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Consumer perception and purchasing behavior towards green cosmetics

A market research

Lilibeth Borges, Amalia Paananen

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Abstract

The market of green cosmetics is gaining popularity due to the rising trends of having a 'clean" and 'healthy' lifestyle. Recent generations are becoming more aware of the effects of unsustainable consumption in every-day life and they partake in different habits to improve this issue. Still, the market of these clean cosmetics is not performing as successfully as its conventional cosmetics counterpart is.

This research was created with the intention of discovering what the difference between clean and traditional cosmetics are, how their quality and integrity are perceived by consumers, and how their market value can improve. Global eco-certifications and standards used in cosmetics are analyzed as well for their accuracy and varying definitions of what construes a 'green' product.

The nature of this research was exploratory; therefore, a close-ended, deductive survey was created in accordance with the aforementioned objectives in the literature review. With this approach, quantitative data was gathered for insight on consumers' perceptions of different aspects of green cosmetics. No target group was used.

It was concluded that one of the most prominent findings in this research was that the knowledge of eco-certifications has a significant effect on consumers' purchase decisions of green cosmetics. Also, the findings show that clean cosmetic brands must focus on transparency and quality as much as traditional cosmetic brands do to reach a higher level of consumer demand. Furthermore, some producers of green cosmetics practice the opportunistic behavior of "greenwashing". Additionally, more consumers could likely be reached through earned media such as influencers, reviews, and especially in-store recommendations as that was found to be consumers' preferred familiarization method.

Keywords

Green cosmetics, eco-friendly, perceptions, market value, certifications, clean, greenwashing, consumers, standards

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Tiivistelmä

Terveellisemmän ja ekologisten elämäntapojen tavoittelun trendi on kasvattanut luonnonkosmetiikan suosiota markkinoilla. Nuoret ja nuoret aikuiset ovat edellistä tietoisempia jokapäiväisten valintojen seurauksista. Silti luonnonkosmetiikka ei ole menestynyt myynnissä yhtäläisesti verrattuna muihin kosmetiikka tuoteisiin. Tämä tutkimus tehtiin jotta saataisiin selvyyttä siihen, miten perinteisen kosmetiikan ja luonnonkosmetiikan laatu ja luotettavuus eroavat kuluttajien silmissä sekä kuinka ostovalintoja tehdään. Selvyyttä haluttiin myös siihen, miten luonnonkosmetiikan markkinointia voitaisiin edistää.

Tutkimus toteutettiin monivalintakyselynä. Verkkokysely luotiin tutkimus tavotteiden ja kirjallisuuskatsauksen löytöen pohjalta. Kvantitatiivinen data kerättiin monivalintakysymyksillä. Tutkimukselle ei määritelty tiettyä kohderyhmää.

Tuokset osoittivat, että luonnonkosmetiikalle on kysyntää. Tulokset osoittivat myös, että suurella osalla kuluttajista ei ole tietoa ekologisten sertifikaattien merkityksestä. Tietoisuudella eri kosmetiikassa käytetyistä sertifikaateista näytti olevan merkitystä luonnonkosmetiikan kulutukseen. Kyselyn vastausten mukaan kuluttajilla on laajaa epäluottamusta luonnonkosmetiikan väittämiä kohtaan. Kuluttajat luottavat erityisesti tuttavien, vaikuttajien ja kauppojen asiantuntijoiden suosituksiin. Näin ollen ansaittu medianäkyvyys todettiin tehokkaaksi luonnonkosmetiikan markkinointitavaksi. Kyselyn ja kirjallisuuskatsauksen saatujen tietojen perusteella luonnonkosmetiikan markkinoinnissa

Avainsanat (asiasanat)

Luonnonkosmetiikka, ekologinen kosmetiikka, kuluttaja käyttäytyminen, markkinointi, Asiakas käyttäytyminen, eko- sertifikaatit, kosmetiikan markkinointi

Muut tiedot (salassa pidettävät liitteet)

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1 Introduction

Wellbeing and a sustainable lifestyle have become more popular in recent years. Consumers have become more conscious about their shopping habits. Buying green (or 'clean'; used interchangeably in this thesis) cosmetics, buying secondhand, and eating organic foods have become more common. Companies provide more products that claim to be sustainable or ethically produced. Along organic food and sustainable fashion habits, there is a demand for green cosmetics. Green cosmetics are cosmetics with organic, natural ingredients or other aspects that support the protection of the environment. Here, consumer behavior towards green cosmetics is analyzed. Furthermore, the effectiveness of marketing strategies used by companies selling green cosmetics is researched.

2 Background

This subject sparks the interest of many because of its expanding popularity, not only in the beauty industry, but also in the clean beauty industry. As the market continues to offer an overwhelming, growing selection of cosmetics, there is curiosity about the concept that the beauty industry could possibly and hopefully be implementing more green actions during production, packaging, and sourcing. Green cosmetics -and specifically green makeup- are often seen as plain and underperforming compared to its more traditional counterpart. Also, one can find that they are not receiving the same amount of visibility and recognition by beauty influencers, stores, advertisements, articles, and markets in general. In this literature review, the surface is scratched on why this is happening.

2.1 Research questions:

Q1 How can the marketing of green cosmetics become more appealing and accepted?

Q2 What does the green cosmetic market currently offer in terms of quality and integrity?

Q3 How do consumers perceive the quality and integrity of green cosmetics?

3 Literature review

Green marketing may include products that are categorized to be green or demonstrating its producer(s) being involved in protecting the environment with different projects. A green product is defined as a product that is developed according to certain environmental standards depending on the location (Fonseca-Santos, Chorilli, & Correa 2015, 18). A "green" lifestyle is a growing trend all around the world. This lifestyle may vary from daily clean habits to clean nutritional values to clean cosmetics. It is more specifically discussed in this literature review what companies' green standards are, which efforts they make to be clean, and what consumers perceive of these types of cosmetics.

Green products are products that are natural by their ingredients, have green packaging, or use a process of production that reduces environmental damage (Arseculeratne & Yazdanifard 2014, 2). Green products work in the same way as traditional products, in the sense that their functions should remain constant. Their key difference is the impact on environmental factors. Green products generally have a longer life cycle and are created with biodegradable components; increasing the lifetime of the products, developing reusable products or packaging, and raising environmental awareness.

"Green Marketing strategy encompasses two essential characteristics; Firms will have to take care in order to develop a product that would satisfy consumers' needs satisfactorily with minimum negative impact on environment; coupled with this is the creation of a perception in the minds of the customers so as to emphasize the quality of the product and the firm's commitment towards the environment." (ibid., 131).

Green cosmetics can be made, for example, from organic ingredients or by using recycled materials. The most often seen green factors in cosmetics are reusable or biodegradable packaging, vegan ingredients, organic ingredients, no fragrances or colors added, and companies working with charity organizations. Besides environmental factors, using green cosmetics is connected wellness and a healthy lifestyle. A good example of a common ingredient used by many well-known companies is clay. According to Amberg & Fogarassy (2019, 3), Bastianini et al. (2018, 5) found that "Clay minerals also have exceptional qualities, among others, low or no toxicity, and high bio-compatibility."

Green cosmetics are usually connected with a sense of naturality and organic ingredients. As told by Fonseca et al. (2015, 18), organic ingredients make the products safer for health and have less of a negative impact on the environment (Ottman 1993; Lambin 2002). This is one of the given perceptions to be further evaluated throughout this piece.

One of the most popular green cosmetics brands is Lush. Lush´s operations focus on reducing waste created from their products. Lush makes it possible for consumers to purchase shower gel, shampoo, and makeup enclosed in recycled plastic or zero plastic. Lush´s products in pots and bottles are sold in 100% post-consumer plastic. A customer can return five clean and empty pots of products from Lush to any Lush store in exchange for a free face mask. Thirty-five percent of Lush´s products are sold naked, with no packaging. (Lush stories, "10 Things You Should Know about Lush Packaging".)

3.1 Green standards

There are multiple globally recognized standards for "green" and organic products and labels. Companies may use eco-labels to prove the ecological factors of the product. Eco-labels work as certifications for the product to show the truthfulness of the given claims (i.e. the environment friendliness, vegan or natural ingredients in the product) (Atkinson & Rosenthal 2014, 34). Marketers should select the most applicable eco-label for their brand based on their claims, region of sales, intended audience and the total costs of the certification and licensing. For marketers, it is important to know their target audience. Transparency is another aspect to consider as it can improve the eco-label recognition and increase sales (H. Whittaker, Engimann, & Sambrook 2009, 30). "…COSMOS Standard will provide some harmonization and transparency as to what is natural and organic, particularly in Europe, but there is a great deal of work to be done by the industry to create a universal definition.” (H. Whittaker et al. 2009, 34).

There is a lot of controversy between different certifications, standards, and eco-labels. Different eco-labels also often have competing interests i.e. non-profit, government agencies, consumer advocacy groups, and for-profit groups (Atkinson & Rosenthal 2014, 34). Consumers without knowledge or just little knowledge of green cosmetics often fear being misled by the claims of the products. These consumers tend to go for eco-labels with certified information. (Zhang & Zhou 2019, 25.)

In the article by Fonseca-Santos et al. (2015, 18), the authors study the process and terminology used in the creation of green cosmetics. Some of the eco-labels used in ecological products are Ecocert, USDA, Cosmos-Standard which have varying standards for definitions of organic. According to Cosmos-Standard (2020), for a cosmetic to be considered organic there must have at least 95% of organic ingredients produced. (“About the Cosmos-Standard: International Certification for Cosmetics”). At least 20% of the total product must be organic. For natural cosmetics there is no requirement to use a minimum level of organic ingredients. The USDA (2008) permits four main labeling categories based on the percentage of organic ingredients in the product: "100% organic," "organic," "made with organic ingredients," and "less than 70% organic”. (Cosmetics, Body Care, and Personal Care Products page). These labels can be used to build trust and confidence between consumer and producer in terms of integrity of quality, ingredients, environmentally positive effects, and safety.

As for the European Union, eco-labels are popular and obvious in food and cosmetic products, such as the Blue Angel in Germany and the Nordic Swan in Scandinavia. (Atkinson & Rosenthal 2014, 34). “The European certifiers BDIH and Ecocert have been leaders in the ecolabel movement, but relatively new players such as MBDC, DfE, and NPA are seeking to become leaders in the eco-label market, particularly in the U.S.” (H. Whittaker et al. 2009, 34). “Eco-labels emerged in the U.S. mainstream in the 1990s partly as the result of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which pushed for sustainable development. One of the first labels to appear was Energy Star, developed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to identify and promote energy-efficient products.” (Atkinson & Rosenthal 2009, 34.)

Now, there are over 300 eco-labels globally which vary for their credibility and accuracy. Many eco-labels suffer from lack of regulation; some of them include more detailed information and claims than others. (ibid., 34-35.)

Figure 1 Different eco-labels i.e.; USDA organic, Eco-cert, BDIH standard

3.2 Greenwashing

As there are many eco-labels and green products with competing values, there are also many companies that include the so called “greenwash” in their marketing. “The term for advertisement and labels that promise more environmental benefit than they deliver is called ‘greenwashing’.” (Dahl 2010, A 247). According to Dahl (2010, A 247), the term for greenwashing has been used since mid-1980s to describe the practice of making unreliable and overstated claims of the sustainability of the product as an attempt to gain market share. The study by Zaman, Miliutenko, & Nagapetan (2010, 104), showed that there is gap between company policies and their practices. A lot of eco-brands do not comply with the environmental justice and cleanness that their services or products claim in packaging or other sources of product information.

From the hundreds of green labels used today, only a few are recognized to be highly reliable and accurate (Dahl 2010, A 251).

Greenwash might manifest itself as a claim of sustainability that cannot be supported by easily accessible information or by third party certification. Also, the claims made can be poorly defined; the real meaning of these claims can be easily misunderstood by consumers. Greenwashing can also be done by making truthful claims that can be supported but are not important and relevant to the product’s purpose. These claims can be unhelpful and confusing in the purchasing process for a consumer who searches for environmentally conscious options. (Dahl 2010. A 249)

Greenwashing that has been done in the past has already affected the attitude of many consumers. This has caused a bad brand image for many large-scale companies through many industries from food to clothes to cosmetics. This can make future attempts to market green products very hard as the consumers have already lost trust for the brand.

