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**A Study of Consumer Buying Behaviour and  
Consumers' Attitude on Sustainable Production  
and Consumption in the Food and Beverage  
Sector**



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## **Abstract**

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**Title of the Publication:** A Study of Consumer Buying Behaviour and Consumers' Attitude on Sustainable Production and Consumption in the Food and Beverage Sector.

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**Keywords:** consumer buying behaviour, sustainable production and consumption, sustainability, green consumer, green brand.

Global consumption patterns are unsustainable. It becomes obvious that efficiency gains and technological advances are not sufficient enough to sustain global consumption. Therefore, consumers have to focus on sustainable consumption, while businesses integrate practices on sustainable production.

The purpose of this study was to examine consumers' buying behaviour and consumers' attitude on sustainable production and consumption in the food and beverage sector. The theoretical background of the study was based on the concepts of consumer buying behaviour, sustainability and sustainable development.

The empirical part of the study was conducted by a quantitative research method. The data collection was implemented through a structured online questionnaire that was designed in order to analyse an overall consumer buying behaviour and respondents' motivation on shifting its current buying behaviour towards sustainable food choices.

The research findings showed a positive motivation and attitude of consumers to adjust to more sustainable consumption patterns and their willingness to contribute to the sustainability progress as an individual. It has been identified that it is becoming important for consumers to make preferences towards brands, which delivers performance based on sustainability.

Due to limitations in the researched population among students in Finland and geographical location, there are other possibilities to study the examined topic with future implementations of the research.

## **Forward**

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## 1 Introduction

The importance of doing business in a sustainable way as well as consumers' attitude towards sustainable production and consumption is a significant topic to study nowadays. The central idea of this research is to examine the overall consumer buying behaviour and consumers' attitude on sustainable production and consumption in the food and beverage sector, while promoting public awareness about sustainable food choices.

The food and beverage industry has an extensive reach. It is considered to be one of the most rapidly growing industries in the world. (Schuetzendorf, 2018) This business sector plays a key role in a human's everyday life, as people purchase food and beverage products on a daily basis. There are several factors that affect consumers while choosing a specific brand of a product. Moreover, consumers are going through a decision-making process while making their purchases. Therefore, the author would like to research whether customers are concerned about buying food from green brands, which integrate sustainability as a main aspect into their strategy and ethos and concentrate on sustainable consumption and production in general.

This study seeks to evaluate consumer behaviour and purchase decision-making process towards green products from companies that act differently by managing sustainability. The outcome of the research will show us whether students are aware of acting in a sustainable way, and if they would get acquainted about sustainable production, would they change their attitude and opinion to switch on making purchases from green brands.

### 1.1 Statement of the problem

The food and beverage industry has great impact on the environment and leaves an ecological footprint due to the high demand and a growing population.

Current patterns of global consumption are unsustainable. Consumer lifestyles, including how consumers choose and use products and services, has to be changed, as efficiency and technological advances are not sufficient enough to bring global consumption to a sustainable level. (Sustainable consumption facts and trends: From a business perspective, 2008)

Consumer behaviour contributes significantly to the impact on the environment. Therefore, conscious consumers with environmental awareness can change buying behaviour patterns in order to maintain the world in a more sustainable way.

### 1.2 The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine consumer buying behaviour of undergraduate students from universities in Finland towards sustainable consumption of food and beverages from green brands. The objective of this thesis is to evaluate consumers' opinion and attitude towards sustainable consumption and consumers' awareness of green products through the implementation of an online questionnaire.

### 1.3 Limitation of the study

This study has a specified area of consumer behaviour, consumer attitude and opinion. Therefore, this research was conducted from the consumer perspective, which limits the application of the findings. Moreover, time constraints, limited resources and relatively small sample groups mean that the findings of this study cannot be fully generalized and that further and more comprehensive study is needed to fully understand this research area.



## 2 Theoretical background

The theoretical background of the study is collected from a wide range of varying source material such as literature, correlated articles, books and journals, Internet database and reports. The main concepts of consumer behaviour, sustainability, sustainable production and consumption, as well as the definition of green brands, are explained in the theoretical background.

### 2.1 Consumer buying behaviour

Consumer behaviour is the study of the process involved in selecting, purchasing, using or disposing of products, services, ideas or experiences by individuals, groups and organisations to meet their needs and desires. (Solomon, 2006)

The importance of understanding consumer buying behaviour is essential. According to Kotler & Keller (2015) for both manufacturers and service providers, the ways in which customers choose their products and services can be extremely important as this gives them a competitive advantage over their competitors in various ways. Moreover, it is important to increase the understanding of consumer behaviour towards green products as there is an extreme growth in green products in all consumer sectors as a result of the 'green shift' and strategic marketing adopted by many organizations. (Durif, Roy, & Boivin, 2012)

#### 2.1.1 Important factors that influence consumer behaviour

Kotler & Keller (2015) outline that consumer's buying behaviour is influenced by four driven factors: cultural, social, personal and psychological factors. The deepest influence on consumer's buying behaviour is caused by cultural factors among others.

#### 2.1.2 Cultural factors

Culture is the basic determinant of an individual's wants and behaviour. Culture is a particular group of people's characteristics and knowledge, including language, religion, cuisine, social

habits, music and the arts. Culture, subculture and social class have a particular impact on consumer buying behaviour. Each culture consists of smaller subcultures and varies from one country to another. These subcultures identify and classify people based on their shared customs and beliefs. Subcultures include nationalities, religions, racial groups, and geographic regions. Therefore, companies should create specialized marketing programs to suit certain preferences of a subculture. (Kotler & Keller, 2015)

According to Kotler & Keller (2015) each individual belongs to a certain social class that influences the buying decision. People who belong to the same social class share similar interests, values and behaviour. Therefore, members from different social class possess different buying behaviours and have distinct product and brand preferences. In order to understand how to best market existing products and find opportunities for new products, marketers need to pay close attention to cultural values in each country.

### 2.1.3 Social factors

Besides cultural factors, our buying behaviour is affected by social factors such as reference groups, family, and social roles and status.

A person's reference group is a group that is associated with an individual who wants to be a part and be called as a member of that group. For instance, family, friends, neighbours, as well as religious, professional and trade-union groups can influence consumer preference in choosing a specific product or service. It is observed that all members of the reference group share common buying behaviour and influence each other strongly on product and brand choices. Therefore, marketers should identify the roles that influence other people's behaviour within the reference group. (Kotler & Keller, 2015)

Family members are considered to be the most influential reference group for an individual's decision making with an emphasis on the purchase of certain goods and services. Moreover, family factor influences the individual's personality, attitude and beliefs. According to Kotler & Keller (2015) there are two families in a buyer's life: a family of orientation and family of procreation. The family of orientation consists of parents and siblings, where parents have a strong influence on a person's behaviour. However, a family of procreation includes the person's spouse and children, where the preferences tend to change with the influence of the spouse.

The position and role of an individual in society also affect his/her buying behaviour. For example, it is expected that a person holding a supreme position in the organization will buy those items that advocate his or her status. Marketers should try to understand the position and role of the individual long before the product is endorsed. (Kotler & Keller, 2015)

#### 2.1.4 Personal factors

Personal characteristics have a direct impact on consumer behaviour and they include age and life cycle stage, occupation and economic situations, personality and self-concept, lifestyle and values. Therefore, it is important for marketers to understand this factor before designing a marketing campaign.

A consumer's taste and preferences are most often influenced by their age. This can be most commonly seen in food, clothing and any recreational activity purchases they may do. People tend to buy different products in the different life cycle stages throughout the entire life. For example, the brand of a perfume which individual used some years ago might not suit his/her desires and needs in the present moment. Therefore, preferences in purchasing a product constantly change. (Kotler & Keller, 2015)

Occupation and economic circumstances influence consumer behaviour in the marketplace as well. Both product and brand choice are affected by the economic circumstances of the individual. Simultaneously, individuals tend to buy products and services that promote their profession and role in society. Buying patterns vary according to the individual's occupation. (Kotler & Keller, 2015)

Consumer buying behaviour is strongly affected by personality and self-concept factors. By personality, Kotler & Keller (2015) distinguish human psychological characteristics that lead to behaviour buying responses that are relatively consistent and enduring. Each brand has a personality. Consumers tend to choose and use brands that correspond to their personality and are consistent with their actual self-concept that corresponds to how they view themselves. Marketers carefully examine brand experiences to express brand personalities.

According to Kotler & Keller (2015) lifestyle and core values also influence consumer buying behaviour. By lifestyle, the author defines an individual's interest, opinions and activities that reflect the person's pattern of living in the society. However, core values guide people's enduring choices

and desires and underlie attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, marketers orientate of consumer's basic values and believe that their buying behaviour can be influenced by appeals to the inner selves of people.

#### 2.1.5 Psychological factors

Psychological factors can affect consumer behaviour very strongly. That includes motivation, perception, learning and memory.

The level of motivation affects consumers' buying behaviour. People tend to have many needs through any given time. Some needs are biogenic; they arise from physiological states of tension such as hunger, thirst, or discomfort and other needs are psychogenic; they arise from physiological states of tension such as the need for recognition, esteem, or belonging. Therefore, people will try to satisfy the most important need first and then move to the next need. (Kotler & Keller, 2015)

A motivated person is ready to act with the perception of the situation. Perception is also a psychological factor that is the process by which an individual selects, organizes, and interprets information to draw a meaningful picture of the world. Depending on their individual beliefs and attitudes, different people have different perceptions of the same product. Therefore, marketers should try to understand the behaviour and attitude of each individual to gain their attention towards the offerings. (Kotler & Keller, 2015)

Learning process arises from a consumer's experiences and is followed by action. According to Kotler & Keller (2015) learning is produced from drives, stimuli, cues, responses, and reinforcement, which means that if a consumer has a positive buying experience, then in the future the customer will choose the same brand.

Consumers tend to have several strong associations and information about a brand that creates essential brand knowledge. Through thoughts and feelings, perceptions and images, experiences, beliefs and attitudes, customers create brand associations. Therefore, marketers have to ensure that consumers have the product and service experiences that create the right brand knowledge and maintain this information in their memory. (Kotler & Keller, 2015)

## 2.2 Consumer decision-making process

The decision-making process is the method that marketers use to identify and track the decision of a customer journey. This method helps to analyse the consumer's decision-making process from beginning to the end and it is divided into five separate stages where all the steps are carefully studied by marketing managers. This process helps to understand how information is obtained, how beliefs are formed, and what consumer criteria for product selection are specified. (Solomon, 2006) Moreover, aspects of acting in a more sustainable way and integration of sustainable consumption in each stage of the consumer decision-making process are discussed in this chapter.

