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# **What do young Belgians and Finns expect from eco-friendly clothing?**

DEGREE PROGRAMME IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS  
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<p>The main objective of this thesis was to understand whether there are differences in consumption between young Belgian and Finnish consumers with regard to eco-friendly clothing. Indeed, the consumption behavior can vary from one country to another, so it was important to choose two different countries in order to allow the writer to have a point of view from both countries. The author chose this topic because in the next few years she would like to start her own eco-friendly clothing company and to do this the author had to analyze which of the two markets might be more interested in this type of clothing.</p> <p>In order to get a better understanding of consumer behavior, the theoretical part of the thesis was written about consumer behavior, the buying process as well as the internal and external environment. After writing the theoretical part, a quantitative study was started. This study was launched via Google Forms and was sent as a private message to the author's entourage via social networks such as Instagram, Messenger, WhatsApp, and Snapchat. Once the data was collected, the author analyzed the results one by one to allow an accurate and reliable analysis. These results revealed that consumer behavior will indeed vary depending on whether the consumer is Belgian or Finnish since, when analyzing the respondents' answers, it was revealed that Finns shop more often alone than accompanied, while Belgians are more likely to be accompanied by their relatives or friends. Consumption behavior will therefore be influenced by their external environment. Expectations will also be different as the living environment in which the Belgian and Finnish respondents live is different. Indeed, the study found that Belgians will be more sensitive to price than the Finns, as well as to the environment, and this can be explained by the fact that the Finns are more sensitive to ecology than the Belgians.</p> <p>Today's world has to deal with the problems that climate change is causing in the environment and more specifically the damage that the textile industry is doing to the environment. It was therefore important for the author to look into this subject and analyze whether Generation Z and millennials felt concerned about the environmental cause and indeed, it was possible to find that both generations felt concerned about this subject. This allowed the author to realize that indeed, leaning toward a more ecological lifestyle can be beneficial for a company.</p>		
<p>Keywords: Fast fashion background, eco-friendly clothing, marketing, customer behavior, buying process, internal and external influences, quantitative research</p>		

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Around the world, the importance of caring for the environment is becoming increasingly important. In 2019, 27,000 young Belgians were walking in the streets to fight for the environmental cause. (Lory, 2019). Three thousand children and young people took part in the same demonstration in Helsinki. (YLE, 2019).

One of the most important things to note is that the textile industry plays a major role in the pollution of the planet. Indeed, the textile industry is the second most polluting industry in the world. It generates more than one billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> in the air. While 80 billion garments are produced in a year, millions of tons are thrown away. (Bihaki, 2019). Through these figures, the author can see the damage that the textile industry causes to the environment. This is why the writer decided to focus on this topic and more specifically on consumer behavior toward eco-friendly clothing. A quantitative study was carried out to understand the expectations of young Belgians and Finns between the ages of 18 and 30 towards eco-friendly clothing. The objective of this study was to understand the differences and similarities between these respondents from two different countries in order to have a better insight into whether it is a better idea for a company to enter the eco-friendly clothing market in Belgium or in Finland.

This thesis explains what ecological fashion is but also consumer behavior as well as the internal and external environment that surrounds it. Indeed, the behavior of a consumer will depend very much on his culture, his beliefs, and values. But it will also depend on his personality, perception, his motivations, and emotions. In order to meet consumer expectations, it is important that a company that wants to offer a specific product knows and understands the needs of the consumers. Different chapters will be covered such as the marketing approach including operational marketing, the buying process & roles, the black box, and the stages of the buying process.

## 2 PROBLEM SETTING AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Nowadays, global warming is at the heart of the issues. What causes global warming is the ecological footprint of each individual. Young people are becoming more and more sensitive to environmental issues, they want environmentally friendly products and prefer to buy second-hand clothes. For this reason, more and more brands are offering clothes made of environmentally friendly fabrics. The textile industry is in second place worldwide, it is a major polluter of the environment and the planet. It produces more than a billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> in the air; this is comparable to sea and air transport combined. It also absorbs more than 4% of the earth's drinking water resources.

The author's main objective was to better understand what influences customer behavior and to find out if there are differences and similarities between young Belgians and Finns when it comes to ecological clothing. The aim here was to better understand what consumers expect from brands that offer eco-friendly clothing so that they can meet their needs while respecting the environment.

The conceptual framework is very much oriented towards consumer behavior. According to Professor Theodore Levit, consumer behavior is the most crucial part for marketers when they do their business research as the main goal is to build and retain consumers. (Clayton et al., 2006)

The picture below shows how the writer intends to proceed in this work. In the study, the author intends to show that consumer behavior can vary depending on the age of the respondents, where they come from, and what influences them in their purchases as every individual does not react in the same way when they are surrounded or when they are alone. This will lead to a comparison to see if there are differences or similarities when looking at the profile of the respondents.

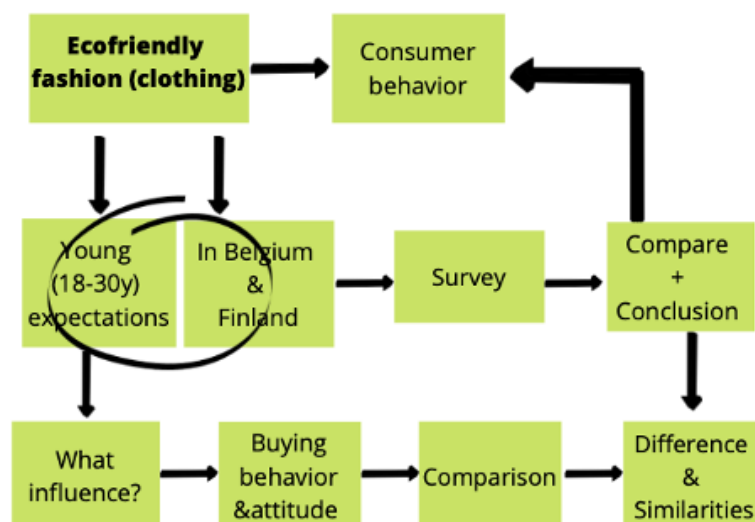


Figure 1. Conceptual framework (Author of thesis, 2022)

### 3 FAST FASHION BACKGROUND

#### What is fast fashion?

It is simply a business strategy to renew collections of fashion items in the clothing industry as quickly as possible. Brands follow this trend to be able to meet the needs of their customers concerning the latest trends. Fast fashion favors the renewal of the wardrobe, which leads to overconsumption. (The Good Trade, 2022)

#### The impact of fast fashion on the environment

Between 2000 and 2014, clothing consumption increased by 60%. (Remy, Speelman & Swartz, 2016). This increase is simply because brands are phenomenally renewing their collections. Indeed, Zara may be an appropriate example to demonstrate the number of collections a clothing brand offers in a year. The brand renews its collections more than 20 times a year. (Howland, 2017). In 2000, there were 2 collections per year but the author can observe that in 2011, brands have increased to

5 new collections per year. With fast fashion, the prices of clothes are much more affordable which explains the increase in the purchase of clothes as there has been a considerable drop in prices. If developing countries continue to buy more clothes as the purchasing power of the country in question increases, one study estimates that by 2025 the ecological footprint will become much larger. (Remy et al., 2016)

### **Ecological Fashion**

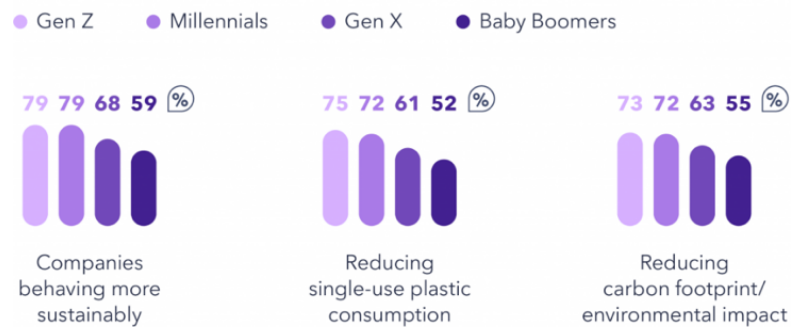
It is a fashion phenomenon that is pushing clothing brands to commit to a more environmentally friendly and planet-friendly fashion. These brands will commit to minimizing their carbon emissions, protecting the planet from climate change, and moving towards a mindset that focuses on the health and safety of all species.