3.3 Motivational factors in purchasing behavior

In recent years, consumers have had a growing interest towards environmentally friendly cosmetics. Fonseca et al. (2015, 18) uncovered from a study that the estimated average annual growth of the green cosmetics market is 8-25% (Jones & Duerbeck 2004). “Marketers have presumed that a green product has emerged to become the direction for future product development and it is the answering call from public to conserve the environment due to extensive pollution and waste creation from corporations.” (Nor Fairuz & Hashim 2015, 87).

Although there is a growing popularity in the market for such items, consumers have varying motivations when buying these products or lack thereof. Despite the environmental concern of customers, there is a gap between thinking green and acting green (Yi Chang 2017, 160). Consumers having a positive attitude towards green cosmetics are not seeing the environmental aspect relevant in the purchasing process (Singhal & Malik 2018, purpose). Behavior and motivations are further discussed in the upcoming paragraphs. Although green cosmetics are usually connected to a healthy lifestyle and well-being, Matic & Puh (2015, 53) profess that health interests have no significant effect on the purchase behavior towards natural cosmetics. Customers' health or environmental concerns will not necessarily have an influence on their attitude towards natural cosmetics (Amberg & Fogarassy 2019, 5-6).

It is also claimed that consumers' motivation behind their purchase of green cosmetics is not driven by environmental values but rather by personal needs and lifestyle (Nor Fairuz & Hashim 2015, 87). The motivation behind purchasing behavior of green cosmetics seems unclear as there are many different conflicting findings. Different findings might be affected by the location and social expectations. Also, study methods, research participants, researchers, and their philosophy behind the research topics can affect the findings.

The growing interest for health and well-being is affecting consumer behavior. The most common worry for consumers buying traditional cosmetics is the chemicals used in the products that can possibly be harmful for their skin and health (Lin, Yang, Hanifah, & Iqbal 2018, 1-2.). (Zhang & Zhou 2019, 4) Stated that according to (Dayan & Kromidas 2011) Even though traditional cosmetics can bring great damage to nature and peoples' well-being due to the development of chemical synthesis technology, tens of thousands of effective synthetic ingredients have been developed and can be easily standardized and mass produced at lower costs

Green cosmetics are usually seen as a safer option. But what is the integrity of this "claim" or given perception that products (especially cosmetics) that are labelled as organic or environmentally friendly are actually the safer option? According to Apone, Barbulova, & Colucci (2015), "If waste products are sourced from an eco-farm, they are an even more valuable source of safe extracts needed for these cosmetics, since there are no remaining pesticides, or potentially toxicant materials." (Amberg & Fogarassy 2019, 6).

The five common appeals for products in general are environmental, health, safety, social, and hedonism related (Grubb & Grathwohl 1967, 22-24). It could be assumed that cosmetic products that are labeled as "environmentally friendly" would have one or more appeal that can attract the potential consumer. The rising environmental consciousness about global warming and sustainability raise a demand for beauty products that are created with these customer values integrated.

By dividing perception values, they can be analyzed for their purpose, popularity, and effectiveness. Firstly, consumers will engage in behavior, including making purchases, to obtain a positive reaction from their social peers (ibid., 22-24.) This indicates that there is a correlation between self-consciousness and purchase decision. More specifically, there is a correlation between being self-conscious about how people around one perceive one's choices made after purchasing items, whether they are green or not. Evidently, receiving positive judgment from peers is considered a form of validation for consumers. Social pressure and friends have an impact on the process of undergoing a green lifestyle (including green cosmetics) (Zhang & Zhou 2019, 26-27). Nor Fairuz & Hashim (2015, 87) argue that consumers' green cosmetics purchase decisions are actually based on personal needs and lifestyle rather than environmental concern.

Natural cosmetics have become products that also represent the consumers´ sustainable and healthy lifestyle as their own identity (Zhang & Zhou 2019, 25). Also, a virtual community and peers promoting green lifestyle, for example, in social media, can impact the consumer's attitude and interest to switch over to the use of green cosmetics instead of the traditional option (ibid., 27). "For example, the green movement launched by social groups plays a key role in promoting consumers from original lifestyles to healthy and sustainable lifestyles" (ibid., 24).

3.4 Consumer behavior

Consumers tend to go for well-known brands when purchasing green cosmetics because the cosmetic brands they are accustomed to have likely provided and/or exceeded expected results. Brand knowledge has significant influence on the purchase behavior of consumers (Yi Chang 2017, 165; Singhal & Malik 2018, literature review). The perceived quality has influence on the purchase intentions of the customers as well (Yi Chang 2017, 165). If natural cosmetic products do not reach the quality of traditional cosmetics, consumers most likely will not continue buying them (Amberg & Fogarassy 2019, 6).

To be able to compete against traditional cosmetic products in stores, green cosmetics must reach a high quality with an affordable price (Fonseca-Santos et al. 2015, 18-

21). For one, the price of these types of cosmetics, as with virtually any product, is affected by location, marketing, sourcing, standards, and quality. Green cosmetics, though, are seen as “premium” because their production typically requires transforming waste into recycled material, which, in turn, affects the final price of the product (Arseculeratne & Yazdanifard 2014, 133).

Also, a perceived high quality of green cosmetics seems to positively influence consumer purchase intentions (Yi Chang 2017, 165). Moreover, the price of green products can have a great effect on the purchasing process. Consumers might have an interest for a natural and healthy lifestyle, but the price of green cosmetics might make them back away during the purchasing process (Zhang & Zhou 2019, 27). The price and recommendations of the product have been found to affect the purchasing process between women with different income levels. Education level and age do not seem to have an effect on the purchasing decision. (Singhal & Malik 2018, findings.)

Xie et al. (2015, 1110) revealed that organic products are generally perceived as safe when they are lacking in artificial elements such as pesticides and chemical-based fertilizers, which is applicable especially to foods. Consumers that purchase organic food and new cosmetics brands are more likely to purchase green cosmetics as they are generally aware of what they consume and do so with health-related concerns. Generally, those who purchase organic foods for ethical and health-related reasons are environmentally conscious as well. Women are found to be more interested in purchasing green cosmetics than male consumers. The age of consumers is not found to be a significant factor on their attitude towards green cosmetics. (Amberg & Fogarassy 2019, 8-10; Matic & Puh 2015, 59.)

There are multiple barriers affecting consumer behavior towards green cosmetics such as “…high price, inconvenient purchasing location, perceived efficacy or quality, lack of knowledge and no awareness, no plan beforehand, no harmonized certification.” (Zhang & Zhou 2019, 33). These barriers directly hinder consumers' purchasing behavior of natural cosmetics without being governed by the purchasing intention. (ibid., 33).

3.5 Customer attitude

Consumers are confused about the different standards used for green cosmetics because there is no “one” general standard that is used globally and delivers the same message. Namely, the United States of America and Europe have a wide variation of certification and standards that are used in their products with varying definitions and exceptions of the definition of what an environmentally friendly product is categorized as. Also, the overstated marketing of green cosmetics is concerning consumers (Lin et al. 2018, 2).

A brand image can affect one’s attitude towards a green product, as traditional cosmetic brands are linked to the thought of unhealth and pollution, specifically with large-scale cosmetic companies. Consumers are suspicious towards the natural cosmetics offerings of these companies (Zhang & Zhou 2019, 1).

Two of the most common hindrances for purchasing green cosmetics are the lack of awareness and trust towards environmentally friendly products (Singhal & Malik 2018, literature review). Because green cosmetic marketing is still under research, consumers tend to have a lack of trust for green brands (Matic & Puh 2015, 9). Different symbols and possible greenwashing used in marketing are worrying consumers. Distrust of claims made by the label found in products creates a negative attitude towards them (Zhang & Zhou 2019, 19). Consumers attitude towards green brands is also affected by the lack of objective knowledge. Consumers' misinterpretation of natural cosmetics can come from the fact that consumers perceive their knowledge from their peers or from independent learning through internet (ibid., 31).

”The demonstrated benefits of the addition of eco-labels on cosmetics packages results in an increased amount of confusion among consumers and they will not be able to distinguish the official and non-official eco-labels” (Korink 2013, 44).

An exploratory study by Lin et al. (2018, 8) showed that some consumers consider, for example, a green leaf mark as a symbol in packaging as a reference to the product being categorized as a green cosmetic, and some consumers consider this a marketing strategy used by companies. Consumers are likely to search for symbols of certified green production from the packaging of the product (Amberg & Fogarassy 2019, 6). The consumer´s attitude towards green products are affected by the products´ packaging, location, price, and recommendations (Singhal & Malik 2018, conclusion). “Consumers also became extremely refined; therefore, scientific research and product development became steps producers cannot skip.” (Amberg & Fogarassy 2019, 2).

Tae-Im (2019, literature review) categorized the impact of consumer behavior through ‘subjective knowledge’, ‘objective knowledge’, and ‘experience-based knowledge’. Subjective knowledge about a product is defined as a customer’s own feelings and self-perception on the amount of knowledge they have about a product’s uses, sourcing, manufacturing, authenticity, and such. While objective knowledge is a consumer’s knowledge formed by memories. Lastly, experience-based knowledge is knowledge created from prior usage of said product or a similar one. Singhal & Malik (2018, literature review) acknowledged that a positive attitude towards green cosmetics does not always mean that consumers will necessarily purchase the item, even if their attitude can reflect on their behavior as a consumer because the green market is far too novel thus consumers have little knowledge about the green market’s offerings and they back away at times of purchase. Jaiswal & Kant (2018)

3.6 Suggestions

The study by Lin et al. (2018, 5-7) showed that there is demand for clear and honest marketing for green cosmetics. Consumers are hoping the information about natural ingredients and the production process of products can be found from their advertisements clearly when making purchase decisions in stores. Companies could provide more information about the benefits of using green cosmetics to gain trust and loyalty of consumers (Matic & Puh 2015, 60). Consumers are more likely to purchase green cosmetics when the product contains a trusted label. Also, a preference for products containing an eco-label was found. The preference was especially high when the product with eco-label included additional information. (Korink 2013, 32.)

Companies that practice publicity through advertisement and direct selling can help marketers create a positive attitude for female consumers from their neutral attitude (Singhal & Malik 2018, analysis and interpretation). “First, marketers need to exert their influence on consumers and actively promote healthy and sustainable lifestyles to consumers. For example, marketers need to increase communication with consumers, expose more objective product knowledge of natural cosmetics to them, including the production process, the source of ingredients, and the positive and negative effects of various natural ingredients.” (Zhang & Zhou 2019, 34.)

A globally recognizable label and standards used in advertisements could make green marketing more effective, especially with proof of environmentally friendly claims. Consumers are expecting often to find an authentic certification symbol of green cosmetics from their product´s packaging. (Korink 2013, 44) suggests that adding an eco-label to product can be good investment for the manufacturer as it would have positive impact to the consumers´ perception of the product.

Known celebrities with good image used as advocates for green brands could create effective marketing through different media (Lin et al. 2018, 11). “Harmonized authoritative certifications can clean up a variety of claims and certifications on the market, reduce opportunistic behavior like greenwashing, help consumers easily access objective product knowledge, reduce the cost of searching information, and thus increase trust in brands, finally increase commitment to buy natural cosmetics.” (Zhang & Zou 2019, 32).

Also, emphasizing the communication between consumer and the companies can enhance the trust. As more objective knowledge would be exposed to the consumers, they would have more trust and so more commitment to buy natural cosmetics. (Zhang & Zhou 2019, 6).

The ability of retailers to create emotional and social values and possess the knowledge as to when it is important to present these values, can produce great profitability. If a retailer can present a product that agrees with its retail concept, the retailer can use the product to the advantage of the producer and the retailer. For example, a product showcased in a specific market is generally profiting the market and the producer, thus a social appeal can be used as a type of tactic to produce said profits. (Nor Fairuz & Hashim 2015, 87.)