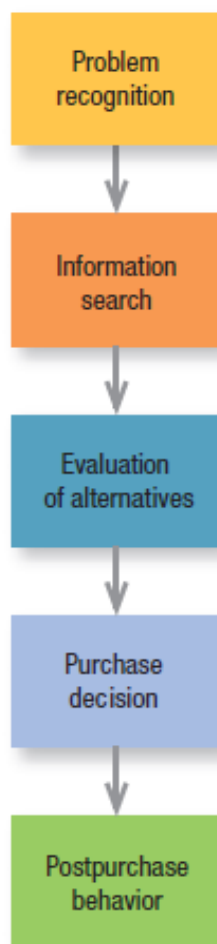


Figure 1: The Five Model Stage (Kotler & Keller, 2015)

### 2.2.1 Problem recognition

The consumer buying decision-making process starts with the problem recognition stage. This stage identifies the difference between the consumer's recognition of needs and wants. It occurs when the consumer senses a significant difference between his or her current state of affairs versus a desired and ideal state. (Solomon, 2006) By collecting information from a number of consumers, marketers need to identify the circumstances that trigger a particular need. (Kotler & Keller, 2015) For instance, a problem recognition might occur when an individual changed the environment to constantly raining weather. Then, a person's need will be to find suitable warm and rain protection cloths as well as an umbrella.

### 2.2.2 Information search

According to Solomon (2006) when the problem has been recognized, consumer needs to find information to resolve it. Information search is the process when a consumer examines his or her environment in order to find suitable data to make a reasonable decision. In practice, information search activity becomes greater when the purchase is important, so there is a need to learn more about the purchase and study different information sources. (Solomon, 2006) Marketers need to understand what kind of information consumers are looking for at different times and locations. (Kotler & Keller, 2015)

According to Kotler & Keller (2015) a consumer is able to gather information from the four main groups of information sources. These information sources are divided by personal, commercial, public and experiential sources. However, each information source influences the buying decision and varies according to the product category and the characteristics of the consumer.

The commercial source is a marketer- dominated source, where a consumer receives the greatest amount of information about the product. This source includes advertisements, websites, salespersons, dealers, packaging and displays.

However, the most effective sources are personal, public and experiential that tend to be independent authorities. Personal sources are defined by family, friends, neighbours and acquaintances. Information source such as public includes mass media, social media and consumer rating organisations. (Kotler & Keller, 2015)

The experiential source for searching information consists of acts such as handling, examining and using the product itself. In fact, choosing this source of information puts an emphasis on the consumption experience and what a consumer can experience by using the specific kind of a product. Thus, it would be based on an individual's own perception of the product through the earlier use of it. (Kotler & Keller, 2015)

In addition, the public source, which includes mass media provides an increasingly valuable information towards advertising a specific range of products with consumption benefits to the environment and the world itself. Therefore, consumers become aware of these groups of products and brands through the public sources and are more likely to be engaged in sustainable consumption through purchasing products from a sustainable brand.

### 2.2.3 Evaluation of alternatives

According to Solomon (2006) there is much effort involved in a purchase decision, when it takes place at a time when the available alternatives must be chosen. Nowadays, it is becoming more challenging for a consumer to make a choice on a purchase, as the market provides a variation of brands that clamours customer's attention.

Evaluation of alternatives starts with identifying alternatives. A consumer involved in extended problem-solving will carefully evaluate several brands, while someone who makes a regular decision may not consider alternatives to their normal brand. Consumer evaluates a product with the careful categorization of all the options based on his/her knowledge and beliefs about the brand and afterwards selects a product among the alternatives. The choice can be influenced by the integration of information from sources, information present at the time of purchase, and beliefs about the brands created through advertising. (Solomon, 2006)

In this stage of a consumer's decision-making process, environmental concerns and buying behaviour of evaluating the product alternatives are based around environmental costs, risks and benefits that will lead to the future assessment of choices in choosing what to purchase. One approach to evaluating more sustainable consumption patterns of a consumer is to consider whether a customer is acquiring the more sustainable option from the product alternatives and at the same time to consider future behaviour in using and disposing of the product.

#### 2.2.4 Purchase decision

The consumer forms preferences among the brands in the choice set during the evaluation stage and further creates an intention to buy the most preferred brand. During the purchase decision process, the consumer still has to make five following sub-decisions: brand, dealer, quantity, timing, and payment method. (Kotler & Keller, 2015)

Consumers may not formally evaluate each purchase decision in some cases, while the final decision may be affected by intervening factors in other cases. The first intervening factor is a factor of an attitude of others. An individual's purchase decision might affect what others think about the purchase because people tend to depend on other's opinion and attitude. The second intervening factor includes unanticipated situational factors. These factors might affect the postponing, modifying or avoiding of a purchase decision because of a perceived risk. Marketers need to understand the factors that give consumers a sense of risk and provide information and support to reduce it. (Kotler & Keller, 2015)

In addition, in order to increase consumer's sustainable performance in consumption, a consumer might reconsider the manner of buying behaviour. In the stage of a purchase decision, it might be evaluated through the purchasing of the product with an emphasis on environmental benefit against other attributes of product features such as price, performance and design.

#### 2.2.5 Post-purchase evaluation

Consumers may feel uncertain about a purchase after noticing disquieting product features or hearing good recommendations about other brands. According to Kotler & Keller (2015) marketing communications should supply support and beliefs for consumers that reinforce and continually support positive feelings about a purchase. In addition, marketers should monitor consumer behaviour from post-purchase satisfaction, post-purchase actions and post-purchase product use and disposal.

Satisfaction is a function of the closeness between expectations and perceived performance of the product. The state of customer feelings after a purchase influences greatly a company's brand as it makes the difference if the customer buys the product again in the future and talks positively or negatively about the product features to others. Moreover, marketers should also monitor how buyers use and dispose of the product. Product consumption rate is a key driver of sales



frequency — the faster buyers consume a product, the sooner they can be back on the market to buy it back. (Kotler & Keller, 2015)

Likewise, during this stage, the total consumption process approach has to be taken into consideration. The use and post-use phases play a key role in a sustainable impact and sustainable consumer performance after the customer made a purchase. This phase plays a crucial role for the environment in terms of the overloaded landfill. Therefore, consumers can keep, reuse and dispose of a product in a more sustainable way through selling or recycling that can lead to positive changes to the environment and production processes. (Sustainable guide for consumers: Eat well and save the planet!, 2007)

It can be concluded that the buying behaviour of consumers will determine the success or failure of new products and services being marketed on the basis of their performance in sustainability. Their overall behaviour will also have a strong impact on the sustainability performance of all goods and services due to the role of consumers in determining sustainability impacts during the use and disposal phases of the consumption process. (Wikipedia, 2019)

### 2.3 Sustainable production and consumption

Sustainable consumer behaviour is the behaviour of a consumer that enhances social and environmental performance, addressed by an individual's wants and needs. (Wikipedia, 2019) Consumption is not only an economic phenomenon that drives the economy of the whole population and consumers' behaviour, but it is also a process that helps individuals to express their identity and establish the place in the society. It is a set of studies that identifies answers to the questions of why and how consumers incorporate sustainability issues into their consumer behaviour or not. It also studies what consumers purchase, how they use these products and what they subsequently do with them. (Reisch, Eberle, & Lorek, 2013)

In recent years, global consumption patterns are unsustainable. It becomes obvious that efficiency gains and technological advances alone are not sufficient to sustain global consumption. Therefore, consumer consumption patterns that include consumer choice of products and services must be changed immediately. (Sustainable consumption facts and trends: From a business perspective, 2008) Sustainable consumption and buying behaviour can be derived from a set of assumptions and can be approached from different perspectives. For instance, the policy maker's view, the marketing view or the consumer field of interest.

Sustainable consumption covers aspects not only of products and services purchased from a green brand but also it is an adoption of a lifestyle, where sustainability is reflected in all aspects of consumers' behaviour. The lifestyle and habits of an individual can include simple methods that will lead to a more advanced form of sustainable consumption. These methods can include the tendency of consuming fewer products and services and seek out and choose products that have a reduced ecological impact, resource efficient and durable. Sustainable consumption also leads towards being more ecological aware of products and items people buy in order to protect the environment. Moreover, the physical process of sequence conservation of resources and reduction of waste should also be considered.

Unfortunately, the food and beverage industry is described as the most significant sector that leaves an ecological footprint in both production and consumption stages due to the great impacts on the environment. Food consumption tends to be an important issue in sustainable consumption and production policies. (Reisch, Eberle, & Lorek, 2013) These consumption patterns are influenced by consumer buying decisions, however, and the way individual's needs are met, are a major driver behind climate change that will have consequences for people, countries, and species worldwide.

Therefore, consumers might adopt several consumption patterns in order to maintain the world in a more sustainable way. In recent years, there is growing consumer demand for more seasonal and local food. According to the National Consumer Council (NCC), seasonal food can offer better taste and at the same time be more affordable on the market. Moreover, purchased local food can deliver fresh taste, reduce food miles, farmers and communities can take a huge advantage and it helps to reconnect consumers with where their food comes from.

Another way for a sustainable consumption comes from consuming less red meat, processed meat and products of animal origin. There are many factors that affect sustainable production: energy used for the production of fertilisers in animal feed, deforestation for making crops for an animal feed caused by the reflection in less absorption of carbon dioxide and a large amount of animal feed that is being produced for animals, which consumer buy and eat later. By this consumption pattern of reducing meat intake, it will significantly help on the human's effects on the environment, while improving overall human's health condition.

In addition, products bought from the company that integrates the Fairtrade principle is a significant motivator for customers to choose the product among other alternatives. Fairtrade-certified products are products, which are imported from poorer countries and that offer a fair-trade deal

for producers. Buying Fairtrade products is about improving the well-being and livelihoods of farmers and workers in poorer countries, improving trade relationships and ensuring better working conditions, greater access to health care and a higher living standard. However, the degree to which the Fairtrade system involves companies varies greatly. Some firms work entirely on fair trade principles and may be partly owned by producers in poorer countries or reinvest a percentage of their profits to support producers' development programs.