Nowadays, young people are more and more sensitive to environmental issues, they want environmentally friendly products and prefer to buy second-hand clothes. And it is becoming more and more popular all over the world. However, making a green garment requires higher manufacturing prices which hinders the growth of this trend as the costs of the garments will be higher. But today, more and more clothing brands are joining this movement. This is not a short-term trend, but a long-term trend. (Idle, 2022)

The graph below shows that new generations are more change-oriented. Indeed, 62% of Generation Z and 59% of millennials have become more environmentally aware after the COVID pandemic. 79% of Generation Z and 79% of millennials say they are more interested in companies that behave in an ethical manner. Both generations are more likely to reduce their plastic consumption and therefore reduce their ecological footprint. These figures show the importance that Generation Z and millennials have towards the ecological issue. This is why it is important for a company to focus more on this concept which interests more and more people. (Hopkins, 2020).

## Younger generations are most concerned about sustainability in a post-COVID world

% of internet users in each generation who say the following is a little or a lot more important after COVID-19



**Question:** Has the importance of any of these things changed for you, because of coronavirus? - Companies behaving in more sustainable/eco-friendly ways | Reducing how much single-use plastic I use | Reducing my carbon footprint/impact on the environment **Source:** GlobalWebIndex Custom Research, May 19-26 2020  
**Base:** 17,149 internet users aged 16-64

Figure 2. Why the call for sustainability is now louder than ever (Hopkins, 2020)

## 4 CUSTOMER & MARKETING APPROACH

### 4.1 Customer

There are three different terms used in marketing that do not mean the same thing. These terms are: "customer", "clients" and "consumer". It is important to know that a customer and a consumer are not the same. A customer can be a company or a person who is going to buy a good or service. A customer will only become a consumer when he/she uses the services or goods that the company offers. This means when there is a consumption of the company's goods and services.

Customers can be classified into 3 different categories:

- B2C: Business-To-Customer: this is when a customer buy a pair of shoes in a shop.



- B2B: Business-To-Business: this is when a company uses another company to purchase the services they offer.
- C2C: Customer-To-Customer: this is when a customer goes to buy a good or service that another customer offers. (Friesner, 2014)

However, it is important to know and understand their needs in order to be able to propose ways to satisfy those needs that the consumer encounters. Needs are a desired state but can also be a tension state that an individual may experience. It is a characteristic of dissatisfaction that is experienced by a consumer. There are different types of needs, these different needs have been hierarchically classified by various philosophers and psychologists, but the most famous is that of Abraham Maslow. (Bersou, 2019-2020)



Figure 3. Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (Hopper, 2020)

Needs can be

1. Expressed needs (what the client says)
2. Actual needs (what the client means)
3. Latent needs (what they are not thinking about)
4. Dreamed needs (what he/she would dream of)
5. Deep needs (what secretly motivates him). (Bersou, 2019-2020)

In order to meet these needs, a company must segment its market to improve the customer experience for different categories of consumers.

Customers are too numerous and too dispersed, too different. They can often be grouped into sub-markets, called segments, which have homogeneous needs and

desires. Once the market has been segmented, the company will identify which segments it wishes to address: it defines its targets. It will develop targeted marketing with the help of a marketing policy and specifically adapted products. (Foxall et al., 1998, pp. 5-7)

#### 4.2 Marketing approach

The marketing approach is a set of actions and it includes the objectives of anticipating, stimulating, or establishing the needs that consumers may have. It consists of adopting the product or service to the needs of the consumer. It includes all the efforts that a company will make to establish itself in a specific market. The marketing approach is divided into two phases:

- strategic marketing
- operational marketing

Strategic marketing includes economic opportunities that will be attractive to the company. Its primary objective is to specify the mission of the company but also its objectives. The most important thing is to work out a development strategy and to ensure that a balanced structure of the product portfolio is maintained.

Operational marketing is the most visible facet, as it includes the creation of marketing tools and media such as press releases, studies, advertisements, dashboards, emailing, etc. It is in the operational marketing that the strategic marketing takes shape, this is where the marketing plan is put in place. The marketing plan includes the 4Ps which are the:

##### P-Product

Product is a material good or service that has specific characteristics to meet consumer expectations and needs. Products can be durable and tangible. There are perishable goods which means when a product can be consumed one or a few times, this includes food or cleaning product. There are durable goods which means that the product has many uses, this includes fridge or clothes.

There are different types of products:

- Homogeneous: same functions (household appliances)
- Heterogeneous : different functionalities (furniture, cars)
- Specialty products include goods with unique characteristics and well-defined brand images (perfume, luxury jewelry, video equipment)
- Unsought products include goods that are not known or thought of naturally.

### P-Promotion

Promotion is the marketing communication of the product or service that a company offers, this includes the means used by a company to inform and persuade current and potential customers in order to inform and remind about the brands that the company markets. Communication will explain who makes the product, share the company's values and encourage customers to try or buy the product. It will also generate mental associations between the brand and personalities. It will make associations with places, events, experiences, feelings, and objects. Communication builds awareness, generates mental associations with the brand, nurtures the brand image, elicits positive impressions and judgments, facilitates relationships between consumers and the brand, and strengthens loyalty.

### P-Place

The P-place enables detail of all the choices and actions that affect the product distribution modalities such as, the choice of sales outlets and the choice of distribution channels. The choice of distribution channels are mainly classified into three categories: direct, short, or longer depending on the number of intermediaries. It also includes stock, warehouses and the assortment of orders. In terms of logistics, this will include means of transport and speed of delivery

### P-Price

The P-price of the marketing plan is the only one that brings revenue, the other P's are sources of expenses. The price must be consistent with the marketing strategy, the target markets and the chosen positioning. Today's consumers are more demanding

and re-evaluate the price they are willing to pay. The price can take various forms and fulfill several functions. It plays an important role in purchasing behavior. The consumer's perception of the price varies according to their knowledge of the product. It also depends on previous buying experiences and it is influenced by the communication.

About the price sensitivity, customers are more sensitive to the price of expensive products and are very sensitive to the price of products they buy frequently. (Boizzard, 2019-2020)

## 5 CONSUMER BEHAVIOR & BUYING PROCESS

A set of mental, emotional, and physical activities developed by consumers when they choose, buy, and consume goods and services to satisfy their needs.

Example of mental activities :

- Reacting in thought to an advertisement

Example of emotional activities:

- Being exasperated by a salesman

Example of physical activities:

- Going to the shopping center

Consumer behavior refers to the reactions of an individual considered as a real or potential customer of a company based on stimuli, such as when visiting a store. The analysis of this behavior is based on the actions and not on the claims of the consumer. It is a matter of finding the causes and modifying or adapting to their reactions. Interaction between different channels such as the Internet or the point of sale plays an important role in new consumer attitudes. (Bersou, 2019-2020)

Prior to the launch of a product, marketers will ask questions even before a product is purchased to allow a better understanding of the attitude that the future consumer might have. Then, marketers will analyze whether the circumstances and ambiance of the shop can affect the consumer's purchase. Finally, marketers will try to determine the customer's satisfaction and try to find out what might affect the purchase of the product and whether the consumer might share their experience with others. Therefore a brand needs to understand the possible behaviors that could occur before, during, and after the purchase of a product.