Nor Fairuz & Hashim (2015) suggest that emerging a health and self-image message to the marketing of green products rather than the environmental issues could possibly generate more response from the market. (87) “It is vital for marketers to realize the underlying reason of why consumers should choose green products rather than conventional products.” (Nor Fairuz & Hashim 2015, 87). Social appeal is influential in developing consumers’ product preference, as consumers tend to buy a product that follow society's perceptions (Sweeney and Soutar 2007, conclusions). This tactic can be found used in advertisements such as posters and commercials to attract consumers that likely follow popular societal trends. “Green product companies would be able to gain acceptance from regulators and the general public so that many promotional activities would bear fruit without much effort since the general public at large would respond to them enthusiastically”. (Arseculeratne & Yazdanifard 2014, 134).

The producers of eco-friendly cosmetics can enhance their consumers’ satisfaction and trust by producers’ manufacturing honesty through developing analyses that test the performance of products from the beginning to the end of its life cycle, to further investigate harmful/safe effects that are produced by environmentally-friendly products within aspects such as transportation, packaging, processing, and selling (ibid., 133). This is one form of research that can be performed using gradual testing to further prove claims made by producers on the environmental effects of eco-friendly cosmetics and reveal data for prospective consumers. Technically, the environmental impact is to be positive, which causes customers to be charged a premium upon purchasing environmentally conscious products (ibid., 132).

With above findings, companies can further investigate more effective marketing strategies for environmentally friendly cosmetics considering that. In this order, one can see the values that are connected to consumers in order of priority when purchasing self-care products. Interestingly enough, product knowledge is the factor with most importance.

3.7 Hypothesis

From the researched articles, it is hypothesized that the biggest problem in the marketing of green cosmetics is the message implied in the advertisement and the packaging. Consumers seem to have lack of trust with company claims of being sustainable. There should be a demand for clear information and justifications for the certifications of the eco-labels used. This information could include environmental and health benefits of the product. Another development that could be implemented in the marketing of these products could be to concentrate more on the health and beauty benefits of these products, as overstated marketing of the environmental effect of the product might cause distrust among consumers. The motivational factors behind the purchase behavior of green cosmetics still remained unclear.

In the aspect of marketing, moving on to producing green cosmetics seems to be especially difficult for big and well-known companies that are used to being recognized for their traditional cosmetics products. These large companies have already set a picture of themselves in the eyes of the consumer as implied in the earlier chapters. Zhang & Zhou (2019) uncovered that as traditional cosmetics brands are linked to the thought of possibly being unhealthy and causing pollutions; more specifically with the larger cosmetics companies. Consumers are suspicious towards the natural cosmetics offerings of these companies. (20.)

For future marketing companies offering green products, it would be important to research and get to know the target audience. The main focus of marketing depends on the target audience´s interest. For some locations and age groups, focusing, for example, more on the health benefits could work better than focusing on the environmental benefits.

H1 The biggest problems in the market of green cosmetics are the misleading or unspecific messages implied in advertisements and packaging.

H2 Consumers seem to have lack of trust with companies’ claims of sustainability.

H3 There is a demand for clear information and justifications for the certifications of eco-labels used in products.

4 Methodology

4.1 Research purpose and design

According to Okhrimchuk (2019, 29), “Typically, academic researchers are conducted with a specific aim: whether to study an unknown phenomenon, to create an accurate image of an existing event, or to identify and explain connections between variables”. There are multiple purposes behind the research that has been conducted for this piece. The first aim was to create and understanding of the perceptions that varying demographics have on the marketing, quality, production, popularity, and other aspects towards environmentally friendly cosmetics. Secondly, it was an aim to further analyze this information to discuss possible improvements towards the marketing of said cosmetics. Another aim was to comprehend the current bias that the “green” cosmetic market faces by its consumers where traditional cosmetics are the preferred option for the last decades.

4.1.1 Quantitative research

To find useful and reliable data for the market research, the data was collected through a quantitative online survey. Quantitative research is defined to be a systematic investigation that includes gathering quantifiable data and analyzing the data by performing statistical, computational, and mathematical techniques (Bhat, questionpro.com N.D). This was found to be useful as the reliable data would inquire a big sample size. The quantitative survey method was chosen to get a wider understanding of the market area and perceptions among general consumers. Quantitative research is widely used in conducting market research. In market research, the information can be collected from consumers by using online surveys, online polls, or other questionnaires. From there, the information can be depicted in

4.1.2

4.1.3 Creating the survey

The next step for the research was to create the survey, which was found to be the most useful and effective way to find the information wanted. The survey question and answer options were defined in accordance to the research objectives, information found about “green” cosmetics’ market, and other observations about consumers in the literature review found earlier on in this research. The survey was created using a Google Form- as the data would be simple to transfer to an Excel workbook further on. The size of the questionnaire was kept short and questions simple for the participants. According to Kothari (2004, 103) the questionnaire should be simple, and the size of the questionnaire should be kept to a minimum. Kothari (2004, 103) also mentioned that the questions should be in logical order from easiest to more difficult questions. This order was used in the survey. The main research objectives of this questionnaire were discovering what consumers’ attitudes are towards “green” cosmetics, what consumers define as “green” cosmetics, what the buying habits of consumers are, and how knowledgeable they are about greenwashing and green cosmetic marketing, and how their interests affect buying habits for such products.

4.1.4 Primary data collection and analysis

The data collected for this research was collected through a cross-sectional, close-ended online survey. As the aim of the research was to gain an understanding about consumer perception, a survey was found to be an optimal way to find that information. Using primary data allows the research to have the most current data possible.

As the objective of the research was to get information about the perception of general consumers, the survey was not targeted to a specific target group. The survey was posted on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter with a set goal of a maximum of 150 respondents.

The survey was displayed for multiple diverse groups of people where most of the users are approximately aged from 16 to 40, such as Facebook groups with foreigners of varying in nationality, age, and gender living in or visiting Finland. Also, the survey was distributed in WhatsApp groups with university students; one group containing approximately 80 possible respondents. The survey was repeatedly shared at least 3 times through these platforms. This was crucial for receiving between 100 and 150 within a short period of time. In total, the survey was posted 6 times on Instagram, 3 times on Facebook, and 3 times on WhatsApp. Participants were not individually chosen to answer the survey. The final amount of responses received was 140.

4.1.5 Analysis methods

The data collected was analyzed by using Excel. The cross-tabulation in Excel pivot charts were used to see possible connections between the answers. The Excel pivot charts were used also to create tables for visual ease.

4.1.6 Research ethics and result verification

The survey was created with the objective that it should be as neutral as possible. Still, as the survey was created as a close-ended survey, the possibility for completely neutral answers was limited. Another limitation for the objectiveness of the data was the platform choices used to share this survey. It was shared online through platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp which results in most participants being in the common age group of social media users. This limited the data as far as middle-aged (50-60) groups was concerned.

Firstly, during preparation of the survey, before its launch, it was assessed whether the survey description was clear and concise. It was also assessed that the answer options were not discriminating any race, gender, nationality, color, sexual orientation, or belief. Once this step was finalized, the survey was published, and every response recorded was done consensually. No respondent was under any obligation to begin or end the survey. There were no unethical, negative consequences occurring to any participant for partaking in the survey. Also, there was no judgement or preju-

dice when presenting the results. As such, the gender option for the survey was inclusive of those who do not identify as binary or simply have different gender preferences than ‘male’ or ‘female’.
Secondly, as the Google Form used for the survey was customizable by the authors, none of the formulated questions required a respondent’s name, address, e-mail, or any information that could reveal the identity of a participant. The authors did not need direct consent from any participant through a legal document or other form of record-keeping. This is one of the aspects of the survey used in the research that greatly facilitated the data collection for the authors; there was no use of a target audience or lack of anonymity. No information was distorted.
Thirdly, for the written parts of this research, all sources used were academic. When using statements not originally from the authors’, citations and references were implemented accordingly.

5 Results

5.1.1 Survey results

The questionnaire used for this research contained a total of 13 questions in which participants can notice that the questions begin as less complex and end as more complex, including a question at the very end where one must write their own answer.
The first question was a very simple one to determine the gender of the participants. This was a mandatory question for respondents to answer. Most (80%) of participants were female, 18.6% were male, and only 2 participants (1,4%) answered ‘other/rather not specify’.
Secondly, the age of respondents was asked. Answer options ranged from below age 18 and over age 41. The top two most common answers chosen were from those in the age group of 22 to 25, with a whopping 43,6%; or a total of 61 people chose this answer. The next most popular answer was from those in the age group of 18 to 21 (26,4%). The rest of the answers were as follows, in order from most to least popular: ages 41+ (10,7%), ages 26 to 30 (9,3%), ages 31 to 35 (6,4%), ages 36 to 40 (2,1%), and lastly, below age 18 (1,4%).

The third question was about the nationality of participants. As the survey was published solely in the Keski-Suomi region of Finland (center Finland), the authors created an option called "Finnish" (62,1% chose this) to gather slightly more accurate data, and then, there was an option for any other European country (15% chose this). Moreover, the second largest choice of nationality was North American with 15,7% of answers; almost tying with other European nationalities (excluding Finland). Participants that had African or Asian nationality tied with each constituting of 2,9% of answers. Only 1,4% of people chose 'South American'. Lastly, no one responded they are of Oceanian nationality.

The next close-ended question was whether people followed online beauty trends or influencers (public figures that provide brand credibility through promotions and other forms of brand publicity). The amount of answers was almost identical, with 71 people (50,7%) selecting 'yes' and 69 people (49,3%) selecting 'no'.

Subsequently, as this survey was not intended to analyze exclusively perceptions of make-up, but rather any cosmetics involving products used for essential hygiene to other items related to physical aesthetic concerns, this question was included: "How often do you purchase cosmetics overall (hygienic necessities and/or other beauty products) for yourself?". This question was essential for analysis of its connections (or connection) with other questions, as demonstrated in (see Figure 2). The most frequently chosen answer was 'a couple times a month' (32,1%), followed by 'once a month' (30%), then every 2 to 3 months (27,1%). The last three options chosen in order from most to least popular were: 'once a year' and 'less than once a year' with each accounting for 4,3% of answers (or each chosen 6 times), and finally, only 3 people (2,1%) chose 'once a week'.

In addition, the next question presented was: "How do you familiarize yourself with the cosmetics you have used, currently use, or are planning to use?" Again, with a reminder that, "Cosmetics are not limited to make-up only." This could ease the understanding of the question for those who might interpret the word, "cosmetics", as merely make-up products in the case of bias. This question allowed people to choose more than one option. Plenty of people were keen on word-of-mouth as their form of familiarization for cosmetics; 70% of participants selected 'through friends or family'. 'Influencers' constituted for 48,6% of answers, then 'in-store recommendations' made up 37,9% of answers, 'online advertisements' was 32,9% of all answers, only 14,3% of people felt they didn't 'pay much attention to the cosmetics' they buy, and finally, 12,1% of people preferred traditional advertisements, like radio, television, newspaper, etc.

To discover what people felt their most valued aspect of a product was during their purchase decision of cosmetics, the following question scratched the surface of this. Multiple choices were able to be chosen at once for this question as well. Quality was the most preferred aspect (77,9%), and the least were 'packaging' and 'uniqueness' (with each matching at 17,9%). Price was the second most valued aspect (75,7%), then ethical values (40,7%), and lastly, popularity comprised of 19,3% of responses.

Moreover, the survey questioned whether people bought clean cosmetics. Although, this question was not limited to answers of 'yes' or 'no' so to be inclusive of even those who are not familiar with the definition of clean/green cosmetics or those who simply do not have a polarized opinion regarding this question. 48 persons (34,3%) preferred buying green cosmetics 'sometimes', 24 persons (17,1%) didn't purchase them, but wanted to 'get into it', 22 people (15,7%) said they did buy green cosmetics, but 'rarely', 17 persons (12,1%) also said they purchase them, and 'very often'. 10 people (7,1%) didn't purchase these products at all, and 10 more didn't know what "green" or "clean" cosmetics meant but had an interest for them. 9 people (6,4%) did not have any interest in these cosmetics.

To assess peoples' own definitions of a clean/green product, the survey asked what participants considered these to be. Participants were able to choose more than one option for this question. 85,7% of people felt they defined these products 'as those 'with eco-friendly certifications'. The following most popular choice was 'an organic product' consisting of 67,1% of answers. Consecutively, over half (57,9%) of people felt that a product with 'sustainable packaging' was an appropriate answer. 52,9% of people agreed that they defined a green cosmetic as a cruelty-free product. And to conclude, only 20 people (14,3%) defined these cosmetics as those that partake in non-profit projects.