Household consumption drives modern economies, but unsustainable consumption, production, and exploitation of resources have resulted in multiple crises that threaten humanity's future survival. (Munasinghe, 2010) Moreover, the sustainability of consumption patterns will significantly reduce carbon emissions. Using energy-saving light bulbs, at lower temperatures washing laundry, eating less meat, planting trees, or using fuel-efficient cars, for example. (Munasinghe, 2010) The annual consumer surveys conducted by the Food Standards Agency showed that people are concerned about their food's nutritional quality and safety, with about 60 per cent saying they want more information about the food they buy.

In terms of the sustainable use of products, the role of business and the role of consumers are inherently linked. The product's environmental footprint in terms of production and disposal and the proper use of the product in terms of its impact on the environment will be crucial. Therefore, companies, governments and communities should understand current and future consumption patterns, in order to change buying behaviour and develop more sustainable products and services. (Sustainable consumption facts and trends: From a business perspective, 2008)

Over and above that, by integrating an efficient production that includes the use of natural resources, minimizing waste and optimizing products and services, companies, governments and communities can benefit from increased competitiveness and profitable operations. (Sustainable consumption facts and trends: from a business perspective, 2008) Meanwhile, the ultimate benefit of consuming products in a more sustainable way can also lead to personal satisfaction and develop a high quality of life through consumption experiences.

## 2.4 Sustainability and Sustainable development

The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) defines sustainability and sustainable development as the method, which is focused on balancing the fine line between two competing needs.

The competing needs stand for the need of our population to move forward technologically and economically, and the needs to protect the environment, where we live.

The global economy is constantly growing. Companies that integrate sustainability in the business model and recognise sustainable business innovation in their products and services will create a huge benefit and success in the twenty-first century. (Lubber, 2011) Company's strategies that are aimed not only at making a profit but also at long - term profitability and environmentally friendly sustainability have begun to become company agendas. In the same way, as for customers, shareholders and employees, companies should be aware of their responsibilities towards the environment and society. In the future, it will be important for consumer choices if the brand is delivering performance that is based on sustainability. (Boztepe, 2012)

According to the World Council for Economic Development (WCED), sustainable development is a development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Sustainable development is a long-term integrated approach that aims at balancing our economic, environmental and social needs and enabling prosperity for generations together with the minimising the over-consumption of key natural resources. (Jargan, 2015) There are three main core areas that contribute to sustainable development philosophy and social science according to The World Summit on Social Development. Different companies integrate sustainable development activities through a different approach. (Commission, 2014)

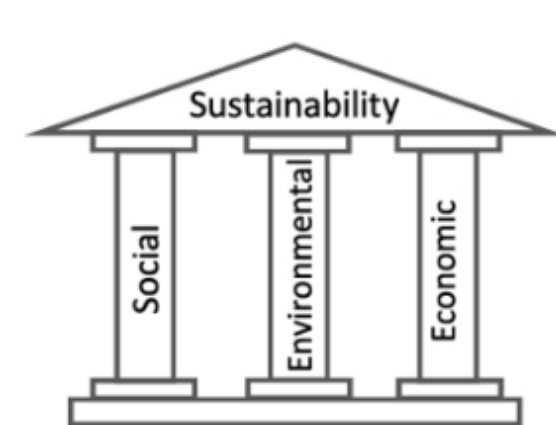


Figure 2: The three pillars of sustainability  
(Purvis, Mao, & Robinson, 2018)

#### 2.4.1 Economic development

Economic development ensures a healthy balance of our economic growth with our ecosystem. Nevertheless, economic sustainability includes ensuring that the business makes a profit, but also ensuring that business operations do not create social or environmental issues that harm the company's long - term success. This pillar provides incentives for companies and other organizations to comply with the sustainability guidelines beyond their normal legislative requirements. Besides, the market in supply and demand is consumerist in nature, and every day modern life requires plenty of resources. As people tend to have high-consumption patterns, companies have to ensure fair distribution and efficient allocation all their resources. (Jargan, 2015)

#### 2.4.2 Social development

Social initiatives have an impact on consumer behaviour and employee performance. Social development ensures the importance of awareness and legislation to protect humans' health from pollution and harmful organizations' activities. A sustainable business should have its employees, stakeholders and the community support and approval, in which it operates in. This pillar focuses on the company's initiatives in social equity, treating employees fairly and being a good community member locally and globally. (Jargan, 2015)

On the employee side, businesses focus on strategies for retention and engagement, including more responsive benefits such as better maternity and paternity benefits, flexible scheduling, and opportunities for learning and development. Companies have come up with many ways to give back for community engagement, including fundraising, sponsorship, scholarships, and local public project investment. (Beattie, 2019)

#### 2.4.3 Environmental development

Environmental protection is the primary concern of the future of humanity and gets the main attention from business. Moreover, environmental initiatives that include energy efficiency and pollution mitigation can have a direct impact on reducing waste. Companies focus on maintaining environmental development by reducing their carbon footprints, waste packaging, water use, and overall environmental impact. Moreover, companies that are managing environmental aspects,

can cause a beneficial impact on the planet and also have a positive financial impact. (Beattie, 2019) Other companies with an undeniable and obvious impact on the environment, such as mining or food production, approach the environmental pillar by benchmarking and reducing it. One of the environmental pillar challenges is that the impact of a business is often not fully costly, which means externalities are not captured. (Beattie, 2019)

The EPA recognized the key to this sustainability is the development of technology and the protection of the environment of the future from potential damage that technological advances could potentially bring. (Jargan, 2015)

## 2.5 The green consumer

The green consumer is defined as the one, who adopts environmentally friendly behaviours and/or buys green products over standard alternatives. Moreover, green consumers concern about the environmental impact caused after their buying behaviour. Such type of consumers tends to consider that each individual consumer as well as government, business and environmentalists can play a role as a consumer and has to be in charge of environmental protection. (Boztepe, 2012)

### 2.5.1 The green gap

The "Green Gap" is the gap of inconsistency in consumers' attitude and knowledge among the actual buying behaviour. Significant numbers of consumers claim to be "green," but the extent to which they are willing to buy goods based solely on environmental grounds is unclear. (Ottman, 1998) Despite the significant increase in environmental awareness among consumers, many of them have not taken their concerns into account in their actual choices and consumption behaviours. This may be due to the consumers, who are not willing to give up or change their way of life.

Moreover, on practice, customers are unwilling to adopt green products, particularly because of the various risk's consumers perceive in their purchases. Perceived risks stand for the uncertainty of the potential negative consequences that can arise with a choice of the product. Those perceived risks are known as the explanation of the 'Green Gap'. (Durif, Roy, & Boivin, 2012) The

“green gap” is defined as the gap between consumers’ green intentions and green actions that leads towards a high concern for the environment but a low green shopping behaviour. (Guyader, Ottosson, Aichagui, & Witell, 2014)

In addition, there is a discrepancy between what consumers think is socially and ecologically sustainable and what is their actual behaviour. This may be due to the lack of knowledge of consumers about general consumer environmental impacts.

The actual consumption of green products around consumers is remaining moderate. There are three main reasons affecting the moderate consumption of green products. First of all, consumers remain sceptical about green practices of companies, as they lack the credibility of green products and mislead green claims. Second, some consumers are unwilling to buy green products because of the risks they can perceive. These risks include the product’s quality, price and lack of information about the green product and its position on the market. Third, a green gap can occur between pro-environmental attitudes and green purchase behaviour. The phenomenon of the green gap can be explained for reasons relating to consumer’s status, reputation and altruism. (Durif, Roy, & Boivin, 2012)

## 2.6 The green brand

A green brand is a brand where environmental values build up the essence of the brand. Moreover, the green brand has an increased recognition and awareness of the environmental issues and its emphasis lays on environmental sustainability. (Insch, 2011) When a company is going green, it can benefit in several ways. First of all, the greening production processes often lead to improved resource efficiencies, lowering the cost structure of the company and enhancing its competitive position. Secondly, going green allows the company to distinguish itself by offering new products in new markets or by offering additional benefits for current products. Such practices can improve the company’s position in the marketplace and at the same time develop new customer segments and enhance customer loyalty. (Polonsky & Rosenberger, 2001)

While green products are often "priced" higher than traditional goods, this does not always mean that they cost more, especially if all associated costs are considered. Green goods often have higher out - of - pocket initial costs but lower long - term costs. (Polonsky & Rosenberger, 2001) They may expect "green" goods to be priced competitively and perform the same as others,

thereby using the greenness of a product to distinguish between two relatively equal goods. (Ottman, 1998)

According to the Sustainable Brand Index Official Report from 2018, Food and beverage is a new leading industry within sustainability. The top three companies that make the ranking of the most sustainable brands in Finland are as follows: Valio, Kotimaista and Fazer. These brands are considered to be the most sustainable in Finland for 2018. (Sustainable Brand Index, 2018)

### 2.6.1 The green marketing strategy

With environmental issues gaining importance to people, businesses have begun to change their production, goods or service generation, and consequently marketing strategies. Companies started producing environmentally friendly products. (Boztepe, 2012) Green marketing is a complex strategy that has to achieve two goals at the same time: to improve environmental quality while satisfying consumers. (Ottman, 1998)

Green marketing is a holistic, integrated approach that continually reassesses how companies can achieve corporate goals and meet consumer needs while minimizing ecological harm in the long term. (Polonsky & Rosenberger, 2001) Green marketing is a complicated tool that has to be integrated across all areas and activities of the organization and be implemented successfully in order to achieve long - term benefits. Moreover, a green marketing strategy can lead to greater resource efficiency and financial savings. In other words, less input is being used and less waste or pollution is being generated. (Polonsky & Rosenberger, 2001)

Green marketing refers to the selling process based on the environmental benefits of products and/or services. Such a product or service can be environmentally friendly or eco – friendly. However, green marketing can be a very powerful marketing strategy when done correctly. (Ward, 2018)

### 2.6.2 The greenwashing

According to Polonsky & Rosenberger (2001) consumers tend to think sceptical, when companies attempt to persuade consumers and associate themselves with environmental issues essentially not being improving to increase environmental performance.



