of Premium Jeans_____

Describe the last time you purchased premium denim jeans for yourself. Where did

you purchase them? What factors do you think contributed to this purchase?

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Thank you for your participation!