Furthermore, the authors wanted some clues on the trust that people feel towards the eco-friendly claims made by the manufacturers of these kinds of cosmetics. Over half (60%) of people appear to only trust these products depending on the company itself or the type of product. 16% of people outright agreed that they trust the claims. 15% were unsure about their trust towards these claims. And 8,6% did not trust these claims at all.

Next, the survey asked people whether they're familiar with eco-certifications made by green cosmetics' manufacturers. 59,3% of answers were 'no', and 40,7% were 'yes'. Then, to receive insight on brand knowledge from the following question, 52,1% of respondents felt they were familiar with brands that produce clean cosmetics, and 47,9% felt they were not familiar.

Last but not least, the final question was optional and open-ended, asking participants to provide a name or names of brands they thought produced green cosmetics. 45% of them provided an answer naming one or more brands. (See figure 2) The most common response for this question was "Lavera". Lavera is a German brand that produces vegan, paraben-free, lead-free, cruelty-free, and certified organic cosmetics (Lavera's Website, FAQ). A response to this question is not a direct indicative that the brand(s) mentioned in the response are factually clean brands. For another type of research, it can be investigated how legitimate these companies' claims of being clean are.

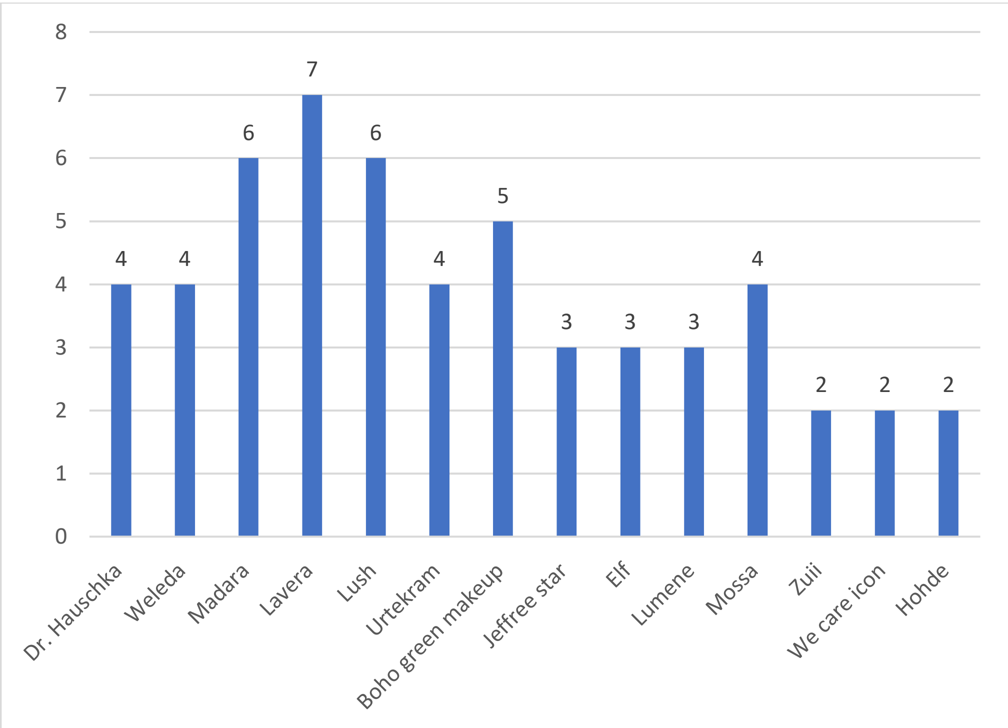


Figure 2 Open-ended question

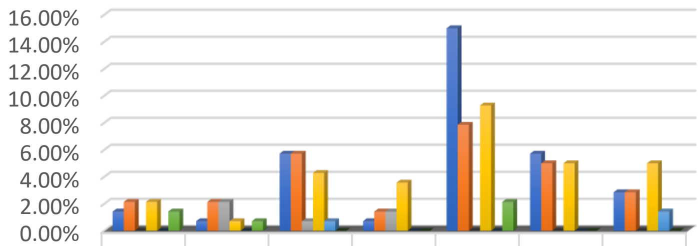
5.2 Cross-tabulation results

In this chapter, the survey results discussed above were further analyzed by cross tabulating. This gave more insight to the connections between certain answers.

5.2.1 Buying habits

5.2.1.1 Buying habits/buying habits of green cosmetics

First and foremost, the buying habits of all respondents were analyzed. The questions “How often do you purchase cosmetics overall?” and “Do you buy green cosmetics?” were compared simultaneously. From Figure 3, it is visible that participants who purchased cosmetics in general were more often are more likely to purchase green cosmetics. When comparing the buying habits of the participants, it was those who purchase overall cosmetics less than once a year that were less likely to buy green cosmetics. 15% of participants buy overall cosmetics a couple times a month and purchase green cosmetics sometimes. Otherwise, there was no significant connection between these factors. (See figure 3)



	I don't know what that means, but I'd like to know	I'm not interested	No, but I'd like to get into it	Not at all	Yes, but only sometimes	Yes, but rarely	Yes, very often
couple times a month	1.43%	0.71%	5.71%	0.71%	15.00%	5.71%	2.86%
every 2 to 3 months	2.14%	2.14%	5.71%	1.43%	7.86%	5.00%	2.86%
Less than once a year	0.0 %	2.1 %	0.7 %	1.4 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %
once a month	2.1 %	0.7 %	4.3 %	3.6 %	9.3 %	5.0 %	5.0 %
Once a week	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.7 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	1.4 %
Once a year	1.4 %	0.7 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	2.1 %	0.0 %	0.0 %

Figure 3 *Y= How often do you purchase cosmetics overall? X= Do you buy green cosmetics?*

5.2.1.2 Buying habits of green cosmetics/gender

The second set of factors analyzed were the purchasing habits of green cosmetics between genders. As Figure 4 shows, according to the survey, women were more likely to buy green cosmetics. 41,1% of female respondents purchase green cosmetics sometimes. Overall, 73,3% of the female participants are buying green cosmetics ´rarely´, ´sometimes´ or ´very often´. Although male respondents were not as active buyers of these cosmetics, it was found that 42,3% of the male respondents were interested in knowing more about green cosmetics. Still, 46,2% of the male participants were not interested or did not purchase green cosmetics at all. 1,4% of participants identified as ‘other’ or didn’t want to specify; this result was too narrow to give accurate data on a larger scale. (See figure 4)

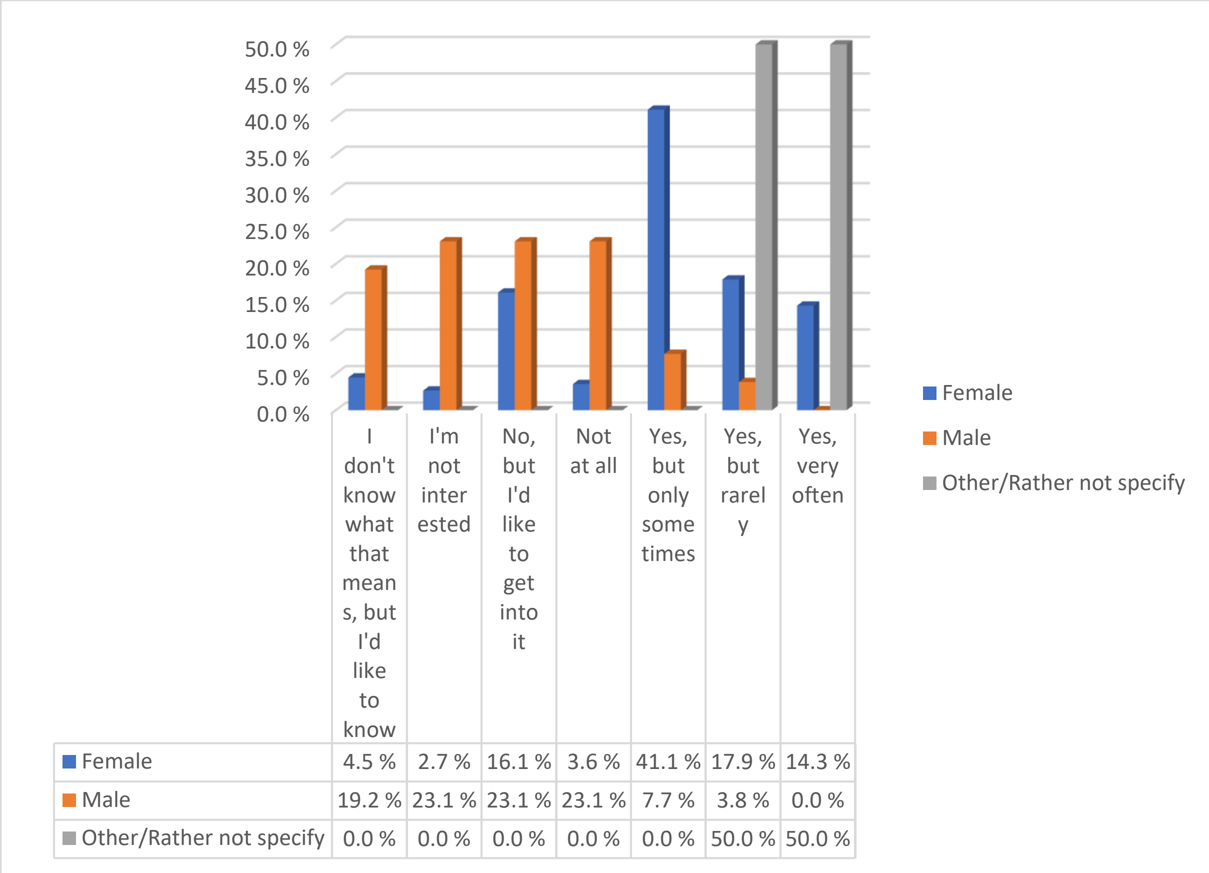


Figure 4 *Y=Gender, X= Do you buy green cosmetics? As percentage of the column total amount*

table 1 buying habits of green cosmetics (Row labels) between genders as percentage from the column total

Count of Gender:	**Column Labels**			
Row Labels	**Female**	**Male**	**Other/Rather not specify**	**Grand Total**
I don't know what that means, but I'd like to know	4,5 %	19,2 %	0,0 %	7,1 %
I'm not interested	2,7 %	23,1 %	0,0 %	6,4 %
No, but I'd like to get into it	16,1 %	23,1 %	0,0 %	17,1 %
Not at all	3,6 %	23,1 %	0,0 %	7,1 %
Yes, but only sometimes	41,1 %	7,7 %	0,0 %	34,3 %
Yes, but rarely	17,9 %	3,8 %	50,0 %	15,7 %
Yes, very often	14,3 %	0,0 %	50,0 %	12,1 %
Grand Total	**100,0 %**	**100,0 %**	**100,0 %**	**100,0 %**

5.2.1.3 Buying habits of green cosmetics/ following trends

The connection between following beauty trends or influencers and the respondents buying habits were compared in (see figure 5). 50,7% of the respondents claimed to follow beauty trends or beauty influencers. As shown in Figure 5, respondents who are following beauty trends were more likely to have positive perception towards purchasing green cosmetics. In terms of negative perceptions towards purchasing green cosmetics, 10% of participants do not follow beauty trends or are not interested in purchasing or do not buy green cosmetics. This is more than twice the amount of participants who *do* follow beauty trends and have no interest in purchasing/are not buying green cosmetics. This group was only 3,5% of the respondents. Females were more likely to follow beauty trends/ beauty influencers (65,1%). 100% of men did not follow beauty trends or influencers. 50% or the “other” gender claimed to follow beauty trends or influencers, but the “other/ prefer not to say” gender group were too small size group to give reliable data in a broad view.
(See figure 5) Effect of following beauty influencers/ trends to the purchasing habit of green cosmetics.