Nowadays people tend to be more sceptical about green claims. The company can damage its reputation, brand and sales if the green claim will be discovered to be misleading in the company's products and services. (Ward, 2018)

According to Polonsky & Rosenberger (2001) the firm should carefully consider what type of information to offer customers and whether they understand what is being communicated when a firm is implementing the environmental promotion. In order to avoid being criticized for greenwashing, the company should carefully evaluate its green promotional activities. Therefore, by educating consumers with eco-knowledge and understanding, people will make more effective decisions and be less scepticism about the brand's green claims and at the same time, the company will not be criticised for greenwashing. (Polonsky & Rosenberger, 2001)

### 3 Methodology

The third section of this paper is methodology. The methodological part of the research contains three main sections. In the first section, the author explains the research methods that were used in the study, sample size population and research design. The second section includes the analysis of the empirical study results based on the respondents' answers to a questionnaire. Diagrams of the frequency distributions were compiled from the statistics program of PSPP, which is a software application that helps to analyse and sample data. Then, diagrams of the frequency distributions were transferred to Excel for further data analysis. Clustered and stacked bars stand for graphical representation to show the research results in an apprehensible form.

To conclude the methodological part of the study, the empirical findings and interpretation of them were discussed and they conclude the thesis. The descriptive text was used to express the nature of the research material that was explained with the usage of figures from the frequency distributions. These compiled figures of the frequency distributions and the questionnaire format can be found at the end of the research under the appendices title. PSPP tables that shows the frequency distributions can be found in Appendix 1 and the questionnaire format can be found in Appendix 2.

#### 3.1 Empirical study

In the first section of the empirical study, the researcher identified methods used to collect, generate and analyse data of the study, distinguished the sample group and explained how the empirical part of the study was conducted and structured.

##### 3.1.1 The research method

There are two research methods that are used in order to collect data and generalize results: quantitative and qualitative research. These methods are closely related; however, they differentiate in accordance with the goal or purpose of the study.

The qualitative research method is exploratory research that provides insights into the problem and studies the problem deeper with a small sample size group. In accumulating qualitative data, flexible techniques, for example, interviews, open-ended questions in the questionnaire, and observations are utilized. These techniques help the researcher to gather responses to questions for the research that is based on the reflection by the respondents on their expression of emotions and experiences on the topic. (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015)

However, a quantitative research method quantifies attitudes, opinions and behaviour and generalizes the results from the large sample size of the population. The quantitative methods for information gathering include mass amounts of numerical data that will further perform a statistical analysis in the study. These methods are normally used by performing a structured survey or questionnaire that focuses on a precise reaction from the respondents. The results of the survey or questionnaire are collected and exhibited in statistical structures that include tables, charts and graphs. (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015)

In this paper, a quantitative research method is used to quantify general attitude, views and opinion of the respondents towards the research problem. The main purpose of the study is to examine consumer buying behaviour towards sustainable consumption in the food and beverage industry and to promote public awareness about sustainability among undergraduate students. The objective of the study focuses on collecting data and generalizing results from the large sample of the population. Consequently, it focuses on performing a structured questionnaire that consists of formal questions in a specific order, conjointly with structured response alternatives.

### 3.1.2 Sample group

Sampling is the process of drawing a sample from a larger population to make conclusions about the whole population, where the population stands for a target group to be studied. (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, 2010)

The researcher had a desire to study the general attitude and opinion of the consumer buying behaviour towards sustainable consumption in the food and beverage industry around undergraduate students. The research included a large sample population that varies between undergraduate students from different educational institutions of universities of applied sciences around Finland.

Originally, the study that is based with a large sample group is considered to have more accurate analysis and be reliable with a big quantity of data. In this paper, the sample group represented the population of interest with respondents from different gender, age group, marital status regardless of their study field. In total, size of the sample and statistical population concluded 270 respondents.

### 3.1.3 Research design

The questionnaire was designed in such a way that it would be interesting and easily understood by respondents. Furthermore, the designed questionnaire gathered only relevant information and included questions that were a necessity of meeting the research objectives.

The questionnaire was constructed with the assistance of the thesis supervisor and a statistical teacher. It was constructed in the English language for a target group of undergraduate students from the educational institution as universities of applied sciences. The questionnaire was designed in an anonymous way and all answers are confidential, that helped respondents to maintain their anonymity and prevent personal identification. Moreover, it was conducted through a precise structure and contained different types of questions. The first part of the questionnaire contained socio-economic and demographic questions in a closed-ended type of questions and multiple-choice formats. The second part of the questionnaire contained questions to identify respondents' behaviour, attitude, opinions and motivation through dichotomies types of questions and Likert scales.

### 3.1.4 Data collection

The author of this study has collected information from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are original sources that demonstrate that gathered data has not been previously collected. (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, 2010) Thus, the primary data sources of this study were derived within a questionnaire from a student perspective on buying behaviour, that had a structured question order. The author chose to conduct an online questionnaire as a way of collecting data with availability for respondent's to be anonymous. The online questionnaire was conducted within a time period of April, 8th - April, 15th 2019 and was open with a duration of 8 days.

The online questionnaire was distributed mostly among students from Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, Lapland University of Applied Sciences and Vaasa University of Applied Sciences. Moreover, the questionnaire was distributed among the author's wide circle of friends and acquaintances, who represent a student status around the Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland.

An online questionnaire is considered to be a cost-efficient and affordable way of collecting quantitative data. Additionally, the appropriateness of a method of a data collection that is used in this study is based on acquired data quality and adequacy, its accuracy and objectivity towards the research problem.

Moreover, the questionnaire included two main types of data, which enabled to gather information for the empirical part of the study. Therefore, personal data such as demographic and socio-economic characteristics of an individual and behavioural variables were included in the questionnaire.

The secondary sources are sources that already have been collected for another purpose and study and are available for researchers for further use in their studies. (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, 2010) Thus, the secondary data was sourced within study materials, publications and related reports in this study in order to obtain reliable information.

### 3.1.5 Reliability and validity

The concepts of reliability and validity have a significant impact on the researcher's thoughts about the conducted research. Concurrently, these concepts are used in order to approve and validate quantitative research. The reliability concept focuses on having a capacity to rehash by the independent researcher and anticipate similar outcomes under the same methodological conditions. (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015) The significance, relevance and reliability of information determine the quality of the study's findings. (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, 2010) The author of this study guaranteed reliable results by gathering data from different sources of information on theoretical knowledge.

Furthermore, validity is used to determine the truthfulness of the results and shows the evidence where the initial interpretation of the data is correct with accurate measurements of the information. The validity and correctness of the questionnaire was determined and tested, so that it

would be easily understood by respondents, and correspond to the objectives of the study. This enabled the questionnaire to gather only relevant information and enhance its validity and reliability.

### 3.2 Data analysis

In the data analysis section, the empirical findings and its interpretation are analysed in the following sub-sections of the thesis. The questionnaire contained questions, the answer on which was compulsory and applied for every respondent, so there would be no missing values.

#### 3.2.1 Background information of the respondents

The starting point of the questionnaire was to outline the demographic picture of the research population. The questionnaire started with background information based on the respondents' gender. The objective was to see the differences in gender distribution of female and male respondents.

The total number of respondents that participated in the online questionnaire was 270 people. There is a clear difference in gender distribution, where 63 per cent of the respondents are female and 37 per cent male. Figure 3 shows the gender distribution.

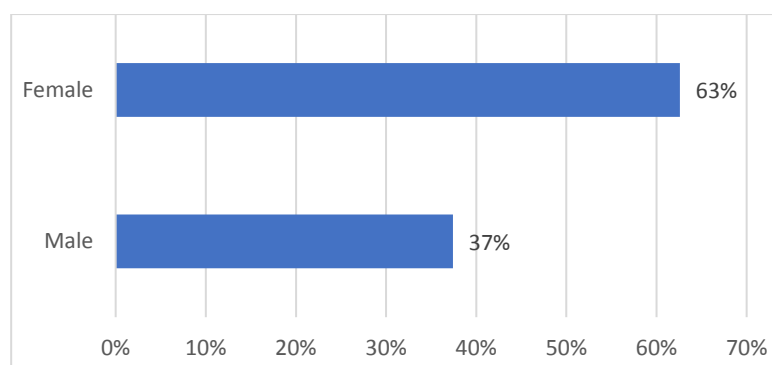


Figure 3. What is your gender? (n=270)

The objective of the second question in background information was to see the differences in respondents' age distribution, where age groups were categorised in 5 sections.

The majority of the respondents were of ages 18 to 24 (55.2%) followed by approximately 37 per cent of the age group 25-39. Approximately 7 per cent were of the 40 to 54 year old group and there is less than 2 per cent of respondents in the 55+ age category, followed by one respondent who is under 18 years old. Figure 4 shows the age distribution of the respondents.

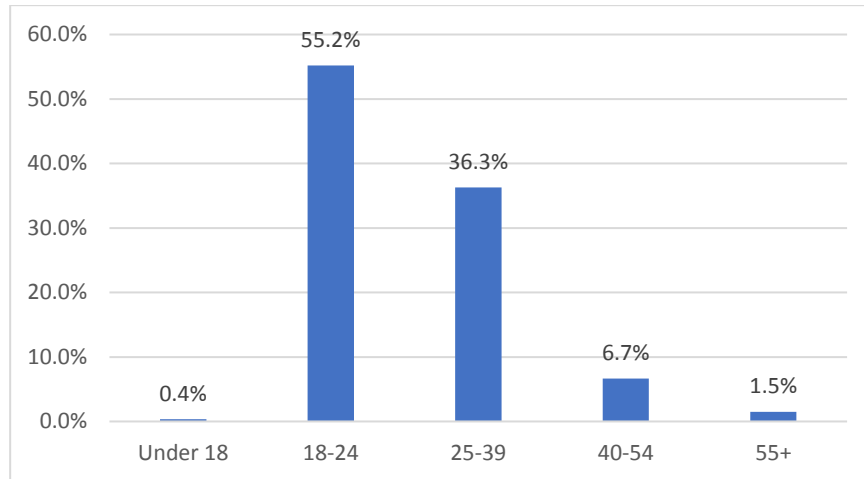


Figure 4. What is your age? (n=270)

The third question asked about the marital status of the respondent. According to the data obtained, more than half of the respondents are single, which compiled 53 per cent of the entire research population. Moreover, approximately a quarter of all respondents, with 23 per cent, live in a domestic partnership and around 5 per cent are in a relationship. Likewise, there is a relatively small per cent of respondents who are married and its approximately 12 per cent, but about 6 per cent are married and already have children. The remaining per cents of respondents are engaged or have a domestic relationship with children. Figure 5 illustrates the marital status distribution of the research.

