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New Research Shows 90% of Chinese Consumers Surveyed Prefer Leather Alternatives Over Animal Leather

99% of surveyed consumers were open to purchasing leather alternatives

August 2, 2021 — A Material Innovation Initiative (MII) study done in collaboration with North Mountain Consulting Group shows that consumer interest has tipped away from animal leather and toward leather alternatives in China. China is a huge market, with fashion industry revenue expected to be 383 billion USD in 2021. This is 44% of the global total.

Keri Szejda, Founder & Principal Research Scientist, North Mountain Consulting Group: “The study showed the highest rate of acceptance toward a new technology I have yet seen -- 90% of the participants selected a next-gen product over conventional and 70% reported a high likelihood of purchasing. This study suggests there will be wide acceptance of next-gen leather in urban Chinese markets once at scale.”

Consumers who preferred nex-gen leather (90%): The majority of participants (70%) were enthusiastic about purchasing and explained that they sought out alternatives because of concerns about the environment (72%), quality (72%), animal welfare (63%), personal expression (61%), and cost (56%).

Reasons listed by respondents:

- *“Next-gen leather can protect the environment more.”*
- *“It does not hurt animals.”*
- *“I like to try new products.”*
- *“The performance-cost ratio is high.”*
- *“Because it is more fashionable.”*

62% of the enthusiastic consumers indicated that they would pay a higher price. Millennials and members of Gen X expressed the greatest preference for and likelihood of purchasing next-gen leather (75-76% highly likely to purchase). Fewer respondents rated specific technologies as being influential in their purchasing decisions.

Nicole Rawling, co-founder and CEO of MII: “Consumers want to buy products that are in alignment with their values, and they are becoming increasingly aware that animal leather is not. Leather production contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, harmful chemical pollution, and negative health impacts for workers and surrounding communities. On top of this, leather production relies on the skins of approximately 1.4 billion animals every year, a fact that many consumers find unsettling. Creating next-gen leather alternatives that outperform leather both functionally and ethically could lead to a total transformation of the leather market away from animal options.”

Consumers who preferred leather (10%) explained that they sought out animal leather because they believe it to be higher quality, safer, and are accustomed to using it. Some wanted to avoid alternatives because of concerns about quality.

Reasons listed by respondents:

- *“I am accustomed to using conventional leather.”*
- *“Conventional-leather products are better quality.”*
- *“Next-gen products need to be tested/proven over time.”*
- *“Safe and worry-free.”*

The findings highlight opportunities and challenges for material scientists, startups, and brands working to develop next-gen replacements for animal-derived leather. To read the full study and find more information on methodology and participant demographics, please visit [this link](#).

About the Material Innovation Initiative

The Material Innovation Initiative is a nonprofit that accelerates the development of high-performance, eco-friendly, and animal-free materials for the fashion, automotive, and home goods industries. MII serves as a critical connector along the path to market adoption for new materials, partnering with scientists, startups, brands, and retailers to direct the industry toward areas of maximum impact. MII designed the survey and collected the data for these findings. Learn more at materialinnovation.org

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About North Mountain Consulting Group

The study was conducted by North Mountain Consulting Group, a research firm that specializes in understanding the consumer landscapes of emerging technologies. For more information, please visit www.northmountainconsulting.com.

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