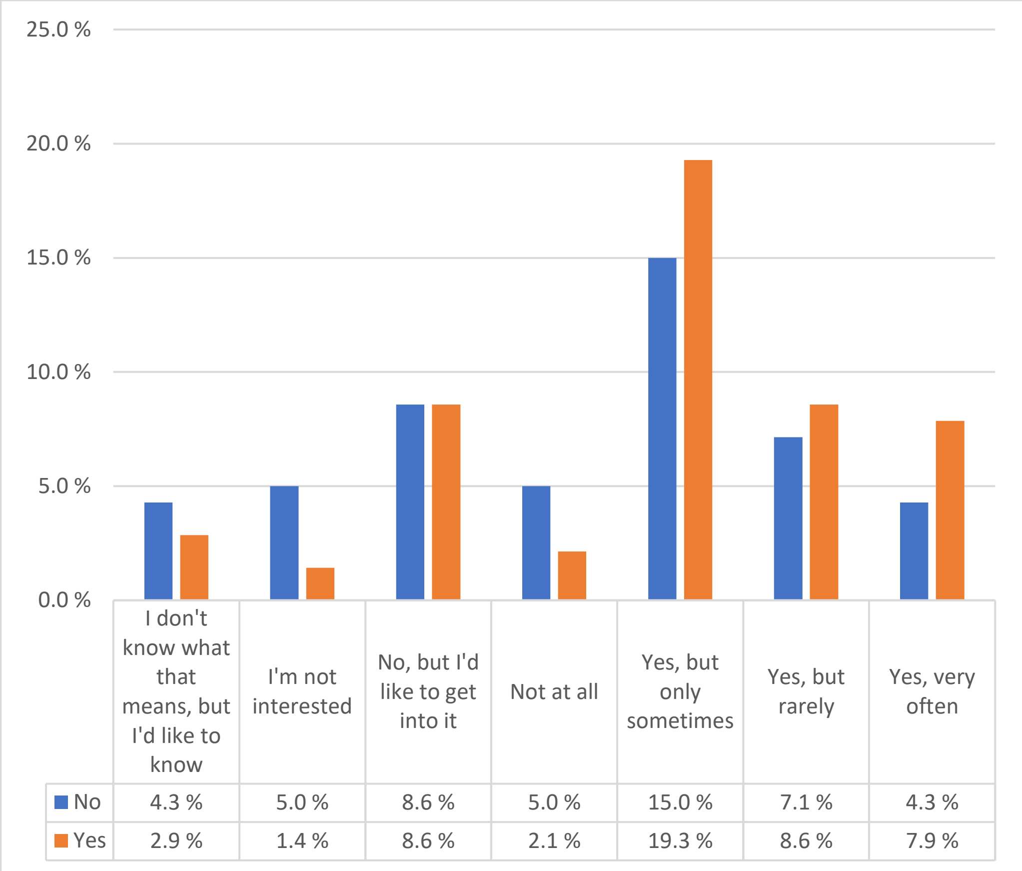
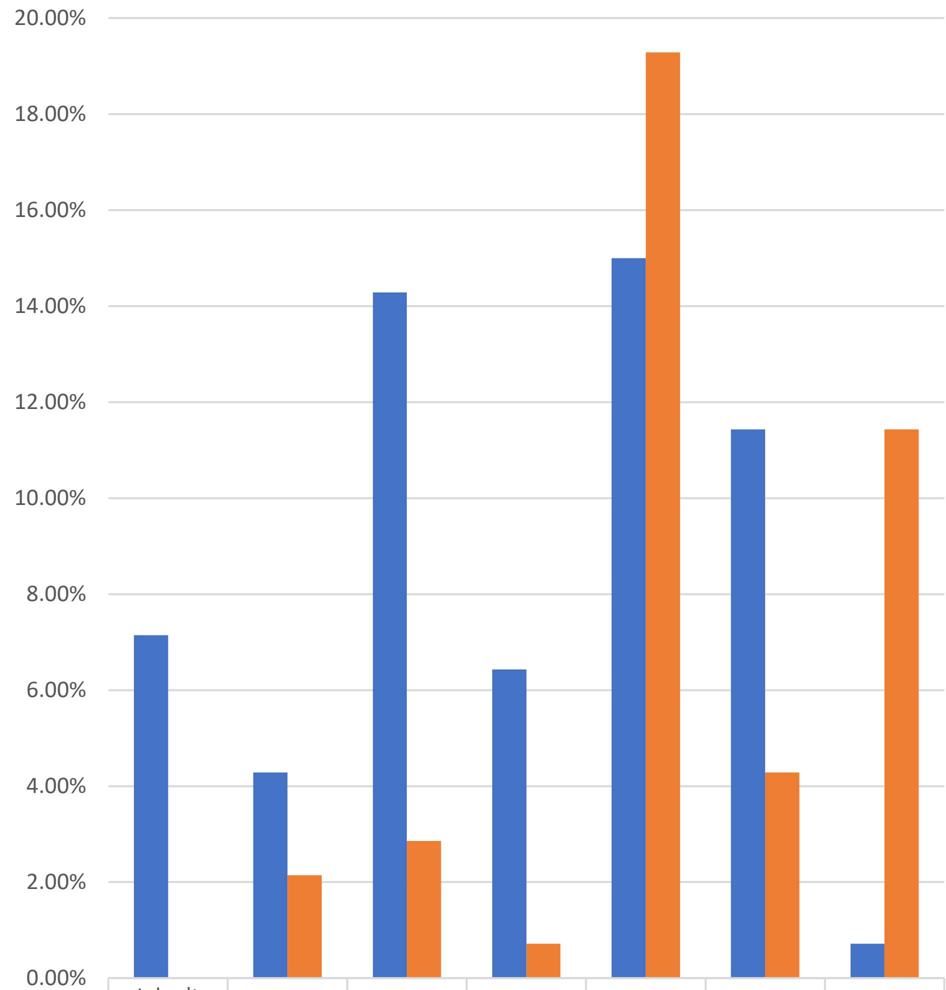


Figure 5 *Y= Do you follow beauty influencers/ beauty trends? X= Do you buy green cosmetics?*

5.2.1.4 Buying habits of green cosmetics/ familiarity with certifications

Another connection evaluated was the one between respondent's familiarity with the certifications used in green cosmetics and buying habits. As one can see from Figure 6, the knowledge of participants had a positive effect on their purchasing behavior. 94,12% of participants who claimed to buy green cosmetics products very often, were familiar with the certifications used in cosmetic products which makes 11% of the grand total of the respondents. 66,67% of those who were not interested in green cosmetics, were not familiar with any certifications. 90% of those who claim not to buy green cosmetics at all are not familiar with any certifications used. From the total amount of respondents, this makes 6,43%. 100% of those who don't know what green cosmetics mean but would like to know are not familiar with any certifications (see table 2). This group made 7,14% of the total amount of respondents.

14,3% of the survey respondents that said they were not buying green cosmetics but would like to get into it. 83,3% of participants belonging to this group were not familiar with any certifications. (See figure 6)



	I don't know what that means, but I'd like to know	I'm not interested	No, but I'd like to get into it	Not at all	Yes, but only sometimes	Yes, but rarely	Yes, very often
Not familiar	7.14%	4.29%	14.29%	6.43%	15.00%	11.43%	0.71%
Familiar with certifications	0.00%	2.14%	2.86%	0.71%	19.29%	4.29%	11.43%

Figure 6 Y= Are you familiar with any certifications used in green cosmetics? X= Do you buy green cosmetics?

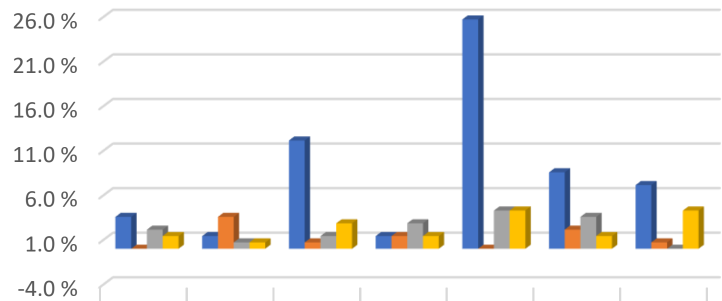
table 2

Count of Are you familiar with any certifications used in green cosmetics? Do you buy green cosmetics?	Column Labels Not familiar with certifications	Familiar with certifications	Grand Total
I don't know what that means, but I'd like to know	100,00 %	0,00 %	100,00 %
I'm not interested	66,67 %	33,33 %	100,00 %
No, but I'd like to get into it	83,33 %	16,67 %	100,00 %
Not at all	90,00 %	10,00 %	100,00 %
Yes, but only sometimes	43,75 %	56,25 %	100,00 %
Yes, but rarely	72,73 %	27,27 %	100,00 %
Yes, very often	5,88 %	94,12 %	100,00 %
Grand Total	**59,29 %**	**40,71 %**	**100,00 %**

5.2.1.5 Buying habits of green cosmetics/ trust towards the claims

The connection between trust towards the claims of green cosmetics and the purchasing behavior from the respondents, a total of 60% trust the claims of green cosmetics products 'depending on the manufacturer or product'. 15% of the respondents were unsure if they trust the claims. 16,4% trust the claims of green cosmetics, and the rest (8,6%) do not trust the claims.

20,2% of the group 'trusts the claims depending on the manufacturer or product' are not buying green cosmetics but would like to get into to it; this makes 12,1% of all the participants. 42,9% of this group claim to buy green cosmetics sometimes; this makes 25,7% of all participants. Otherwise there was not found significant connection between the trust and the purchasing behavior. (see figure 7)



	I don't know what that means, but I'd like to know	I'm not interested	No, but I'd like to get into it	Not at all	Yes, but only sometimes	Yes, but rarely	Yes, very often
It depends on the manufacturer or product	3.6 %	1.4 %	12.1 %	1.4 %	25.7 %	8.6 %	7.1 %
No	0.0 %	3.6 %	0.7 %	1.4 %	0.0 %	2.1 %	0.7 %
Unsure	2.1 %	0.7 %	1.4 %	2.9 %	4.3 %	3.6 %	0.0 %
Yes	1.4 %	0.7 %	2.9 %	1.4 %	4.3 %	1.4 %	4.3 %

Figure 7 Y= Do you trust the claims of the green cosmetics? X=Do you buy green cosmetics?

5.2.2 Trust towards the claims

5.2.2.1 Trust in claims and familiarity with certifications

The connection between trust towards green cosmetic products and the knowledge about the certifications used in them were studied. The biggest group (32,14%) came from participants who trust the claims ‘depending on the manufacturer or product’ and who are not familiar with any certifications. The second biggest group of 27,86% came from participants who trust the claims depending on the product and are familiar with certifications. (See figure 8)

The biggest difference between knowledge of certifications and a certain level of trust towards the claims of the green cosmetics was found from the group who was ‘unsure’ about trusting the claims. Participants who were not familiar with any certifications were more likely to be unsure about trusting claims. 21,69% of those who were not familiar with any certifications were unsure about trusting the claims of products as well. This makes 12,86% of all participants. 5,26% of those responded they are familiar with certifications were unsure about trusting the claims of the products. This made only 2,14% of all respondents. Otherwise, there was no significant connection between knowledge and trust towards claims. 9,29% of all participants were not familiar with any certifications but trusted the claims of the green cosmetics.

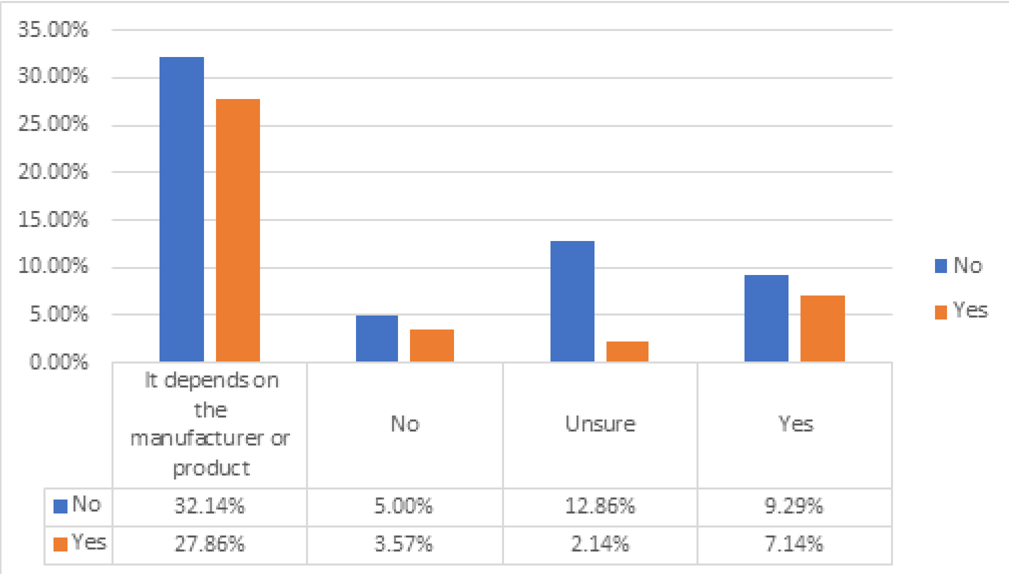


Figure 8 Y= are you familiar with certifications used in green cosmetics? X= Do you trust the claims of the green cosmetics?