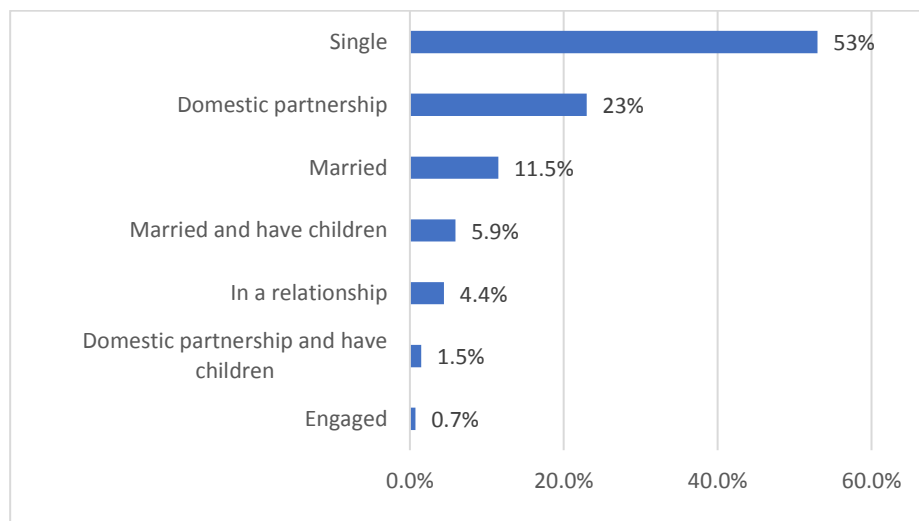


Figure 5. What is your marital status? (n=270)

The last question to gather background information was a question about current employment status. In a view of the fact that the questionnaire was gathered around students, approximately 44 per cent of the respondents are unemployed. Results showed that approximately 38 per cent of people answered have part-time employment, while 17 per cent are full-time employed. Likewise, a relatively small per cent of respondents that accumulate less than 2 per cent are unable to work, and less than 1 per cent are doing an internship and only one respondent is on maternity leave. Figure 6 represents employment status distribution around students.

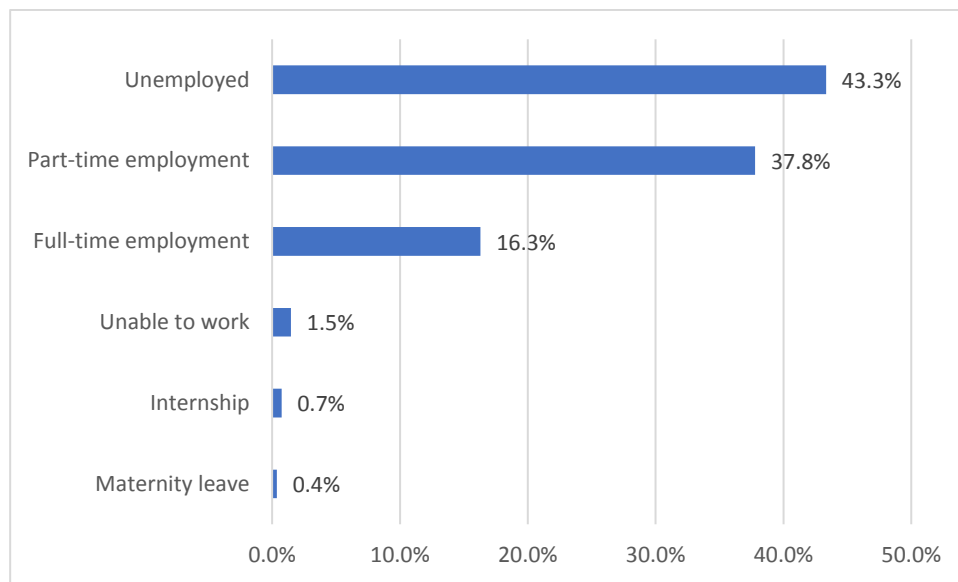


Figure 6. What is your current employment status? (n=270)

### 3.2.2 Respondents' awareness of the term 'sustainable products'

Figure 7 represents the distribution of answers that were given by the respondents regarding how aware they are with a term of 'sustainable products'.

The data obtained show that a significant per cent of respondents (89%) are aware of the term of 'sustainable products' and 8 per cent is slightly aware. The remaining 3 per cent of the respondents were unaware of the term 'sustainable products', implying the fact that there is a big awareness among students of sustainable concept and its products.



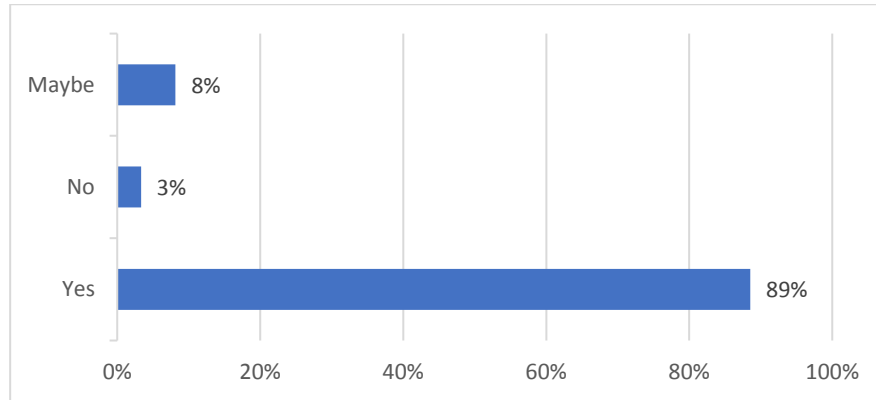


Figure 7. Have you heard the term 'sustainable products' or 'green products' before? (n=270)

### 3.2.3 Respondents' general knowledge and attitude

The following sub-section presents the obtained data that clarifies the respondents' general knowledge and attitude toward sustainable consumption. In order to obtain a general overview of consumer buying behaviour towards sustainable consumption, the next 15 questions were carefully studied and designed in such a way that it would correspond to theoretical part and gather only relevant information that would be used for a future analysis.

Data collected from the first statement on the question shows that approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the respondents (73%) are interested in buying sustainable products and have an interest over this type of products. However, only 6 per cent of the respondents are unwilling to purchase sustainable products and have no interest in obtaining those.

By analysing answers on the second statement, there is clear evidence that respondents have a neutral opinion about a product comparison towards identification the ones with a positive impact on the world with 33 per cent in total.

According to the data obtained on the third statement, more than half of the respondents (61%) usually, compare the country of a product's origin. In contrast, 21 per cent of respondents skip this aspect before the actual purchase of a product. Figure 9 illustrates the respondents' opinion on the statements.

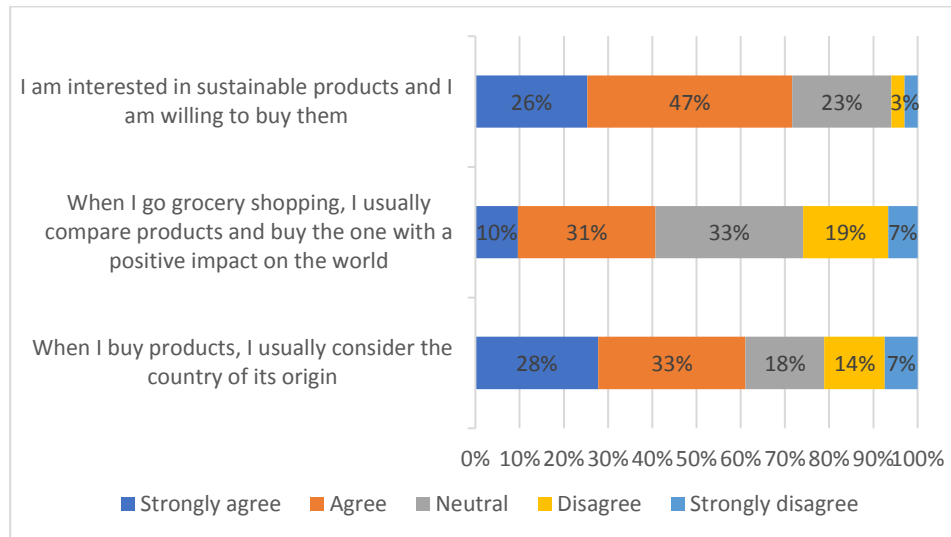


Figure 8. Respondents' opinion on the following statements: 1, 2 and 3. (n=270)

Respondents' answers concerning the statement whether they pay attention if a product is organic or eco-friendly shows a clear difference in answers. More than half (55%) pay attention to the product and notice if it is eco-friendly or carries an organic label, while only 21 per cent of the respondents do not do so.

According to answers on the second statement, while 69 per cent of respondents totally agree or agree partially on the preference of buying local, seasonally available products as standard, 14 per cent of respondents do not make preferences towards these products.

It seems that the majority of respondents are aware of the environmental impact caused by the production, use and disposal of household products after the purchase. This majority concluded 79 per cent, while only a small percentage of the respondents (5%) are not aware of these environmental effects of product use. Figure 9 presents the respondents' opinion on statements.

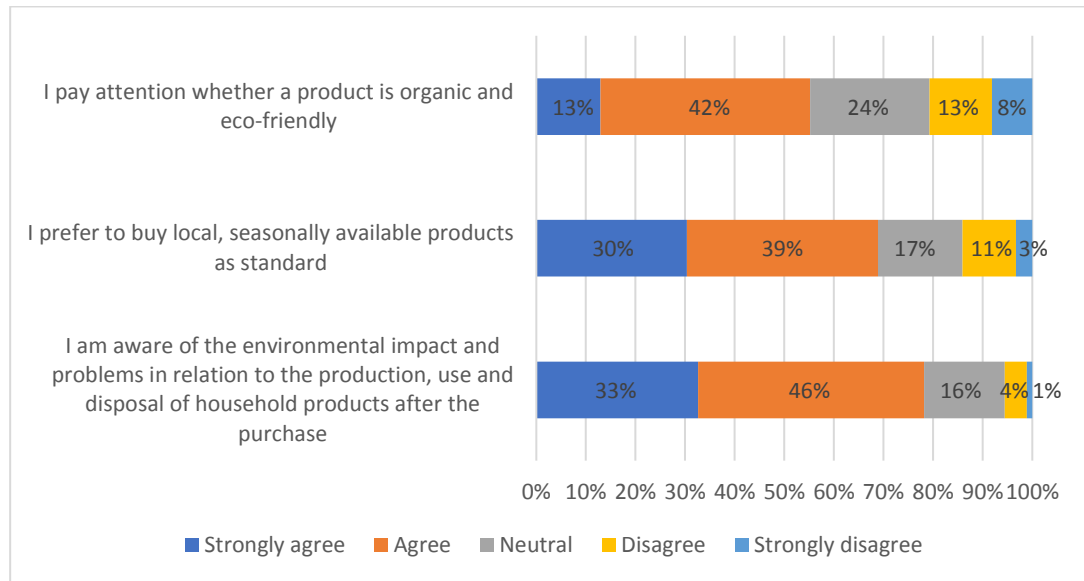


Figure 9. Respondents' opinion on the following statements: 4,5 and 6. (n=270)

The next statement was based on the topic of consumer willingness to pay extra for a product, which has a less negative impact on the environment. There is a fixed percentage of respondents who are willing to pay an additional price for a product if it causes less impact, with 48 per cent in total. In contrast, 27 per cent have a neutral opinion on the statement, followed by the other 26 per cent who totally disagreed or disagreed partially with the statement.

