

New fashion research: misleading labelling, consumers confused about sustainable choices

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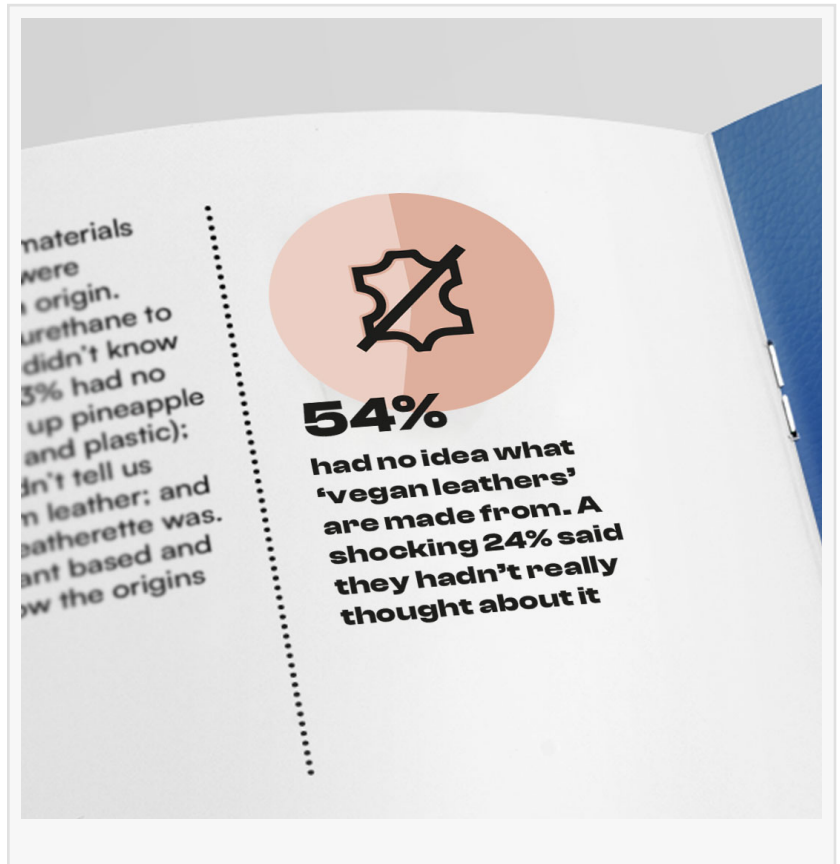
LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, February 22, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- New research has shown that UK shoppers have little or no idea what they're actually buying - and which choices are more sustainable - when it comes to a range of materials commonly used in clothing and fashion items, including leather goods and their various imitation leather alternatives.

Asked which materials were animal, plant or synthetic in origin, many shoppers also seem to be unaware where leather, leather alternatives and other commonly used textiles come from:

23% thought silk (from silk worms) was plant-based
13% said they didn't know the origins of wool, and 10% thought it comes from plants!
11% say they don't know what real leather is made from
21% and 47% didn't know what is used to make PVC and polyurethane respectively
13% thought the plant-based fabric linen was actually synthetic in origin

More than half (54%) admitted that they had no idea what 'vegan leather' is made of - a catch-all term for material that's often marketed as a sustainable alternative to the real thing but can actually be 100% plastic.

The survey of 2,000 UK adults was carried out by trade body Leather UK. It found that half (50%)



of those who buy with sustainability in mind admit that shopping in a way that has the least impact on the planet is confusing and it is hard to know what the right choice is.

For example, nearly half (47%) of those surveyed said they had no idea which of a range of commonly used materials caused the most harm to the planet.

The survey went on to reveal that despite over half (54%) of respondents stating they were happy to choose real leather clothing, shoes, upholstery and interiors items, only a quarter (24%) of consumers in the UK were aware that the hides or skins used to make real leather are a by-product of the food industry that would otherwise be thrown away. Half (50%) falsely think that it comes from cows bred specifically for their leather hides.

A quarter (25%) said they'd feel ripped off, 14% would be really upset and 13% would want their money back if they bought something that was marketed as "vegan leather" – and which they'd therefore assumed to be all-natural – turned out to be completely or partly synthetic.

Three-quarters (74%) agreed that it should be easy to see what they are buying and that labelling should not be misleading when it comes to leather and imitation leather.

The research also highlighted the challenges faced by car buyers, with the automotive industry increasingly moving towards synthetic upholstery options: 24% of consumers would actually want real leather seats if price was no object, compared to only 7% who would want imitation leather. Many Tesla owners have already noted quality issues with the synthetic leather used in their car seats.

Kerry Senior, director at Leather UK comments: "Buying leather or imitation leather goods sustainably can be difficult and confusing, especially when shoppers are increasingly presented with everything from a range of plastic/plant combinations such as apple, cactus or pineapple 'leather', 'mushroom leather' to the meaningless catch-all terms 'vegan leather' and 'plant-based leather'.

"Many also don't realise that real leather is actually a by-product of the food industry and those hides would otherwise be thrown away, which means it might be a more sustainable option than they realise.

"The findings suggest that shoppers need better information on the products they are buying, especially if they want to know what it is that they are taking home with them. But equally UK legislation should follow in the steps of countries such as Italy, Portugal and Brazil where consumer protection laws mean that the word leather can only be used for real leather."

The full "Leather and the Consumer" -Research Report can be found here:

<https://leatheruk.org/leather-and-the-consumer/>

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