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Going Green

Robert Passikoff, President, Brand Keys, Inc



The Fashion and Style section of the New York Times on January 5th reported on the demise of eco-jeans. It turns out that how the jeans are made are trumped by the way they are made—namely, the way they actually fit.

Organic cotton, as it turns out, presents some difficulties when it comes to holding shape, and those manufacturers who jumped on the eco-wagon have learned it's a bumpy ride when you mess with what matters most when it comes to blue jeans. If denim can't hold its shape, it's not going to hold to a woman's, and that, my friends, is a problem.

In fact, it's a problem we outlined in a conference on green nearly three years ago now, when this trend was causing spontaneous celebrations to erupt in the denim kingdom. We demonstrated that consumers found green low on their list of priorities when it came to this category, and that what mattered when buying automobiles and food did not automatically transfer to the buying of blue jeans. We even had charts.

Now the marketplace reality had dragged the truth out from the dressing room into a less-flattering but brighter light: what people say matters and what really does matter are not only often very different things, but also easily missed in direct questioning. Our use of emotional metrics placed the eco-quotient of denim brands far below that of fit, because our below-radar measures are able to answer awkward questions like "Do I care more about my butt-print than my foot-print?"

Predictability, it turns out, is what makes a brand fit with consumer expectations and keeps it profitable. And that's a green that makes every brand look good, no matter what the category.

Subjects: Brands, Consumers, Marketing

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