According to the statement, if an individual has reduced or has limited number of products from animal sources, the major percentage of respondent's totally disagreed or disagreed partially, with approximately 50 per cent in total. Meanwhile, the individuals who strongly agreed or agreed partially on a statement are 36 per cent of the entire group.

The respondents' answers concerning the purchases of Fairtrade-certified products were contradictory. While 36 per cent of the respondents follow the action of buying and making preferences towards Fairtrade-certified products, 30 per cent showed a total disagreement or disagreed partially on this statement. Figure 10 presents the respondents' opinion on the statements.

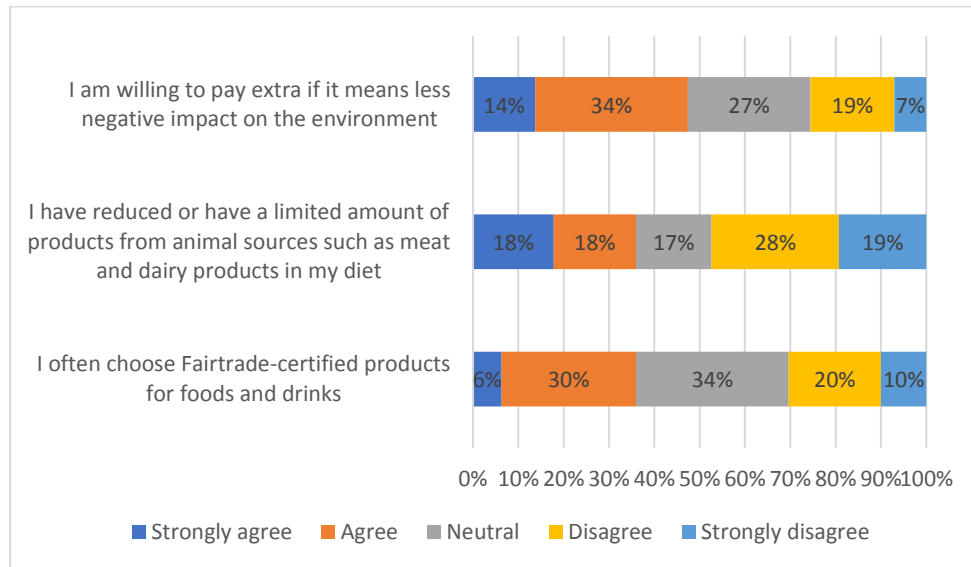


Figure 10. Respondents' opinion on the following statements: 7, 8 and 9. (n=270)

From the data obtained, a significant number of respondents, 82 per cent, care about reducing packaging waste with a total and partial agreement. However, only a small 8 per cent share of the respondents have showed disagreement on this action.

At the same time, there is a solid consumer belief that an individual can make a change to the environment through the changes he/she makes with 73 per cent positive respondents' answers with the total or partial agreement, while 11 per cent totally disagreed or disagreed partially.

It seems that a big percentage of respondents have a neutral opinion about the statement of buying products from the brand that integrated sustainability aspects in its core values. While 32 per cent of respondents have a neutral opinion, more than half of the respondents (51%) totally agreed or agreed partially, followed by the remaining 16 per cent in total with a total or partial disagreement. Figure 11 illustrates the respondents' opinion on statements.

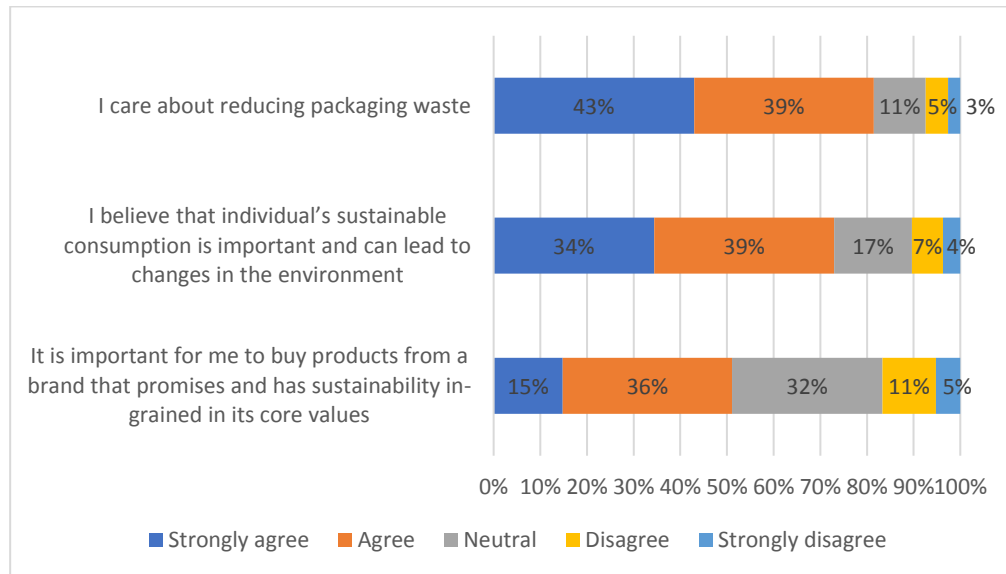


Figure 11. Respondents' opinion on the following statements: 10, 11 and 12. (n=270)

The data showed that approximately half of the respondents (48%) prefer to buy green products over standard alternatives, followed by 33 per cent of respondents with a neutral opinion about this decision. However, 19 per cent of total respondents disagreed with the statement.

At the same time, there is a big percentage of respondents, approximately 50 per cent, who believes that an individual's consumption activities have an impact on the environment. While  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement and only 14 per cent totally disagreed or disagreed partially.

The last statement investigated whether or not respondents think they can trust companies that consider themselves being sustainable. More than half, 54 per cent of respondents can't trust companies, which consider themselves being sustainable, followed by the neutral opinion with 33 per cent, and then 13 per cent of respondent who actually trusts companies. Figure 12 presents the respondents' opinion on statements.

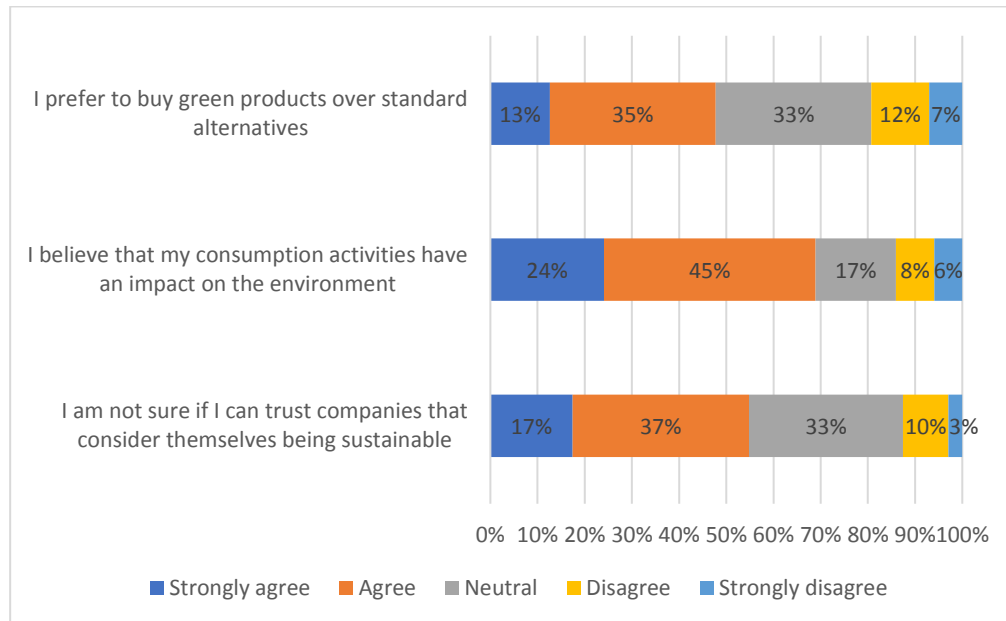


Figure 12. Respondents' opinion on the following statements: 13, 14 and 15. (n=270)

### 3.2.4 Respondents' general motivation

The results of the study showed a slight difference between the respondents' motivation and preference for buying products from a brand that focuses on the sustainability performance in their advertising. Therefore, 47 per cent of respondents have a strong and positive motivation, while 45 per cent are not completely sure whether they would do so. The remaining 8 per cent of the respondents are not interested and disagree with the asked statement. Figure 8 presents the respondents' opinion on the statement.

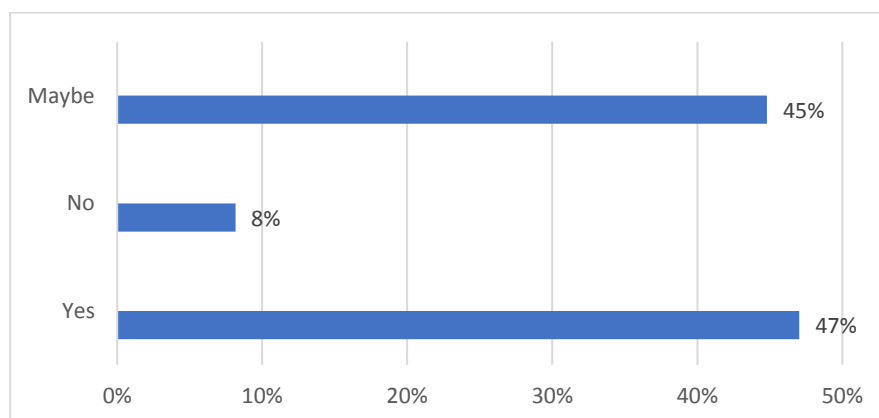


Figure 13. Would you prefer to buy products from a brand that emphasizes on sustainability performance in their advertising? (n=270)

According to the data obtained, 66 per cent of the respondents agreed that if information about sustainability and the company's sustainable performance would be more available, they would be more inclined to buy sustainable products in the future. Therefore, the results show the strong motivation of buyers to obtain sustainable products. Meanwhile, 29 per cent of the respondents are not sure and 5 per cent strongly disagree with the statement. Figure 9 illustrates the respondents' opinion on the statement.