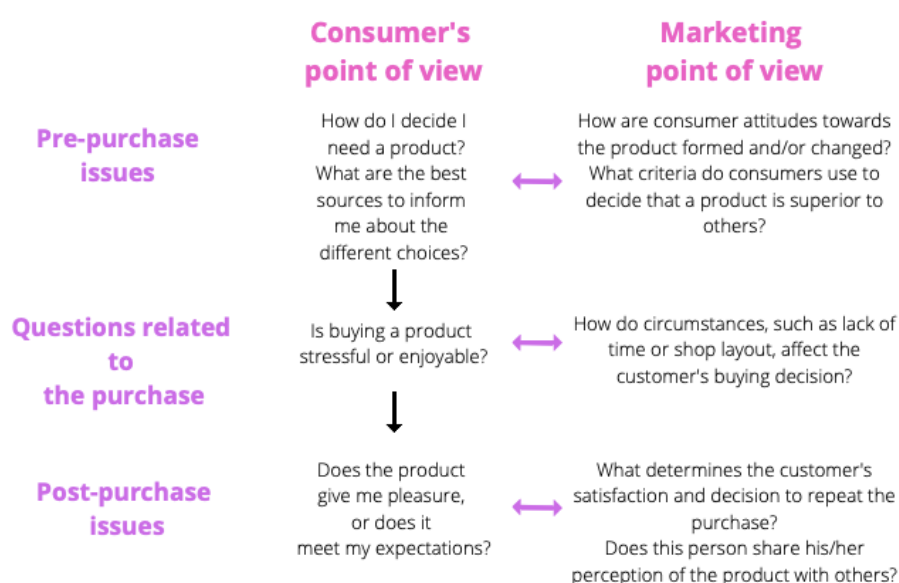


Figure 4. Buying process & Roles (Bersou, 2019-2020)

There are five steps in the buying process. The first step is the recognition of the problem, the consumer's needs will be revealed.

The author will now explain two examples that demonstrate the internal and external stimuli.

External stimuli: "I had a car accident, my car is damaged, I need a new car."

Internal stimuli: "I am talking to a friend who has just seen a film and I want to see it too."

The second step is information seeking. This step will take a look at the intensity of the search concerning:

- learning products (example: computer)

- experience products (example: restaurant)
- belief products, there is a lack of evidence (example: anti-wrinkle creams).

Sources of information come from personal life, such as family and friends, from advertising, such as leaflets, from the public, such as press articles, and from experience, such as product testing but this is not always a rational process

The third step is the evaluation of alternatives. This evaluation is done according to attributes: memory capacity, graphic possibilities, size, and weight. The roles of the attributes mean: what meets another need. These attributes can be salient or determining.

The fourth step is the purchase which is a complex mental task. First, it is important to evaluate the alternatives and then the intention to buy. The attitude of others can influence the purchase or not. It is when one person says to another buy this product or don't buy a product. However, preferences and purchase intentions do not always correspond to the final choice.

The fifth step is post-purchase behavior, where marketers will take a look at the customer's satisfaction, but also the post-purchase actions and the use of the product. The fifth step influences subsequent purchases. (Bersou, 2019-2020)

For a marketer, understanding the buying process can be complicated as they do not have access to what is going on in the consumer's brain, which can be referred to as the "black box". The black box allows the discovery of the "why" and "how" an individual behaves. The marketer will put himself in the shoes of the consumer and try to think like him and solve the problem according to the internal and external factors that might influence him when deciding whether to buy or not to buy a product. (Folea, 2021). Access to the consumer's brain is very complicated. However, there are visible aspects such as stimuli and responses. (Bersou, 2019-2020)



Figure 5. Black Box (Author of thesis, 2022)

The figure below demonstrates the marketing and environmental strategy that the marketers have put in place for consumers. Then comes the phase where everything happens in the consumer's brain. This phase is very complicated to understand, which means that the marketers will take into account the characteristics of the consumer. Marketers will analyze the level of response to the marketing and environmental strategy that has been put in place. The level of response will include buying, not buying the product, but also seeking additional information from the consumer.

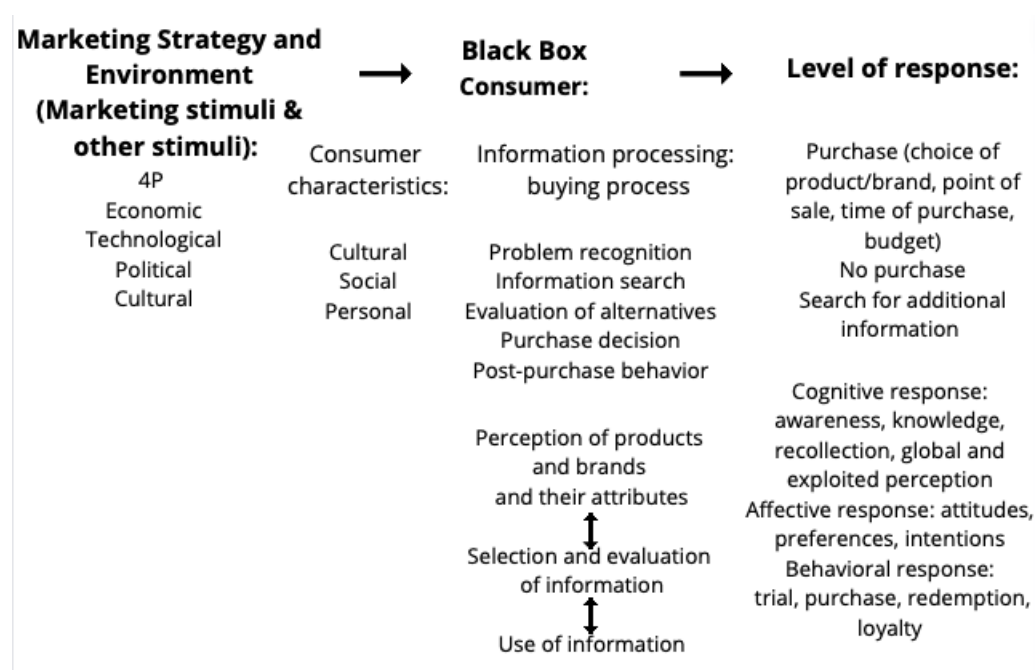


Figure 6. Black Box process (Author of thesis, 2022)

## 6 INTERNAL & EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

Internal influences include perception, motivation, personality, emotions, and attitudes.

### 6.1 Perception

Perception is the result of an interaction between a person and the environment. It is a process of selection, organization, and interpretation. This perception will be unique as each person is unique. It is a world saturated with sensations, including colors, smells, and sounds, some of which will attract attention and others will be ignored. The interpretation of stimuli will be based on the person's experiences and wishes (Solomon et al., 2010). Stimuli include images, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures. The sensory receptors are the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin. Sensory marketing appeals to consumers' five senses in a way that affects perception, judgment, and behavior. (Foxall et al., 1998, pp. 213-218).

1. Sight: sensitivity to color, size, shape, and brightness. In marketing: packaging, advertising campaign, SOP design.
2. Hearing: sounds. Music in supermarkets, in advertising. This sense relaxes, energizes, and increases impulse buying.
3. Smell: processing of smells by the limbic system (this is the seat of instant emotions). This sense can arouse emotions.
4. Touch: touching a product. There is evidence that when a salesperson touches a customer's arm/shoulder, it can influence their consumption behavior.
5. Taste: testing food products. It can vary from one culture to another. It carries emotions and memories.



