



## Generation Y's Perception of Price and Quality Related to Apparel Products

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Many studies have investigated the relationship between price and quality, but only a few investigated the price-perceived quality relationship for apparel products (e.g. Heisey, 1990). Furthermore, not much attention focused on quality perceptions held by the Generation Y segment. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between price level and apparel quality as perceived by male and female Generation Y college students. In specific, this study examined the following questions: 1) Does a positive relationship exist between price level and perceived apparel quality by Generation Y college students? 2) Do Generation Y college students rely on price as an important cue for apparel quality evaluation? 3) What non-pricing cues do Generation Y consumers consider important when determining apparel quality? 4) What types of information source do Generation Y consumers often use when determining apparel quality?

Studies have shown that price is only a good indicator of quality when other cues are not available (e.g. Heisey, 1990; Zeithaml, 1988). Despite consumer beliefs, almost every study examining price and objective quality found that price was a poor indicator of overall product quality (Boyle & Lanthrop, 2009). But, Gabor and Granger (1979) concluded that price serves as an indicator of quality in a much greater frequency than is commonly believed. As to apparel product, there are both physical, such as fabric and construction, and behavioral qualities, such as durability and enjoyment (Klerk & Lubbe, 2004). Gardner (1971) found no relationship existed between price and quality for men's suits and dress shirts as perceived by male participants. However, Heisey (1990) concluded a positive relationship exists between price and quality in her study using sweaters as the object of evaluation by female subjects. No studies compared quality perception between men and women.

An experimental design survey instrument was used to collect data among 114 college students. Jeans was selected as the apparel product for perceived quality measurement. The treatment consisted of two price levels, two styles of jeans and two genders. The data was analyzed via Excel, including frequency, means, standard deviation and student T-test.

The results of this study did not show a positive relationship between price and perceived quality, but price was regarded as the most important factor when evaluating apparel quality by Generation Y college students. Aesthetic appeal was the next most important factor. Gender had a significant effect on quality evaluation and on the importance of quality cues for quality evaluation. This study provided further understanding about the role of gender in quality evaluation and what cues are important to male and female college students, as well as the types of information sources that this consumer group uses for quality evaluation. Female college students regarded aesthetic appeal, fabric content, construction and care more important while male college students regarded brand name to be more important. Both male and female college students use personal experience and friend recommendation most often for quality evaluation, followed by online review and store website.

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