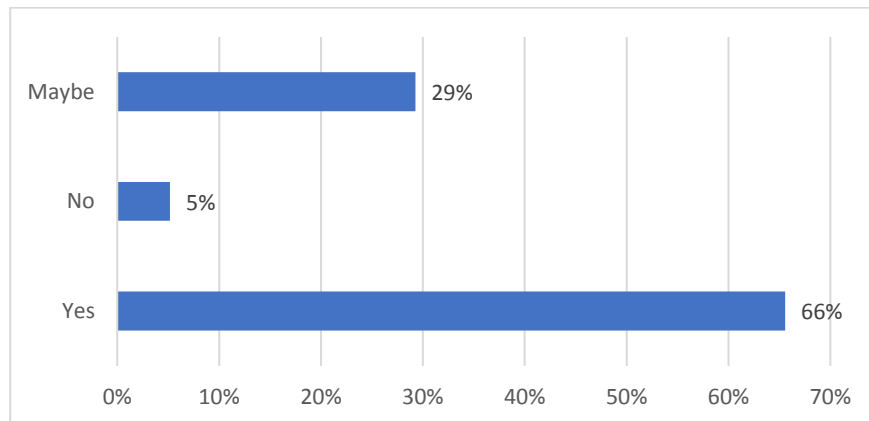


Figure 14. If information about sustainability and the company's sustainable performance would be more available to you, would you be more inclined to buy sustainable products in the future? (n=270)

### 3.2.5 Respondents' information search on sustainable products

The results of the study showed the distribution of different channels of information search on sustainable products. Figure 10 represents this distribution. The primary source is considered to be the internet among respondents with a total of 72 per cent. Also, information search by personal research (50%), around family and friends (36%) and advertisements (32%) are also common around respondents. Information search in social media, products packaging and labels, third-party research have the lowest effect on respondents.

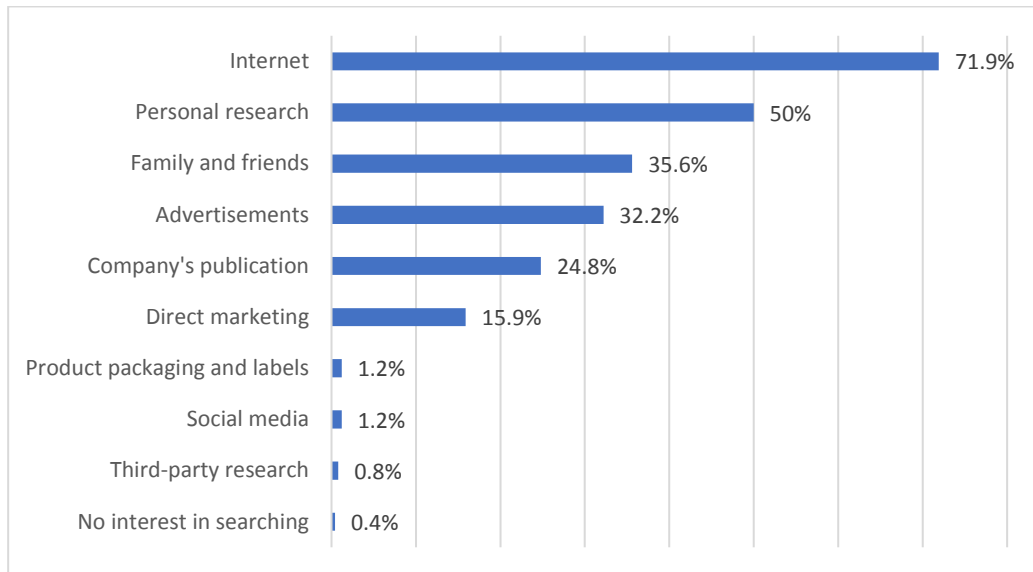


Figure 15. Where do you search for information about sustainable products, if you do so? (Multiple choice question) (n=270)



## 4 Conclusion

In this section of the paper, research findings are discussed, and conclusions are drawn, which leads to the discussion of the research work.

### 4.1 Research findings

The objective of this thesis was to examine consumer buying behaviour and consumers' attitude on sustainable production and consumption in the food and beverage sector, while promoting public awareness about sustainable consumption through the implementation of an online questionnaire. In order to simplify data analysis, the questions were divided into five sub-sections for further analysis: background information about the respondents, respondents' awareness of sustainability, respondents' general knowledge and attitude, respondents' general motivation and respondents' information search on sustainable products.

The research findings show a great consumer awareness of sustainability and sustainable consumption. The study shows a positive motivation and attitude of consumers to adjust to more sustainable consumption patterns and their willingness to contribute to the sustainability progress as an individual. Respondents' cultural factors and awareness of green products has led them to have a personal perception of learning about environmentally sustainable products and, therefore, make personal behaviour more environmentally friendly. The data has shown that students have a desire and interest in purchasing sustainable products. The results of this study showed that thirty-five per cent of respondents prefer to buy green products over standard alternatives, while thirty-three per cent have a neutral opinion about that.

While companies have started to focus their advertising campaigns and marketing materials around sustainability and eco-consciousness, consumer consumption patterns show that the researched population has a positive motivation for buying products from brands that emphasize and follow actions towards increased sustainability performance in their advertisements. Moreover, respondents found it important to buy products from brands that promise and have sustainability ingrained in their core values. From the gathered data, thirty-six per cent agree and thirty-two have a neutral opinion about this statement. That shows that as a culture, consumers have started to embrace sustainability in the products and buy products from such brands.

However, it seems that products with high concern and practices offer a higher price, and students are unwilling to pay extra money for the product. This activity can be due to the fact that approximately fifty per cent of the students are unemployed and do not have spare money to pay for the highly priced product. However, it can be found that individuals with high environmental knowledge are more willing to pay a premium price for green products and have more environmentally friendly behaviour. According to the data obtained, approximately half of the respondents are willing to pay an additional price for a product if it causes less impact.

The obtained data indicates that there is a growing consumer demand for local and seasonal food. A significant number of respondents prefer to buy local, seasonally available products on a daily basis. By choosing local and seasonal food, consumers help to minimise energy used in food production, transport and storage and have a smaller impact on the environment. The main advantages of local and seasonal food are that it offers a better taste and freshness and can be more affordable for the public while at the same time it can be beneficial for the environment in terms of reducing food miles. All goods, including food and drinks, usually come by environmentally damaging forms of transports creating greenhouse gas emissions that can be devastating for the environment.

Demand for meat and dairy products is rising, while farming is one of the most significant contributors to climate change and on the environment. It seems that respondents have not reduced or limited the number of products from animal sources, such as meat and dairy products in their diets. Therefore, this aspect is considered to be really challenging as for the respondents and for the environment in general due to the effect of greenhouse gas emissions. There are many factors that affect sustainable production: energy used for the production of fertilisers in animal feed, deforestation for making crops for an animal feed caused by the reflection in less absorption of carbon dioxide and a large amount of animal feed that is being produced for animals, which consumers buy and eat later.

Moreover, the data shows a significant number of the respondents, who compare products when it comes to the purchase decision making. The product is compared to its original country, and students have an interest in considering the country of its origin that can be beneficial to local farmers, communities and country's economy. Moreover, a significant advantage is that consumers would reward farmers and pay for a fair price for locally grown, seasonal produce, while goods that come from abroad are usually priced high due to transportation costs, refrigerating systems and packaging needed to long-distance food.

The majority of the students were aware of the environmental impact in relation to the production, use and disposal of household products after the purchase. Consequently, consumers' awareness of the environmental impact caused by the food chain is growing and at the same time, consumers' interest in transparency in the food chain is increasing alongside and it helps green brands to create a positive image and increase an economic growth. Likewise, from the gathered data, it seems that more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of respondents care about reducing packaging waste, leading for a preference to the brands with less packaging and which supports the recycling industry.

Data shows that students tend to pay greater attention to whether a product is organic and eco-friendly which shows that more products are being chosen and bought that produce less environmental damage. However, the preference and buying patterns in relation to Fairtrade products are not often chosen by the respondents in the food and beverage industry. Fairtrade-certified products are products, which are imported from poorer countries and that offer a fair-trade deal for producers. Buying Fairtrade products can improve the well-being and livelihoods of farmers and workers in poorer countries, improving trade relationships and ensuring better working conditions, greater access to health care and a higher living standard.

According to the data, the respondents believe that an individual's sustainable consumption is important and can lead to changes in the environment. Even small actions and changes in daily lifestyle and daily habits can reduce the footprint on the environment and cause green actions from each individual. There is a huge percentage of respondents, approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the entire group believing that individual's consumption habits have an impact on the environment. Awareness of different environmental issues and the consequences in different parts of the world have enabled consumers to access data from different sources.

According to the research findings, sixty-six per cent of the respondents agreed that if information about sustainability and the company's sustainable performance would be more available to them, they would be more inclined to buy sustainable products in the future. A consumer-driven evolution in marketing is increasing, letting consumers have more information and transparency on the company's performance. The data shows that consumers are willing to buy products from brands with higher transparency about products, services and performance. Therefore, companies that have integrated sustainability in their business model and are aimed not only at making a quick profit but also at long - term profitability will create a huge benefit and success. According to the study results, it is becoming essential for the consumer to make product choices based on the brand that delivers performance based on sustainability.

From the gathered data, there is only a small percentage of respondents, who actually can trust companies that consider themselves sustainable. Approximately half of the respondents do not trust companies, so the effect of greenwashing appears here, where consumers tend to be sceptical about companies that attempt to persuade consumers of the increased environmental performance in their actions.

According to the questionnaire results, the majority of consumers obtain information about sustainable products from the Internet and personal research. Therefore, it indicates that consumers tend to search for information autonomously.