Perceptual organization: it is an organization and structuring of information that will give meaning. In the Gestalt school, the individual seeks to make his perceptions simpler and easier to interpret. It includes 5 laws: figure and background (may vary according to the person), continuity (grouping of objects to create continuity), proximity (grouping of distinct stimuli according to their proximity in time and space), similarity (grouping of stimuli according to their similar characteristics) and closure (perception of an incomplete image as complete).

## 6.2 Motivation

Study of the "why". To understand consumer reactions and choices. Motivations may seem obvious but are often influenced by their values, ideals, and outlook on the world. To study motivations, marketers use qualitative approaches and projective techniques. Dichter has developed a number of these. For women, he says, "taking a cake out of the oven" is like "the act of birth". Offering women ready-made preparations, to which they simply need to add water, could marginalize their role. He suggested that an egg should also be added as a symbol of fertility. The projective technique is a method of personality study that confronts the subject with a situation to which he or she will respond according to the meaning the situation has for him or her, and according to what he or she feels during that response.

### The process of motivation

1. Need: the gap between the consumer's current state and the state he/she wishes to achieve generates a tension that pushes the individual to fill the gap.
2. Behavior: the individual has to find ways, varying according to his culture, experiences, and values, to satisfy them = drive theory.

### Consumer values

- Hedonistic motivation: to please oneself, to think only of oneself, this is a selfish dimension
- Oblative motivation: corresponds to the desire to please others, it is an altruistic dimension
- Self-expression motivation: expressing who you are or what you want to become. (Bersou, 2019-2020)

### 6.3 Personality

Personality represents consumption and self-image. The goods and services that an individual consumes form their personality. Products and brands highlight the values of individuals, which helps to understand different approaches to the self. Self-image: what an individual thinks of themselves and their characteristics. The ideal self and the real self: the ideal self represents what a person would like to be. Whereas the real self represents what a person is. The extended self: a more distant view as an individual will extend their perception of themselves according to their environment.

According to Freud, personality is made up of two topics. Freud's first topic is the physical structure which consists of three different levels: the conscious, the unconscious and the preconscious. The conscious comprises the individual is what he is. The unconscious includes the aspects that are hidden and not very accessible. And the preconscious is everything that goes on in an individual's consciousness.

But, from Freud's point of view, this does not say much about how the personality is constructed. This is why he decided to write his second theory. This theory includes the 'id', 'ego' and the 'superego'. The "id" is what characterizes the individual from birth, it is the animal part of the mind. It is the least visible and impenetrable part of an individual's personality. The "superego" comprises the little voice in the individual's head that dictates the parental prohibitions that the individual has had as a child. This voice says "you must not". It is a moral law that acts on a person without necessarily understanding its origin. It is a counterbalance to the id. The "ego" is the most visible aspect of the personality. Indeed, it is the result of the confrontation between the desire of the individual and the referee who is between the two other instances. It plays a mediating role in order to respond to the id and superego. It ensures the stability of the individual by preventing him from releasing his daily impulses.

### 6.4 Emotions

Emotions can be very strong and uncontrollable. If an individual's need is not met, the individual's emotions may be negative. The individual may feel angry or irritated, which may influence consumption behavior. However, if the individual's needs are

met, the individual's emotions will be positive and this will influence consumption behavior. Emotions play a major role in the consumption of a product as it is emotions that guide an individual. If an individual is happy with his purchase, he will become loyal to the brand which means that emotions are very important in consumer behavior. Emotions can be triggered by external events such as the surrounding environment but also by internal events such as personal well-being.

This graph demonstrates the effects that the environmental event and mental imagery have on an individual's emotions but also the nature of those emotions in question. Brands know how to reach an individual's emotions. Simply by putting into context emotions that have marked a person. This is called unknowing stimulation. (Vainikka, 2015, p. 23-26)

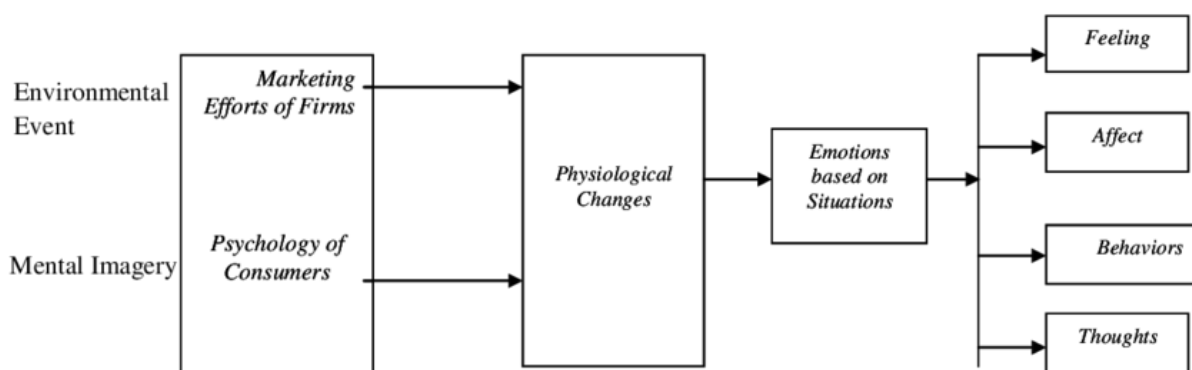


Figure 7. Nature of Emotions (Hawkins et al., 2010)

## 6.5 Attitude

An attitude is the result of a consumer's appraisal of the ability of a product or feature to satisfy the consumer's purchasing and consumption requirements as expressed by the consumer's appraisal criteria. If the sentiment is in favor of the product this means that the individual has a positive attitude towards the product and is, therefore, more likely to buy the product and therefore like the product. But if the latter has a negative attitude towards the product, the individual will not like the product and therefore will not buy it. The consumer's attitude will depend on and vary according to his or her beliefs, intentions, and feelings about the product or object. (Vainikka, 2015, p.27-29)

## EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

External influences help in explaining consumer choices and how to deal with a consumer's attitudes and consumption behavior. (Clauzel et al., 2016, p. 1)

There are two major factors:

1. Cultural factors
2. Social factors

### Cultural Factor

It is “a set of knowledge, beliefs, norms, values, and traditions acquired by man as a member of a particular society” (Darpy et al., 2007). Every individual is born and grows up in a different cultural environment which will define his identity and therefore explain his preferences and consumption behavior. Today, many companies adapt their marketing and their offer according to the cultural groups they address. (Clauzel et al., 2016, pp. 2-5)

### Social Factor

An individual's consumption choice may differ depending on whether it is made in the presence of someone or alone. According to some social psychologists, the process of influence refers to the fact that an individual will modify his behavior because of others. This will influence the consumption choices of the individual since he will be influenced by his environment as there is an interaction between them. This can lead to changes in the consumer's behavior, feelings, attitudes, and beliefs as the group will influence the individual. (Clauzel et al., 2016, pp. 33-36).