5.2.2.2 *Familiarity with certifications/ following trends*

When comparing trend-following with knowledge about certifications, there was a slight difference. 49,29% of participants are not following influencers or beauty trends and 50,71% are following trends. Those participants that are following influencers are slightly more likely to know certifications used in green cosmetics. 15% of all participants are not following trends and were familiar with certifications, 34,3% were not following beauty trends and were not familiar with any certifications. 25% of all participants are following beauty trends and are not familiar with any certifications and 25,7% were following trends and were familiar with certifications. (See table 2)

Table 3

Count of Are you familiar with any certifications used in green cosmetics?	Column Labels		
Do you follow beauty trends/ beauty trends?	**Not familiar**	**Familiar with certifications**	**Grand Total**
No	34,29 %	15,00 %	49,29 %
Yes	25,00 %	25,71 %	50,71 %
Grand Total	**59,29 %**	**40,71 %**	**100,00 %**

5.2.2.3 Familiarity with certifications/ Gender

When comparing the knowledge about the certifications between the genders it was found that female participants were more likely to be familiar with certifications. The survey results showed that 84,6% of male respondents were not familiar with any certifications. From females 53,6% were not familiar with any certifications used. Unspecified gender was too small sample to have reliable data in broad view.

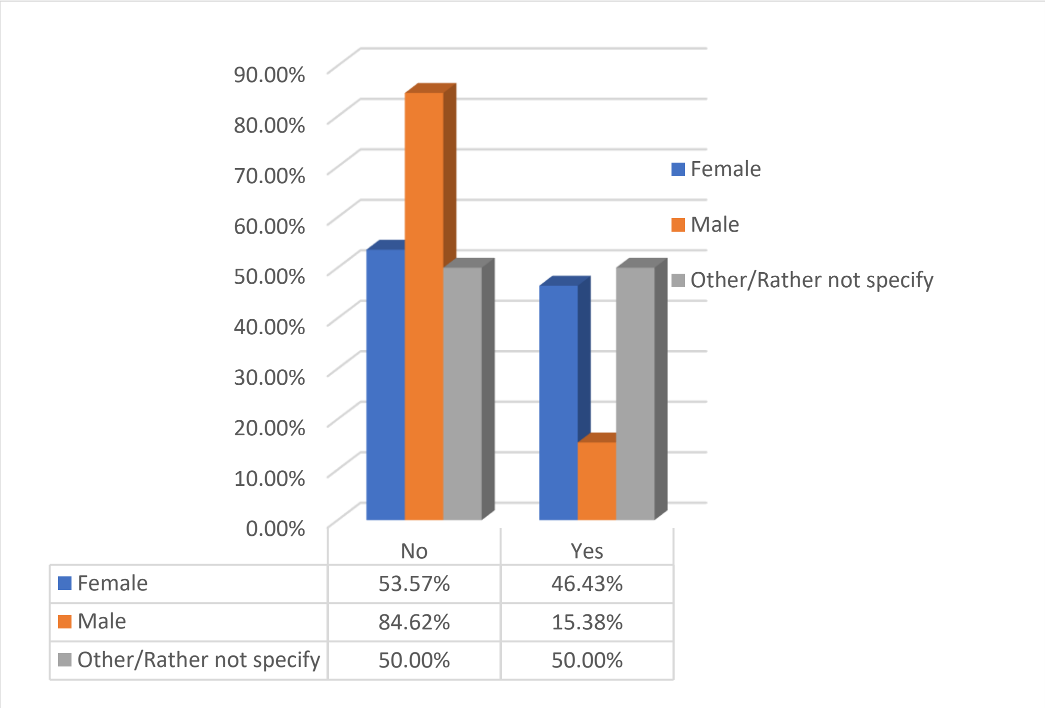


Figure 9 Y= Gender, X= Are you familiar with certifications?

6 Discussions

From the survey, it was found that there is a potential consumer group from those who responded that they are interested in buying green cosmetics but have not yet gotten into it. In total, 24 persons (17,1%) were in this group. Also, 42,3% of male respondents were interested in knowing more about green cosmetics. Most of the respondents belonging to these groups mentioned were not familiar with any certifications. This could mean that knowledge has a positive effect on the buying habits of participants. This was also backed up by the results from Figure 6. It could be interpreted that there is a strong connection between consumers' knowledge and buying habits of green cosmetics. 94,12% of the participants who claimed to buy green cosmetics products very often are familiar with the certifications used in the cosmetics products which makes 11% of the grand total of the respondents. Furthermore, the survey study showed that the knowledge about the certifications or qualities of the product does not necessary earn the trust of the consumer. 9,3% of the survey participants trusted the claims of the green cosmetics without knowledge about the certifications used. 60% of all respondents trusted the claims depending the manufacturer or product. Which type of brands or products the consumers trust the most could be further researched.

Most of the participants familiarized themselves with the cosmetics they have used through friends and family. Almost half of the respondents familiarized themselves through influencers. Also, in-store recommendations were found to be a popular way to get information about the cosmetics among the participants. This could mean that consumers could possibly be reached through earned media. The least common way to get familiar with cosmetics products were through traditional media. The most popular aspects desired from the cosmetics products according the survey was quality. After quality came price and ethical values.

Participants who followed beauty influencers or trends were found to have more positive perception towards buying green cosmetics. There was also found big difference between the genders and following the beauty trends. 100% of the males who responded to the survey were not following beauty trends. Furthermore, females were found to buy green cosmetics more frequently than males. Lastly, the survey showed that there is demand for green cosmetics and growing interest towards it. Only half of the respondents were able to name green cosmetics brands for the open-ended question. This signifies that there is lack of awareness about green cosmetics brands.

7 Conclusions

The findings from the literature review and the survey show that there is demand for green cosmetics. Additionally, the survey results imply there is a potential target niche group of consumers who are not yet buying green cosmetics but would be interested. As hypothesized, the market has lack of consistent trust towards the claims of the green cosmetics. This could mean that potential consumers and their trust has yet to be maximized. Even though the distrust of claims caused by labels found in products creates a negative attitude, as told by Zhang & Zhou (2019, 19), the survey here had results that showed that lack of trust towards the claims of the products did not have a significant negative effect on the purchase decisions. Neither had the knowledge about certifications used in the products, significant impact to the trust towards the claims of the products.

Providing consumers with knowledge about eco-certifications could result in more frequent buying of green cosmetics. More target groups could be created if labels are advertised clearly on product packaging and in stores. For instance, Cosmos-standard, USDA, Eco-cert, and above-mentioned certifications could create agreements or projects with individual clean brands to promote their sourcing or ingredients. The study by Korink (2013) showed that consumers are more likely to purchase green cosmetics when the product contains a trusted label. Also, a preference for products containing an eco-label was found. Korink (2013) stated that the preference was especially high when the product with eco-label included additional information. The marketing of green cosmetics has plenty of area for improvement. It is such a new 'niche' market that it only attracts a select few buyer personas.

Based on the survey results green cosmetics could be marketed the best by providing clear and additional information about the benefits and the green efforts of the product in a way that it could be easily read and understood by regular consumer. This would be especially beneficial for the green brands as it would bring them apart from the conventional cosmetics brands using green marketing approach. Earned media could be the optimal way to gain the consumers trust, interest and to reach new consumer groups. Male consumers could be taken more into account when marketing green products as there was found interest towards green cosmetics. To gain the interest of the consumers the green cosmetics brands could concentrate on providing affordable green products, as price and quality were found to be the most important aspect looked from the cosmetics products.

7.1 Answers to research questions

Q1 How can the marketing of green cosmetics become more appealing and accepted?

Q2 What does the green cosmetic market currently offer in terms of quality and integrity?

Q3 How do consumers perceive the quality and integrity of green cosmetics?

Q1 The survey study showed that the consumers tend to value good quality and price over ethical values when searching cosmetics products. Nor Fairuz & Hashim (2015, 87) suggest that emerging a health and self-image message to the marketing of green products rather than the environmental issues could possibly generate more response from the market. To make the marketing of green products more appealing, the marketing could concentrate more on health and beauty benefits of these products, as exaggerated marketing of environmental benefits of the product might cause distrust among consumers. The survey also showed that consumers trust the recommendations from family/ friends, influencers, and sales personnel. From this, it could be interpreted that earned media could be optimal way to market the green cosmetics products. “Adding an eco-label to product packaging can be a good investment for manufacturers, because it will increase the product preference of the consumer.” (Korink 2013, 44).

Objective knowledge of certifications, ingredients, sourcing, sustainability, and such from sales personnel could indicate knowledge and integrity about a green product in general. As shown according to the survey, the most popular way consumers familiarize themselves with green cosmetics is through family and friends. This could very likely mean that the brands of these products have room for improvement with how they earn the trust of their consumers since biased opinions from friends and families impact consumers more. Producers of clean cosmetics and clean products in general could create buyer personas from target groups that have different wants and needs based on market trends, age, occupation, skin concerns, environmental concerns, budget, income, and gender.

Q2 To reach a higher level of consumer demand, green cosmetics brands should concentrate on transparency and quality as high as conventional cosmetics do. If natural cosmetic products do not reach the quality of traditional cosmetics, consumers most likely will not continue buying them (Amberg & Fogarassy 2019, 6).

“It is important for consumers to understand the information given by the green brand by having the capacity to process the additional information” (Korink 2013, 16).

The cosmetics market offers hundreds of brands and different eco-labels. To be exact, statista.com (2018, statistics page) estimates that in 2021, the market value of organic personal care products worldwide will be at 17,47 billion U.S dollars and at 25,11 billion U.S dollars by 2025. The current trend of natural and green cosmetics has increased brands’ use of eco-labels; conventional cosmetics brands have started to use eco-labels as part of their marketing plan as well. “The demonstrated benefits of the addition of eco-labels on cosmetics packages results in an increased amount of confusion among consumers and they will not be able to distinguish the official and non-official eco-labels” (Korink 2013, 44).

One of the brands mentioned by participants in the open-ended question in the survey was “Jeffree Star Cosmetics”. Jeffree Star Cosmetics is a California-based makeup brand developed by entrepreneur Jeffrey Lynn Steininger Jr. founded in 2014 that offers conventional high-end cosmetics. Their products are defined as cruelty-free and vegan. Although, it is not actually a brand that has been certified as clean with any certifications. (FAQ, Jeffree Star Cosmetics website.) This comes to show that people can have a different idea of what construes a *clean* brand. Further research can explore the cause behind this phenomenon and what other brands are being confused regularly by consumers.

Q3 59,3% of respondents were not familiar with any certifications used in green cosmetics. Unfamiliarity with certifications could be interpreted as susceptibility towards opportunistic behavior of greenwashing. Furthermore, consumers without knowledge or just little knowledge of green cosmetics often fear being misled by the claims of products. These consumers tend to go for eco-labels with certified information. (Zhang & Zhou 2019, 25.) As mentioned in the literature review, greenwash might manifest itself as a claim of sustainability that cannot be supported by easily accessible information or by third party certification (Dahl 2010, A 249). As the study showed, there is lack of consistent trust towards the claims of the green products. It seems that consumers´ trust on the claims is often depending on the manufacturer or the product. The trust still did not have a large impact on buying habits.

A very large amount (75,7%) of survey respondents viewed price as an important factor during the purchase decision of cosmetics. This could be another one of the reasons why green cosmetics are lower in the competition against conventional cosmetics. Green cosmetics almost always have a premium that makes its way into the final price of products before they are on the market shelves due to how ingredients are sourced and manufactured ecologically. (Arseculeratne & Yazdanifard 2014, 133).