## 4.2 Discussion

The central idea of this research was to examine the overall consumer buying behaviour and to promote public awareness about more sustainable options in the food production sector from a student perspective. From the author's perspective, the research objective has been met and the study was successfully conducted. However, this research was conducted from the consumer perspective among English speaking undergraduate students in Finland. Therefore, the findings of the study cannot be fully generalized and represent the whole population in Finland. A more detailed study is needed to fully understand this research area of sustainable production and consumption.

Likewise, the same idea of the research can be studied from the company's perspective. For instance, the research could be implemented based on the idea of whether an organisation could incorporate sustainability practices in its business strategy and whether it would be beneficial for a company in terms of profit maximization. The suggested research idea could be successfully implemented by conducting a qualitative survey with a representative of a company.

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## Appendices

Appendix 1: The frequency distributions table from statistics programme PSPP

**Background information of the respondents:**

1. What is your gender?

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Male	1	101	37.41	37.41	37.41
Female	2	169	62.59	62.59	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

2. What is your age?

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Under 18	1	1	.37	.37	.37
18-24	2	149	55.19	55.19	55.56
25-39	3	98	36.30	36.30	91.85
40-54	4	18	6.67	6.67	98.52
55+	5	4	1.48	1.48	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

3. What is your marital status?

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
	Domestic partnership	62	22.96	22.96	22.96
	Domestic partnership and have children	4	1.48	1.48	24.44
	Engaged	2	.74	.74	25.19
	In a relationship	12	4.44	4.44	29.63
	Married	31	11.48	11.48	41.11
	Married and have children	16	5.93	5.93	47.04
	Single	143	52.96	52.96	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	



4. What is your current employment status as a student?

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Full-time employment		44	16.30	16.30	16.30
Internship		2	.74	.74	17.04
Maternity leave		1	.37	.37	17.41
Part-time employment		102	37.78	37.78	55.19
Unable to work		4	1.48	1.48	56.67
Unemployed		117	43.33	43.33	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

**Respondents' awareness of the term 'sustainable products':**

5. Have you heard the term 'sustainable products' or 'green products' before?

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Yes	1	239	88.52	88.52	88.52
No	2	9	3.33	3.33	91.85
Maybe	3	22	8.15	8.15	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

**Respondents' general knowledge and attitude:**

6. Please choose the most suitable answers to the following statements:

1) I am interested in sustainable products and I am willing to buy them

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Strongly agree	1	69	25.56	25.56	25.56
Agree	2	126	46.67	46.67	72.22
Neutral	3	61	22.59	22.59	94.81
Disagree	4	7	2.59	2.59	97.41
Strongly disagree	5	7	2.59	2.59	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

2) When I go grocery shopping, I usually compare products and buy the one with a positive impact on the world

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Strongly agree	1	26	9.63	9.63	9.63
Agree	2	84	31.11	31.11	40.74
Neutral	3	90	33.33	33.33	74.07
Disagree	4	52	19.26	19.26	93.33
Strongly disagree	5	18	6.67	6.67	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

3) When I buy products, I usually consider the country of its origin

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Strongly agree	1	75	27.78	27.78	27.78
Agree	2	90	33.33	33.33	61.11
Neutral	3	48	17.78	17.78	78.89
Disagree	4	37	13.70	13.70	92.59
Strongly disagree	5	20	7.41	7.41	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

4) I pay attention whether a product is organic and eco-friendly

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Strongly agree	1	35	12.96	12.96	12.96
Agree	2	114	42.22	42.22	55.19
Neutral	3	65	24.07	24.07	79.26
Disagree	4	34	12.59	12.59	91.85
Strongly disagree	5	22	8.15	8.15	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

5) I prefer to buy local, seasonally available products as standard

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Strongly agree	1	82	30.37	30.37	30.37
Agree	2	104	38.52	38.52	68.89
Neutral	3	46	17.04	17.04	85.93
Disagree	4	29	10.74	10.74	96.67
Strongly disagree	5	9	3.33	3.33	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

6) I am aware of the environmental impact and problems in relation to the production, use and disposal of household products after the purchase

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Strongly agree	1	88	32.59	32.59	32.59
Agree	2	123	45.56	45.56	78.15
Neutral	3	44	16.30	16.30	94.44
Disagree	4	12	4.44	4.44	98.89
Strongly disagree	5	3	1.11	1.11	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

7) I am willing to pay extra if it means less negative impact on the environment

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Strongly agree	1	37	13.70	13.70	13.70
Agree	2	91	33.70	33.70	47.41
Neutral	3	73	27.04	27.04	74.44
Disagree	4	50	18.52	18.52	92.96
Strongly disagree	5	19	7.04	7.04	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

8) I have reduced or have a limited amount of products from animal sources such as meat and dairy products in my diet

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Strongly agree	1	48	17.78	17.78	17.78
Agree	2	49	18.15	18.15	35.93
Neutral	3	45	16.67	16.67	52.59
Disagree	4	76	28.15	28.15	80.74
Strongly disagree	5	52	19.26	19.26	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

9) I often choose Fairtrade-certified products for foods and drinks

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Strongly agree	1	17	6.30	6.30	6.30
Agree	2	80	29.63	29.63	35.93
Neutral	3	91	33.70	33.70	69.63
Disagree	4	55	20.37	20.37	90.00
Strongly disagree	5	27	10.00	10.00	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

10) I care about reducing packaging waste

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Strongly agree	1	116	42.96	42.96	42.96
Agree	2	104	38.52	38.52	81.48
Neutral	3	30	11.11	11.11	92.59
Disagree	4	13	4.81	4.81	97.41
Strongly disagree	5	7	2.59	2.59	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

11) I believe that individual's sustainable consumption is important and can lead to changes in the environment

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Strongly agree	1	93	34.44	34.44	34.44
Agree	2	104	38.52	38.52	72.96
Neutral	3	45	16.67	16.67	89.63
Disagree	4	18	6.67	6.67	96.30
Strongly disagree	5	10	3.70	3.70	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

12) It is important for me to buy products from a brand that promises and has sustainability ingrained in its core values

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Strongly agree	1	40	14.81	14.81	14.81
Agree	2	98	36.30	36.30	51.11
Neutral	3	87	32.22	32.22	83.33
Disagree	4	31	11.48	11.48	94.81
Strongly disagree	5	14	5.19	5.19	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

13) I prefer to buy green products over standard alternatives

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Strongly agree	1	34	12.59	12.59	12.59
Agree	2	95	35.19	35.19	47.78
Neutral	3	89	32.96	32.96	80.74
Disagree	4	33	12.22	12.22	92.96
Strongly disagree	5	19	7.04	7.04	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

14) I believe that my consumption activities have an impact on the environment

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Strongly agree	1	65	24.07	24.07	24.07
Agree	2	121	44.81	44.81	68.89
Neutral	3	46	17.04	17.04	85.93
Disagree	4	22	8.15	8.15	94.07
Strongly disagree	5	16	5.93	5.93	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

15) I am not sure if I can trust companies that consider themselves being sustainable

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Strongly agree	1	47	17.41	17.41	17.41
Agree	2	101	37.41	37.41	54.81
Neutral	3	88	32.59	32.59	87.41
Disagree	4	26	9.63	9.63	97.04
Strongly disagree	5	8	2.96	2.96	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

**Respondents' general motivation:**

7. Would you prefer to buy products from a brand that emphasizes on sustainability performance in their advertising?

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Yes	1	127	47.04	47.04	47.04
No	2	22	8.15	8.15	55.19
Maybe	3	121	44.81	44.81	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

8. If information about sustainability and the company's sustainable performance would be more available to you, would you be more inclined to buy sustainable products in the future?

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cum Percent</i>
Yes	1	177	65.56	65.56	65.56
No	2	14	5.19	5.19	70.74
Maybe	3	79	29.26	29.26	100.00
<i>Total</i>		270	100.0	100.0	

**Respondents' information search on sustainable products:**

9. Where do you search for information about sustainable products, if you do so? (Multiple choice question)

<b>Answer</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No interest in searching	1	0.4%
Third-party research	2	0.8%
Social media	3	1.2%
Product packaging and labels	3	1.2%
Direct marketing	43	15.9%
Company's publication	67	24.8%
Advertisements	87	32.2%
Family and friends	96	35.6%
Personal research	135	50%
Internet	194	71.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>270</b>	

## Appendix 2: Questionnaire

**1. 1. What is your gender? \****Mark only one oval.*

- Female  
 Male

**2. 2. What is your age? \****Mark only one oval.*

- Under 18  
 18 - 24  
 25 - 39  
 40 - 54  
 55 +

**3. 3. What is your marital status? \****Mark only one oval.*

- Single  
 Married  
 Domestic partnership  
 Married and have children  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. 4. What is your current employment status as a student? \****Mark only one oval.*

- Part-time employment  
 Unemployed  
 Unable to work  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. 5. Have you heard the term 'sustainable products' or 'green products' before? \****Mark only one oval.*

- Yes  
 No  
 Maybe

**6. 6. Please choose the most suitable answers to the following statements \****Mark only one oval per row.*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1) I am interested in sustainable products and I am willing to buy them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2) When I go grocery shopping, I usually compare products and buy the one with a positive impact on the world	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3) When I buy products, I usually consider the country of its origin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4) I pay attention whether a product is organic and eco-friendly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5) I prefer to buy local, seasonally available products as standard	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6) I am aware of the environmental impact and problems in relation to the production, use and disposal of household products after the purchase	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7) I am willing to pay extra if it means less negative impact on the environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8) I have reduced or have a limited amount of products from animal sources such as meat and dairy products in my diet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9) I often choose Fairtrade-certified products for foods and drinks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10) I care about reducing packaging waste	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11) I believe that individual's sustainable consumption is important and can lead to changes in the environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12) It is important for me to buy products from a brand that promises and has sustainability ingrained in its core values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13) I prefer to buy green products over standard alternatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14) I believe that my consumption activities have an impact on the environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15) I am not sure if I can trust companies that consider themselves being sustainable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**7. 7. Would you prefer to buy products from a brand that emphasizes on sustainability performance in their advertising? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

**8. 8. If information about sustainability and the company's sustainable performance would be more available to you, would you be more inclined to buy sustainable products in the future? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

**9. 9. Where do you search for information about sustainable products, if you do so? (Multiple choice question) \***

*Tick all that apply.*

- Personal research
- Family and friends
- Company's publication
- Direct marketing
- Advertisements
- Internet
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_