## 7 METHODOLOGY

### 7.1 Research design

To be able to answer the problem, the author decided to carry out a study that could help her to better understand what young Belgians and Finns expect from ecological clothing. Doing a study is the best choice because it will allow the researcher to have answers to her questions. The aim is to collect data from young people in Belgium and Finland to better understand their needs and expectations. “Some authors consider research design as the choice between qualitative and quantitative research methods. Others argue that research design refers to the choice of specific methods of data collection and analysis. Research design is also placed as a master plan for conducting a research project and this appears to be the most authentic explanation of the term.” (Dudovskiy, 2022)

### 7.2 Research method

The quantitative method is the most widely used as it allows reliable information to be obtained when a company carries out marketing research. While qualitative research is used for the collection of non-numerical data. The latter will help to understand the opinions of respondents. This research involves open-ended questions and therefore takes longer to collect information. (Bhandari, 2022). The author decided to do a quantitative study as it is more reliable and accurate. The study is about the expectations of Belgians and Finns towards ecological clothing, so it is important to have measurable and quantifiable variables. Doing quantitative research will also help the writer in data collection as the questionnaire will only contain closed-ended questions, making it easier to carry out the study. (Bilgin, 2017, p. 1)

### 7.3 Survey population and sampling

In the case of this study, it would be more of a business-consumer relationship because the aim here is to demonstrate to clothing brands what young people expect from eco-friendly clothing. To carry out a survey, it is essential to define the population on which the survey will focus. The study will focus on young adults who are between 18 and 30 years old. These respondents will come from Belgium and Finland. This choice was made because the author would like to analyze an age group to which she belongs. These two countries were chosen because the author is a Belgian living in Finland.

Sampling allows for the selection of individuals that a company wishes to survey from within an already defined population. (Bathelot, 2017). The sample size can affect the efficiency of the survey as well as its accuracy. This is why the questionnaire will be sent to 112 people in total. That means 56 people living in Belgium and 56 people living in Finland. (Thompson, n.d., p. 4)

### 7.4 Making the questionnaire

The questionnaire was written by the author. The author's main goal was to have questions that were understandable and simple so that everyone could understand them. The author also took into account the length of the questionnaire so as not to discourage respondents. The writer questionnaire takes about 5 minutes to complete and this information is given when the respondent receives the questionnaire. The author divided the questionnaire into two parts. The first part includes the personal information of the respondent, i.e. gender, age group, and the country where the respondent lives. The second part of the questionnaire includes questions about environmentally friendly clothing and fashion in general. The aim here is to find out whether the sample is environmentally and fashion-conscious. To analyze what a clothing shop should offer and understand the expectations of consumers looking for environmentally friendly clothing. It is also important for the author to see if the sample uses eco-friendly clothes or not and understand why.

## 7.5 Data collection and analysis

The author's questionnaire was sent to her Belgian and Finnish friends through social networks such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, or Messenger. As far as sending the questionnaire in Belgium is concerned, the writer chose to send it to 56 people living in Belgium. As for sending the questionnaire to Finland, the author chose to send it to 56 people.

For data collection and analysis, the author decided to use google forms as it is a convenient way to conduct an online survey. Once the responses were obtained, the author was able to analyze the behavior of each consumer belonging to a different age group and location. The writer was able to easily collect the data and understand the differences and similarities between the respondents as well as the answers that were most common or not.

Based on the numbers in Figure 2, the author was able to conclude that ecology is a very common topic nowadays. Indeed, since the COVID 19 crisis, 79% of generation Z and millennials are more sensitive to the environmental cause. As young people are more and more involved in the fight against global warming and in reducing their ecological footprint, the author expects a favorable response to ecological fashion.

## 7.6 Validity and reliability

Validity refers to the relevance of a survey. The right questions must be asked to respondents so that the interviewer can measure relevant data. When writing the questionnaire, it is important to ask yourself: "Does this question allow me to measure what I want to measure?". The author's study aims to understand consumer behavior towards eco-friendly clothing. That is why the questionnaire includes questions such as: "You buy ecological clothes because:", "You do not buy ecological clothes because:". These two multiple-choice questions allow the writer to better understand why they behave in this way. This will help the author to measure data in a relevant way. When a marketer conducts a survey, the marketer must have high-quality data but above all reliable. There is a very simple example that helps to understand 'reliability'. A person measures the length of something with a slat. This action has

been repeated 5 times in a row and the answer is always the same. However, there is some difference in the answer each time and this is reflected in the error the individual has made. Since the individual did not place himself in the same place 5 times. To reduce or eliminate this error rate, it is important to have a large number of respondents to have more reliable responses. (Hayes, 2007). As the sample consists of 112 people in total the author can say that the survey is reliable as among these 112 respondents there is a fair division and a large response rate.



## 8 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Before sending the questionnaire, the author created two links: one link that was sent to the Belgians and another to the Finns in order to facilitate data analysis. The questionnaire was sent directly as a private message to the author's surroundings via Snapchat, Instagram and Messenger. The questionnaire received 56 Finnish and 56 Belgian respondents, making a total of 112 respondents.

Part one of the questionnaire contains the respondents' information. This includes the gender, age, and origin of the respondent. Of the Belgians between 18 and 30 years old, 44.6% of the respondents were male and 55.4% were female. In the Finnish population between 18 and 30, 55.4% were male and 44.6% were female. As regards the age of the Belgian respondents, 57.1% of the respondents were in the 21-23 age group, 16.1% in the 18-20 age group, 14.3% of them in the 27-30 age group, and only 12.5% of them in the 24-26 age group. As regards the age of the Finnish respondents, 55.4% of the respondents were in the 21-23 age group, 17.9% in the 18-20 age group, 14.3% in the 27-30 age group, and only 12.5% in the 24-26 age group. The number of respondents did not enable the validity of the questionnaire as it included only 112 respondents in total, of which 56 were Belgian and 56 were Finnish, which did not allow for a valid analysis of the responses.

Part two of the questionnaire includes questions related to fashion and ecological clothing. The aim here was to understand whether the target group was aware of ecological clothing and fashion as well as ecology.

In Figure 8 and 9 it can be seen that 39.3% of the Belgians are ecologically aware against 44.6% of the Finns. 39.3% of Belgians and Finns are neither aware nor unaware. 12.5% of Belgians and 8.9% of Finns are unaware. 8.9% of Belgians and 5.4% of Finns are strongly aware. Only 1.8% of the Finnish are strongly unaware. This leads to the conclusion that the Finns are more aware than the Belgians when it comes to ecology. However, they are on the same level since they are both neither aware nor unaware. they are at the same level since they are both neither aware nor unaware, as the survey shows, 39,3% of Belgians and Finns responded the same.

### 3. How ecologically aware are you?

56 réponses

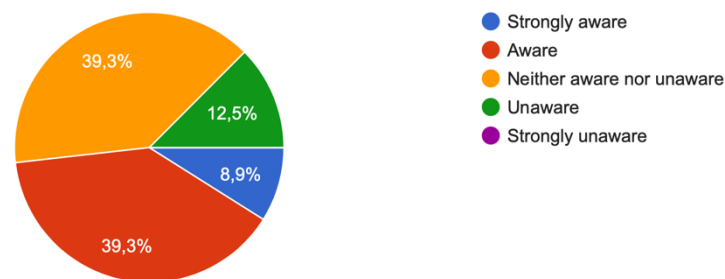


Figure 8. Question 3 : How ecologically aware are you ? (Belgians)

### 3. How ecologically aware are you?

56 réponses

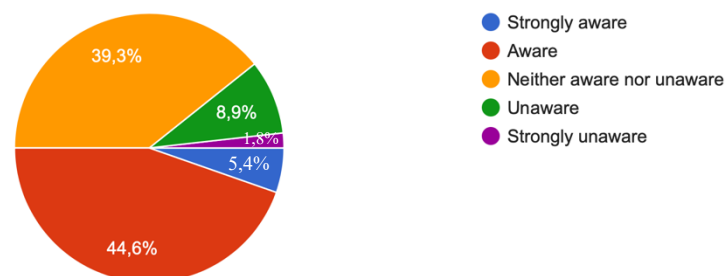


Figure 9. Question 3 : How ecologically aware are you ? (Finns)

In figure 10 and 11, it is possible to analyze question 4 of the questionnaire concerning the respondents' sensitivity to fashion. 53.6% of the Belgians and 41.1% of the Finns answered as sensitive. 26.8% of the Belgians and 32.1% of the Finns responded as neither sensitive nor intensive. 10.7% of Belgians and Finns answered strongly sensitive. 7.1% of the Belgians and 16.1% of the Finns responded as insensitive. Only

1.8% of Belgians responded as strongly insensitive. This leads to the conclusion that the Finns are more sensitive than the Belgians when it comes to fashion. However, they are at the same level since they are both strongly sensitive, as the survey shows, 10.7% of Belgians and Finns responded as strongly sensitive.