7.2 Research obstacles and possible further research

One of the biggest research obstacles was the fact that the study was conducted in Finland but more specifically one region of Finland. Finland is a small country as it is, and in the region of Jyväskylä, there are approximately 138,109 people. Jyväskylä is heavily populated by students because there are two large universities in this city, so the results for the survey came mostly from people in the university age group. On top of this, the survey was slightly skewed opposite of the direction of middle-aged people because the authors didn't have a broader age group option for their survey question. Along with this, the researchers would have preferred a larger sample of respondents, but it was already difficult to get above 100 participants for the survey even though the survey was shared in a Jyväskylä-based Facebook group full of foreigners. This group was the largest that the authors used from all the platforms where the survey was shared. Another researcher could publish a survey on a wider scale, for example, for a Master’s thesis.

There were limitations concerning where the survey was shared because the authors were not members of many other (online) groups, there weren’t many large Jyväskylä-based groups, and there were not many where it was objectively and subjectively appropriate to post surveys for research purposes, especially on the Facebook platform because of ethics and group rules. (i.e.: Buy-and-sell groups, job-seeking groups, and hobby groups.) To add to that, most of the Facebook group options had Finnish as their main language, and this research is written entirely in English. As for the WhatsApp platform, only one chat group was entirely adequate for the survey to be shared in. Said group was the researchers’ university class group that had 78 group members. All other instances of sharing the survey on WhatsApp were through PM (personal messaging) of the authors’ friends and relatives. For Instagram, only one of the authors had an active Instagram account, thus this caused a limit as to how many participants could’ve responded had it been shared in another social group.

Furthermore, it was the intention to respond to all three research questions mostly with the results from the survey. Unfortunately, the researchers found the survey lacking in more thorough questions that could directly provide adequate answers to the research questions. Instead, it was found best to respond to the research questions through the data gathered throughout the literature review that was inclusive of sources. The survey might have been formulated differently had the authors had more expertise than when the survey was first launched.

Some of the questions that would have been added to the survey are:

- What are some of the eco-certifications you know?
- More age options (41-45, 46-50, 51-55, 56-60, 61-65, 66-70, and 71+)
- What is your annual average income?

- What is your current occupation?
- Budget questions.

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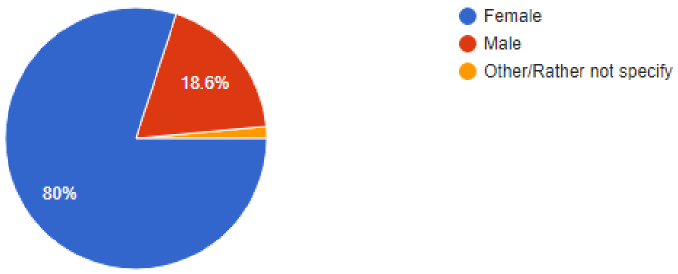
Appendices

Appendix 1 Survey results from Google

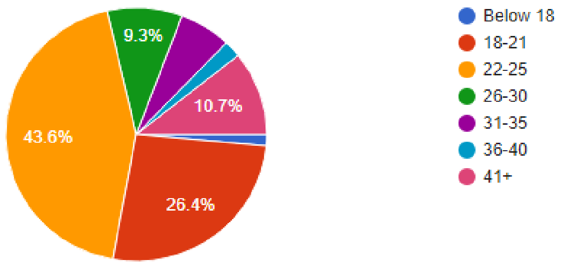
Gender:

140 responses



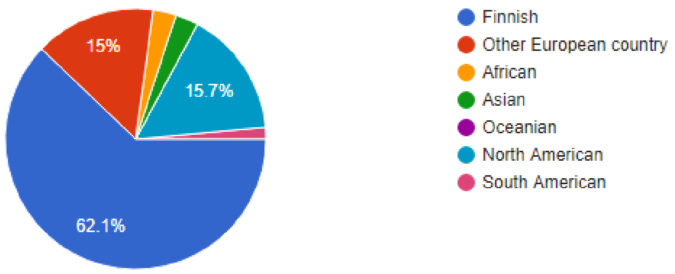
Age:

140 responses



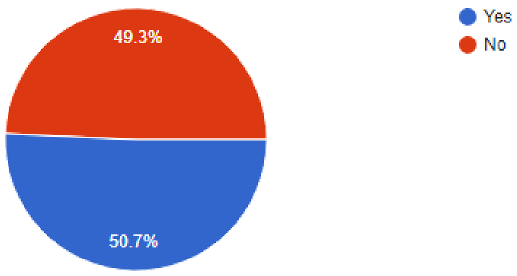
What is your nationality?

140 responses



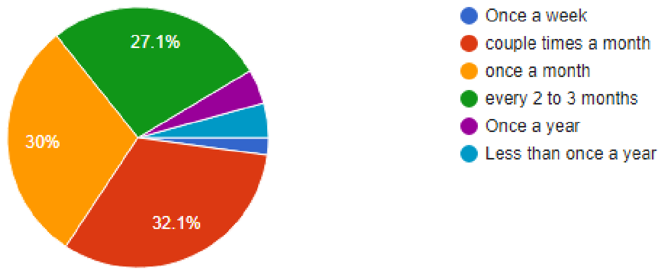
Do you follow beauty influencers / keep up with online beauty trends?

140 responses



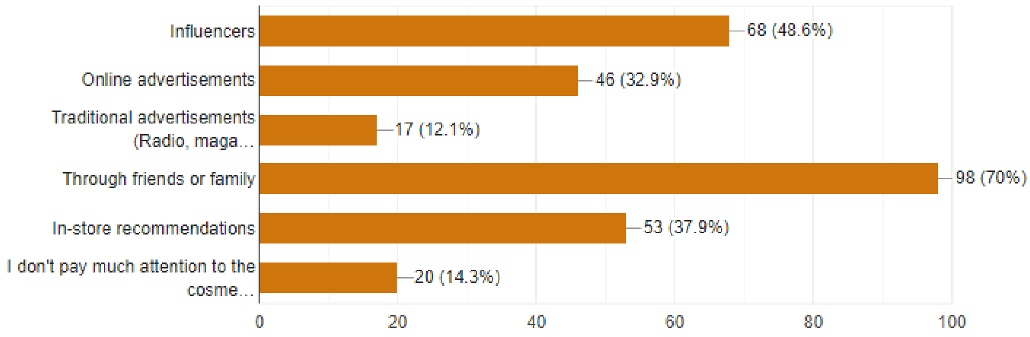
How often do you purchase cosmetics overall (hygienic necessities and/or other beauty products) for yourself?

140 responses



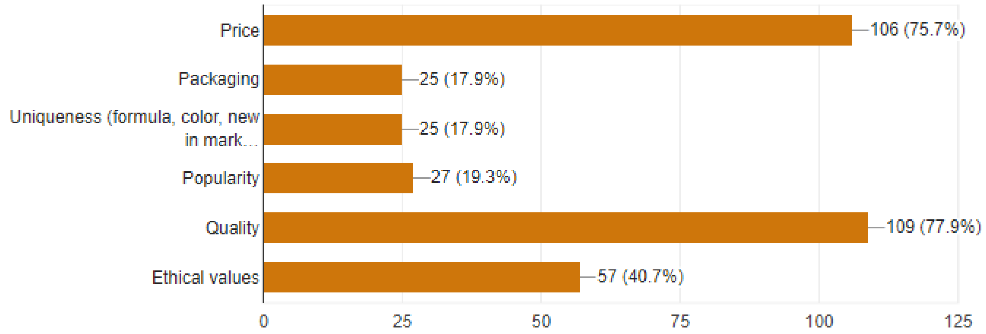
How do you familiarize yourself with the cosmetics you have used, currently use, or are planning to use? (Reminder: "cosmetics" are not limited to makeup only.)

140 responses



Which aspects do you think affect your purchase decision the most?

140 responses

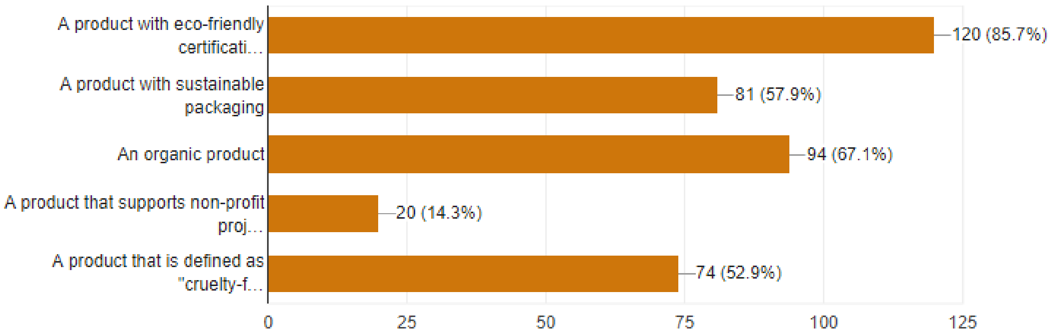


Do you buy "green" cosmetics?

140 responses

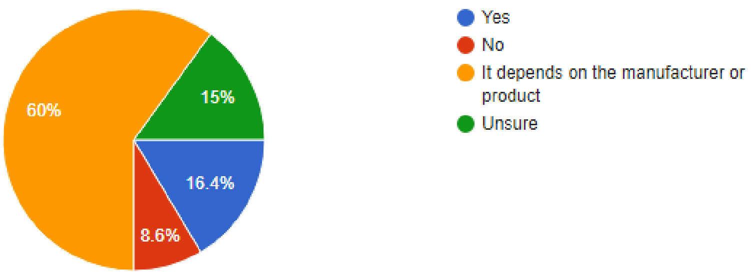
What do you consider to be a "green" cosmetic product?

140 responses



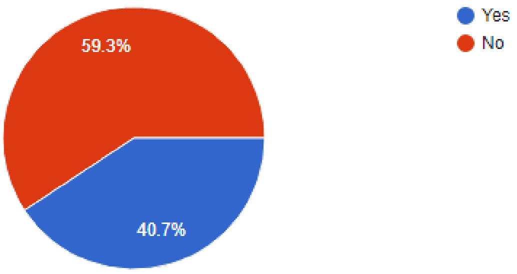
Do you trust the claims of green cosmetics? (i.e: "Made with organic ingredients", "cruelty-free", or "natural".)

140 responses



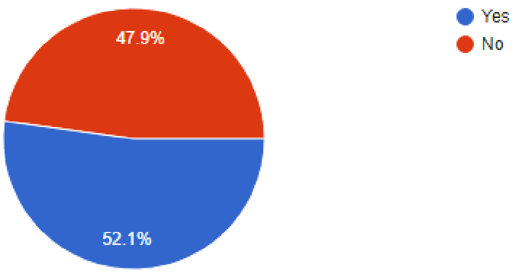
Are you familiar with any certifications used in green cosmetics?

140 responses



Do you know any brands that produce green cosmetics?

140 responses



If yes, which one(s)?

63 responses

Lavera

Lush

Eco tools

Lumene

Mossa

Zuii Organic, Organic shop, Mádara, Flow cosmetics, Mossa

Urtekram, Organic Shop, The Ordinary

Dr. Hauschka

I cant remember the names

If yes, which one(s)?

63 responses

Juice beauty, beauty counter, 100% pure

Body shop, urtekram, Paul Mitchell

Ecocert

Kolme cosmetics, Madara, Flow kosmetiikka, lavera, Muru muru, Kjaer Weis

Hohde, und gretel, less is more, boho

Kiko

Alverde

Elf, lumene, jeffrey star

Burt's Bees

If yes, which one(s)?

63 responses

- Mossa, madara, estelle & thild jne.
- Boho make up
- Urtekram, Madara
- We care icon
- Lush Finland
- Dr Hauschka
- Dr hauska, weleda
- Burtbees
- Honeypot cosmetics for women

If yes, which one(s)?

63 responses

- Weleda, Dr. Hauschka, Whamisa, Hohde
- The Body Shop
- Whamisa
- Madara, Mossa, Evolve, Whamisa etc
- Body shop
- Lavera, Madara,
- Zuii
- Ekopharma
- Sobioetic, ole hyvä,

If yes, which one(s)?