#### 4. How sensitive to fashion are you?

56 réponses

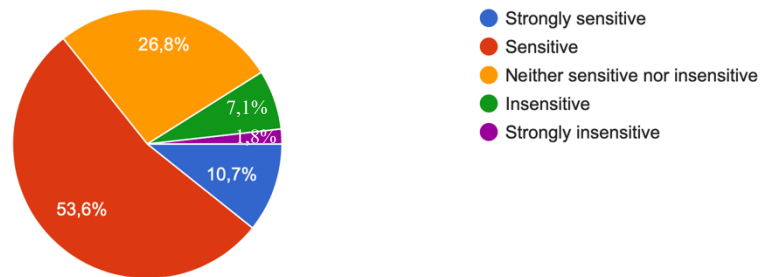


Figure 10. Question 4 : How sensitive to fashion are you ? (Belgians)

#### 4. How sensitive to fashion are you?

56 réponses

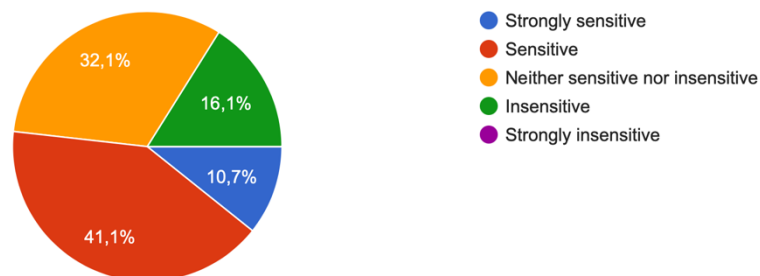


Figure 11. Question 4 : How sensitive to fashion are you ? (Finns)

The questionnaire also allowed the analysis of if the respondents' purchases are influenced when they are alone or accompanied and by whom they are accompanied. Questions 1 and 2 allow the analysis of this reflection and it is possible to see differences between the Belgians and the Finns. 62.5% of the Belgians and 80.4% of the Finns declare to make the same purchases when they are alone or accompanied. 37.5% of the Belgians and 19.5% of the Finns stated that they do not make the same purchases when accompanied or when alone. This leads to the conclusion that Belgians

will be more influenced by social factors as they are less likely to buy the same products when they are alone or accompanied.

2. When you go shopping, do you make the same purchases when you are alone or accompanied?  
56 réponses

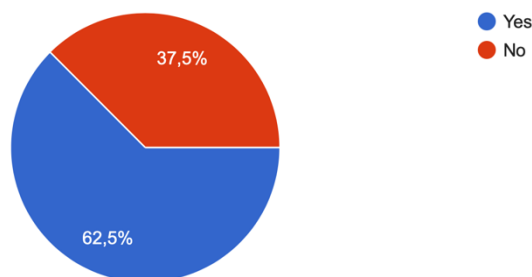


Figure 12. Question 2 : When you go shopping, do you make the same purchase when you are alone or accompanied? (Belgians)

2. When you go shopping, do you make the same purchases when you are alone or accompanied?  
56 réponses

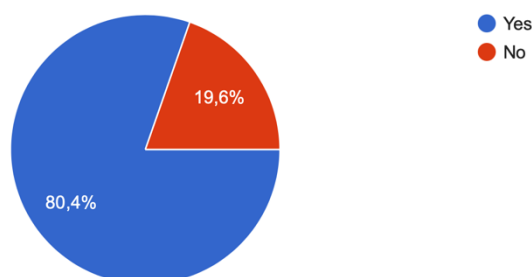


Figure 13. Question 2 : When you go shopping, do you make the same purchase when you are alone or accompanied? (Finns)

The buying attitude may also depend on who accompanies the consumer and indeed Figure 14 and 15 shows that 48.2% of Belgians versus 62.5% of Finns are accompanied by their friends. However, 21.4% of Belgians are accompanied by their parents, compared to only 5.4% of Finns. On the other hand, it can be observed that 28.6% of the Finns go shopping alone against 16.1% of the Belgians. The Finnish shop more often with their friends than the Belgians. However, Belgians are more accompanied by their parents than Finns and Finns are more likely to shop alone than Belgians, which concludes that Belgians will again be much more influenced by their external environment.

1. Who accompanies you most often when shopping for clothes? (choose only one alternative)  
56 réponses

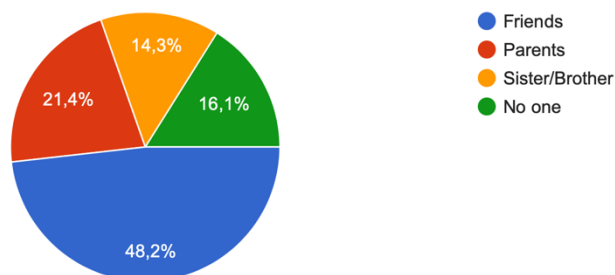


Figure 14. Question 1: Who accompanies you most often when shopping for clothes? (Belgians)

1. Who accompanies you most often when shopping for clothes? (choose only one alternative)  
56 réponses

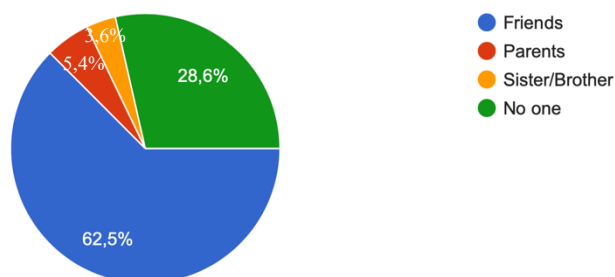


Figure 15. Question 1: Who accompanies you most often when shopping for clothes? (Finns)

Question 7 allows the analysis of the importance of the presence of ecological clothing in a clothing shop. Figure 16 and 17 shows that 48.2% of Belgians and Finns consider it somewhat important. 28.6% of the Finns and 17.9% of the Belgians state that it is very important. However, 26.8% of the Belgians and 14.3% of the Finns say that it is not very important. Belgians and Finns are on the same wavelength as both find it somewhat important that a shop offers ecological clothing. However, it can be concluded that the Belgians find it more important than the Finns.

## 7. How important is it that the clothing shop offers ecological clothing?

56 réponses

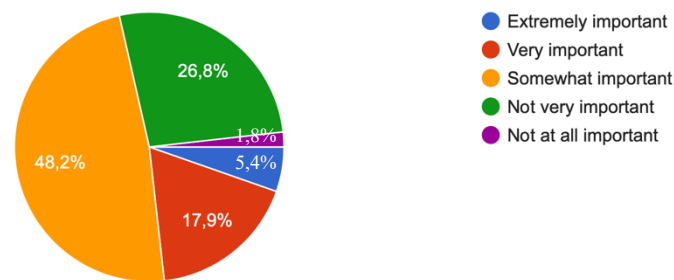


Figure 16. Question 7 : How important is it that the clothing shop offers ecological clothing? (Belgians)

## 7. How important is it that the clothing shop offers ecological clothing?

56 réponses

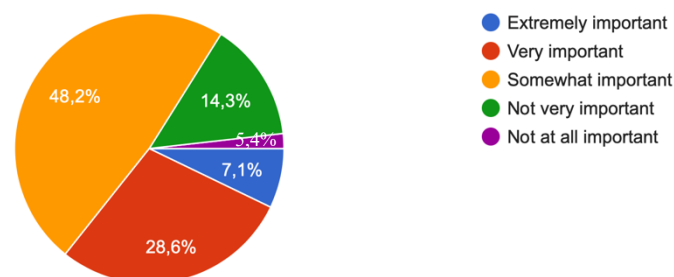


Figure 17. Question 7: How important is it that the clothing shop offers ecological clothing? (Finns)

Figure 18 and 19 allows the analysis of the expectations of Belgians and Finns towards ecological clothing. The main elements show that 44.6% of the Belgian and 25% of the Finnish respondents expect affordable prices. 53.6% of Belgians and only 33.9% of Finns expect this type of clothing to be "made in Europe". 57.1% of Belgians and 73.2% of Finns say they expect high quality. The author notes that 55.4% of Finns and Belgians expect this type of clothing to be made by workers who are paid fairly. The Belgians place a little more importance on trends, as figure 18 shows that 30.4% of the Belgians and 26.8% of the Finns expect environmentally friendly clothing to be trendy. The Belgians expect more affordable prices compared to the Finns, who expect a high-quality product. However, both expect an environmentally-friendly garment to be produced by workers who are paid fairly.

9. What do you expect from an ecological garment? (you can choose more than one alternative)

56 réponses

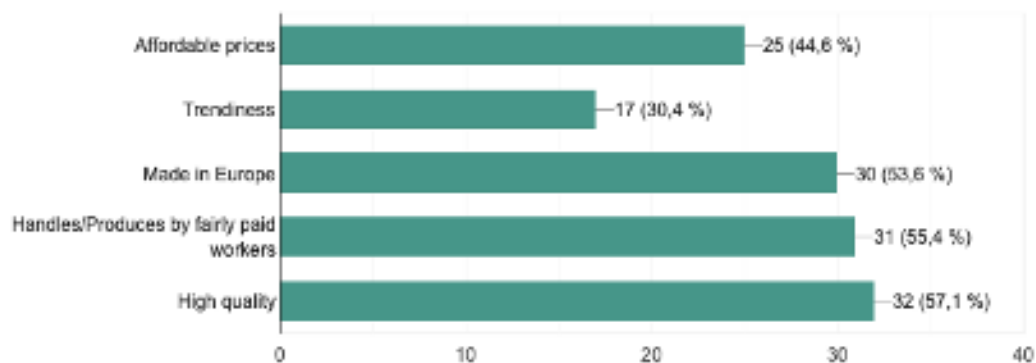


Figure 18. Question 9: What do you expect from an ecological garment? (you can choose more than one alternative) (Belgians)

9. What do you expect from an ecological garment? (you can choose more than one alternative)

56 réponses

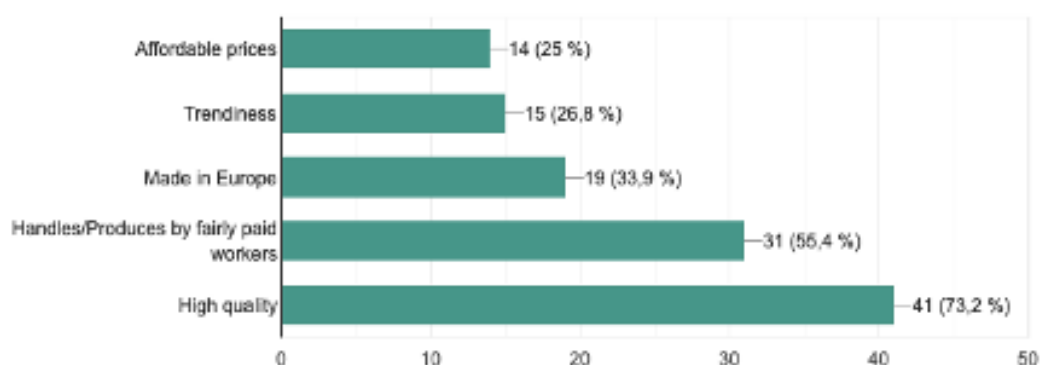


Figure 19. Question 9: What do you expect from an ecological garment? (you can choose more than one alternative) (Finns)

The following questions allow the analysis of the frequency of buying or not buying eco-friendly clothes. The author notes that 41.1% of the Belgian and 23.2% of the Finnish respondents do not buy eco-friendly clothes very often. 32.1% of the Belgians and 53.6% of the Finns buy from time to time. 17.9% of Belgians and 8.9% of Finns buy rarely or not at all. 12.5% of Finns and 7.1% of Belgians buy often. The Belgians are the ones who buy the least ecological clothing and the Finns are the ones who buy it from time to time. The Finns are therefore the ones who consume the most ecological clothing.

## 10. How often do you buy eco-friendly clothes?

56 réponses

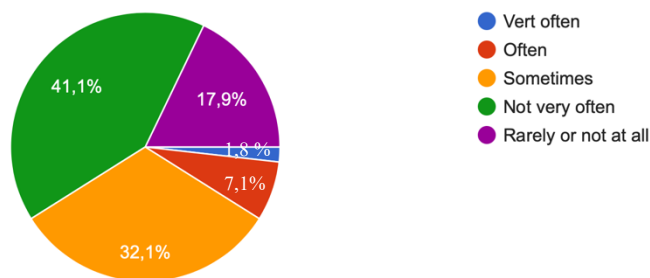


Figure 20. Question 10 : How often do you buy eco-friendly clothes? (Belgians)

## 10. How often do you buy eco-friendly clothes?

56 réponses

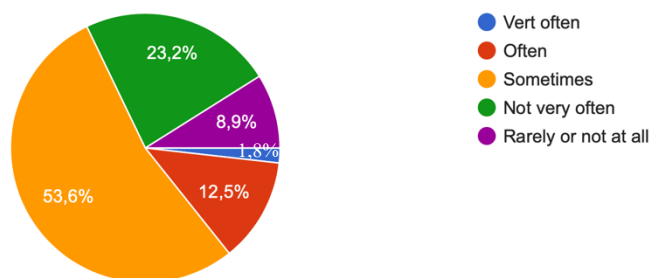


Figure 21. Question 10 : How often do you buy eco-friendly clothes? (Finns)

Question 16 allows understanding if respondents prioritize the purchase of an ecological garment to express their social image. Indeed, 33.9% of Belgians and 30.4% of Finns said that it is very important for them to express their social image. 33.9% of Belgians and 32.1% of Finns answered that it was somewhat important. 25% of Belgians and 23.2% of Finns said it was not very important. 3.6% of Belgians and 14.3% of Finns said it was not important at all. When a Belgian consumes environmentally friendly clothing, this factor will be more important to them as it will allow them to express their social image. However, the Finns find it not important at all and do not take this factor into account when buying ecological clothing. This leads to the conclusion that Belgians are more concerned about their surroundings than the Finns.