63 responses

Maria Nila

Lavera, Korres, Laboratoires de Biarritz

The Body Dhop products overall, EcoTools, Natural Siberica

Boho makeup

Jeffree star, bare minerals, elf

Weleda, goop

We Care Icon

Weleda, ürtekram,

Lumene has lots of natural and vegan products. Surely I would know more brands but they've slipped my mind for now!

If yes, which one(s)?

63 responses

NYX?...

Kat von D, Jeffree Star, Black Moon Cosmetics, Elf, Dose of Colors

EcoTools

Forever Living Products

Boho green

Urtekram

Organic shop. The bodyshop.

Boho, RMS Beauty, Lush, The Body Shop

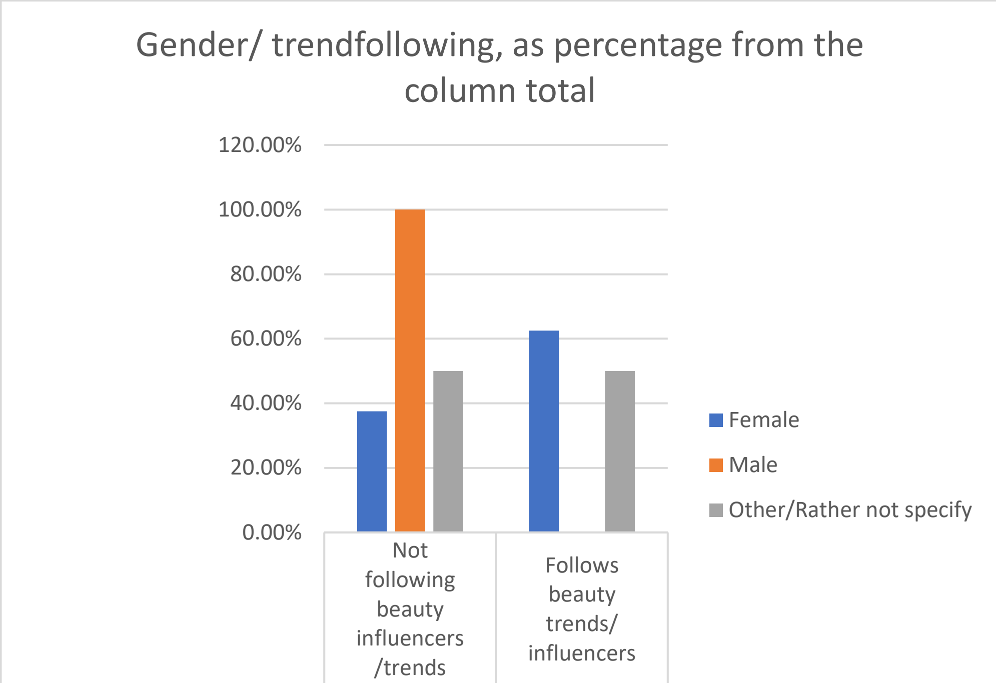
Hynt

Rahua, Madara

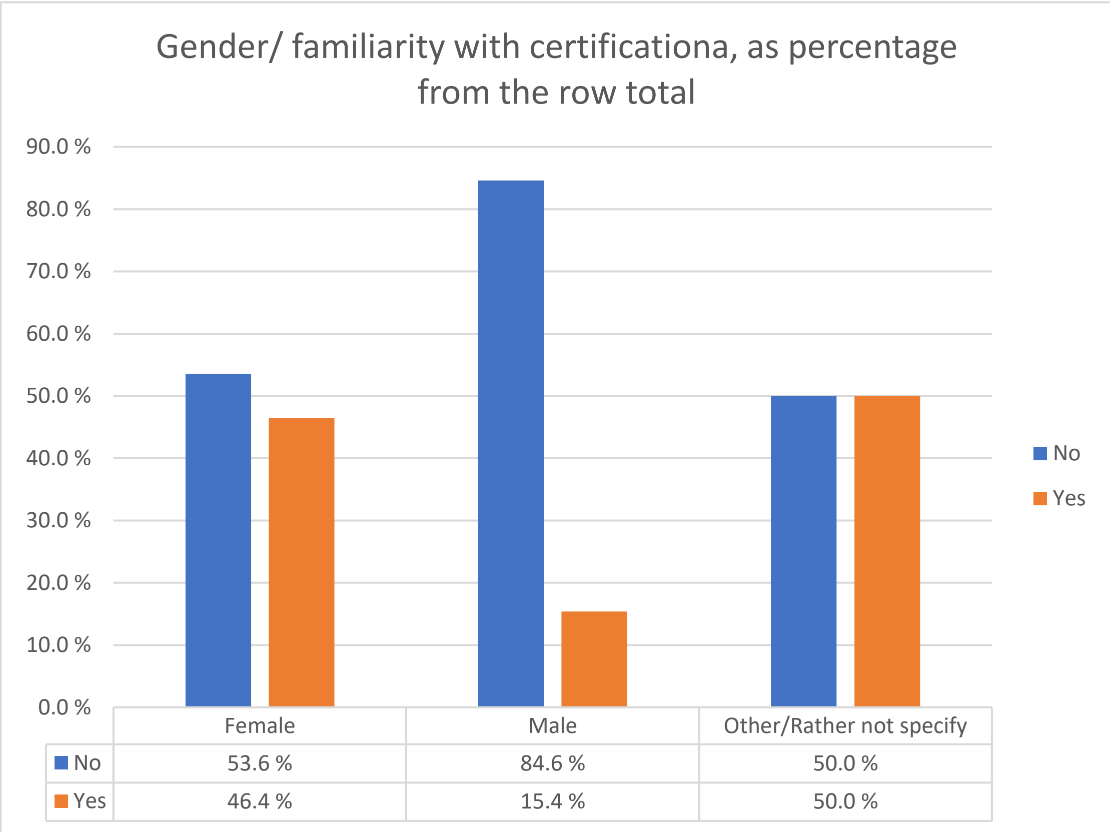
Body Shop, Saaren taika, Kaurilan tuotteet

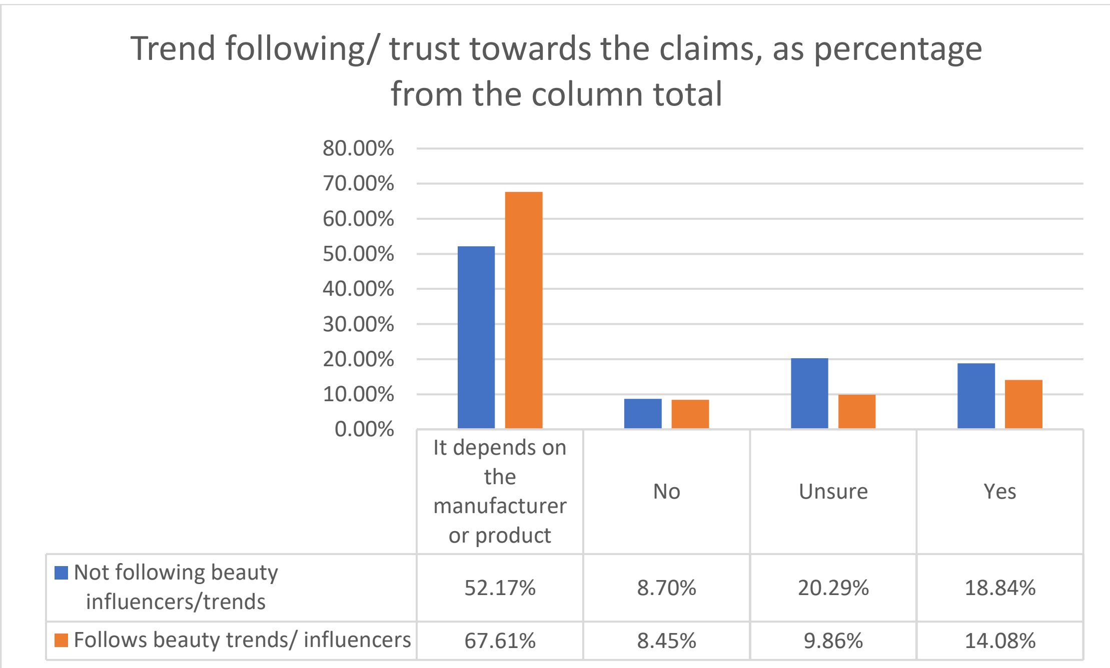
The body shop

Appendix 2 Survey graphs and tables

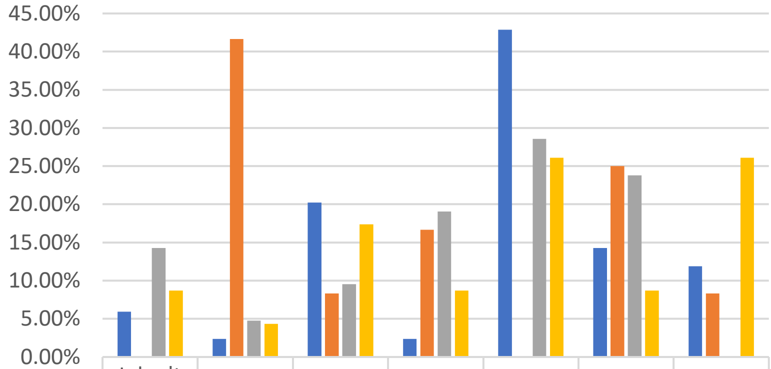


	Not following beauty influencers /trends	Follows beauty trends/ influencers
Female	37.50%	62.50%
Male	100.00%	0.00%
Other/Rather not specify	50.00%	50.00%

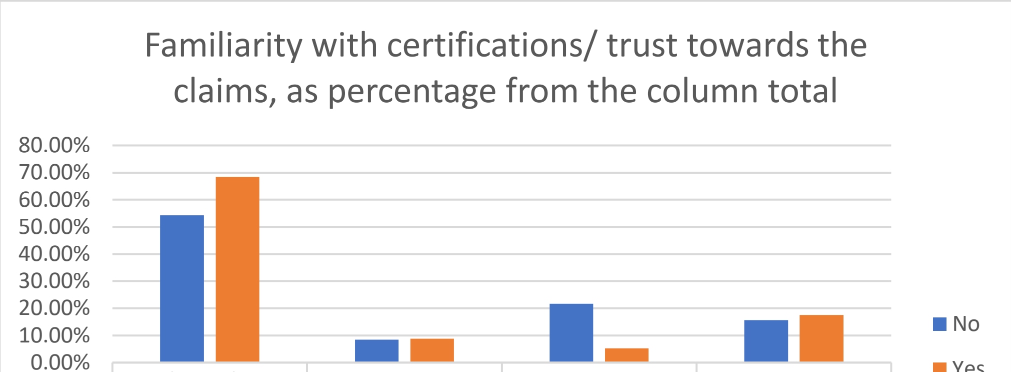

Gender/ familiarity with certificationa, as percentage from the row total
90.0 %
80.0 %
70.0 %
60.0 %
50.0 %
40.0 %
30.0 %
20.0 %
10.0 %
0.0 %
Female
Male
Other/Rather not specify
No
53.6 %
84.6 %
50.0 %
Yes
46.4 %
15.4 %
50.0 %


Trend following/ trust towards the claims, as percentage from the column total
80.00%
70.00%
60.00%
50.00%
40.00%
30.00%
20.00%
10.00%
0.00%
It depends on the manufacturer or product
No
Unsure
Yes
Not following beauty influencers/trends
52.17%
8.70%
20.29%
18.84%
Follows beauty trends/ influencers
67.61%
8.45%
9.86%
14.08%

Trust towards the claims/ buying habits of green cosmetics , as percentage from the column total



	I don't know what that means, but I'd like to know	I'm not interested	No, but I'd like to get into it	Not at all	Yes, but only sometimes	Yes, but rarely	Yes, very often
It depends on the manufacturer or product	5.95%	2.38%	20.24%	2.38%	42.86%	14.29%	11.90%
No	0.00%	41.67%	8.33%	16.67%	0.00%	25.00%	8.33%
Unsure	14.29%	4.76%	9.52%	19.05%	28.57%	23.81%	0.00%
Yes	8.70%	4.35%	17.39%	8.70%	26.09%	8.70%	26.09%



	It depends on the manufacturer or product	No	Unsure	Yes
No	54.22%	8.43%	21.69%	15.66%
Yes	68.42%	8.77%	5.26%	17.54%