16. How important are the following factors when you buy eco-friendly clothes? Show/Express social image  
56 réponses

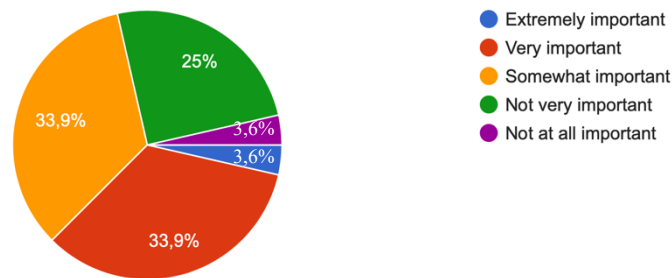


Figure 22. Question 16 : How important are the following factors when you buy eco-friendly clothes? Show/Express social image ? (Belgians)

16. How important are the following factors when you buy eco-friendly clothes? Show/Express social image  
56 réponses

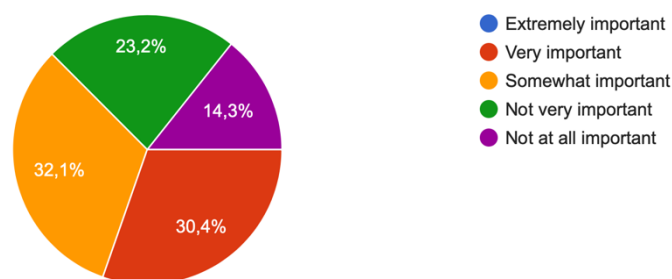


Figure 23. Question 16: How important are the following factors when you buy eco-friendly clothes? Show/Express social image? (Finns)

Question 18 allowed the author to better understand why the respondent would not buy an ecological garment and indeed, after analyzing this question, figure 24 and 25 shows that the limited choice of this type of garment influences the non-buying as 51.8% of Belgians and 46.4% state that this is one of the reasons that could influence them not to buy an ecological garment. Belgians are more price-sensitive than Finns. Indeed, 67.9% of Belgian respondents compared to 39.3% of Finnish respondents say that high prices influence their non-purchase. Belgians are more sensitive to fashion as shown in Figure 23, as 33.9% of Belgians say that this is one of the reasons why they do not buy, compared to 21.4% of Finns. Belgians are much more sensitive to high prices than Finns as this is a factor that could prevent them from buying an

ecological garment. Belgians are also more concerned about the limited choices of eco-friendly clothing that brands offer as they are more fashion conscious. Finns are not influenced by the high prices but rather by the limited choice of ecological clothing.

18. What are the reasons why you will not buy eco-friendly clothes? (you can choose more than one alternative)

55 réponses

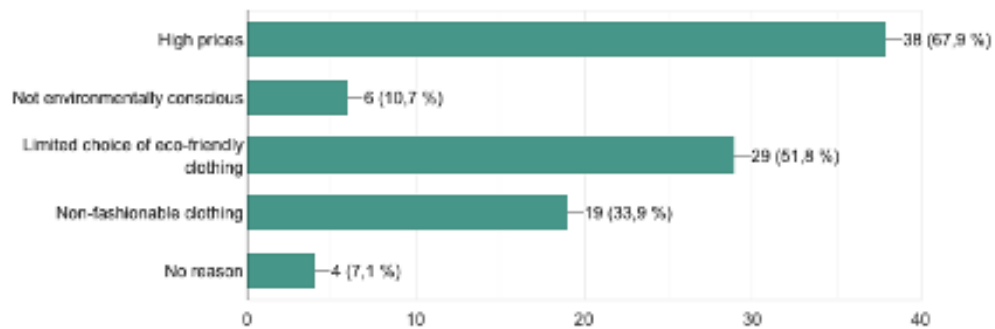


Figure 24. Question 18: What are the reasons why you will not buy eco-friendly clothes? (you can choose more than one alternative) (Belgians)

18. What are the reasons why you will not buy eco-friendly clothes? (you can choose more than one alternative)

56 réponses

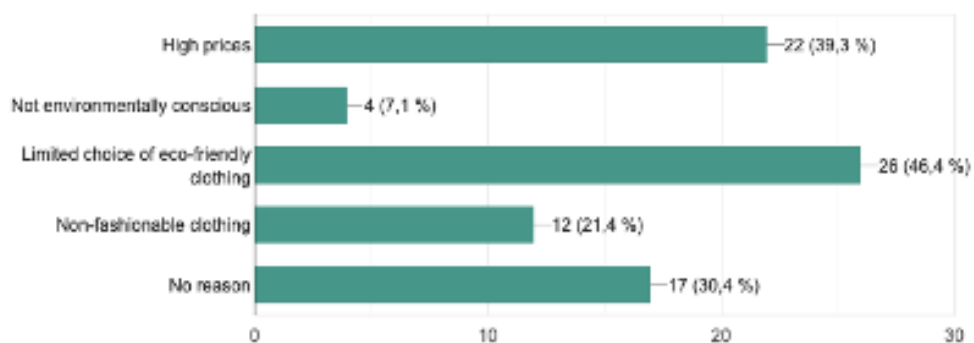


Figure 25. Question 18: What are the reasons why you will not buy eco-friendly clothes? (you can choose more than one alternative) (Finns)

After analyzing the respondents' answers, the author was able to identify considerable differences between Belgians and Finns regarding some of the questions in the questionnaire. For example, the fact that Belgians do not make the same purchases

when they are alone and when they are accompanied leads to the conclusion that they will be more likely to be influenced by their external environment and therefore by their social factors. On the other hand, there are more Finns who responded that they make the same purchases when they are alone and when they are accompanied which means that they will not be influenced by their external environment. The Finns are less likely to be accompanied by their parents and more likely to shop alone, while the Belgians are more likely to be accompanied by their parents and less likely to shop alone. Belgians are also much more sensitive to high prices as this is a barrier to consuming eco-friendly clothing. On the other hand, the Finns are less concerned about high prices and more concerned about high-quality.

## 9 SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

### 9.1 Summary

This part of the thesis will contain the main results of the empirical research which was mainly based on experience and observation. But it will also contain the main results of the theoretical part of the thesis. As far as the theoretical part is concerned, the questionnaire allowed the analysis and observation of consumer behavior towards ecological clothing. Indeed, the questionnaire focused a lot on fashion and the sensitivity that respondents had towards fashion but also on ecology and the sensitivity that they had towards the environment. The aim was to understand whether the respondents were much or not much influenced by the external and internal environment that surrounds them as well as to understand their consumption behavior and what might influence them. As seen in the theoretical part of the thesis, many factors can influence the purchase that an individual will make. The environment that surrounds the individual is taken into account and this can be internal which will include the perception, motivation, personality, emotions and attitude that the consumer will have towards the product. Consumer choices are also explained by the external environment and the two main factors that enter into this are social and cultural factors. However, as seen in the theoretical part it is very difficult to know what is going on in the consumer's brain, this is called " the black box ", which is a complicated and long process but in order to do so, marketers study the characteristics of the consumer to better understand why the consumer acts the way he does.

Regarding the practical part and the results of the research, the author was able to analyze several differences and similarities between the Finnish and Belgian respondents. The behavior of these two types of respondents varies greatly depending on their environment, as each individual is born into a different environment which

will influence their future consumer behavior. This study allowed the author to make links with the theoretical part in order to have a more in-depth analysis of the subject.

After observing and analyzing the questionnaire, the author found some interesting findings. The writer was able to analyze that Belgians do not make the same purchases when they are alone or when they are accompanied, in contrast to the Finns where a higher percentage stated that they make the same purchases when they are accompanied or when they are alone. This leads to the conclusion that Belgians will be more influenced by their social factors when shopping. In addition, question 1 showed that many more Finns shopped alone than Belgians, who were more likely to be accompanied by their friends, parents, or siblings which means that the Finns will be less influenced by their external environment. Indeed, the external environment of an individual can play a major role in consumer behavior. Each individual grows up in a different environment with different norms, beliefs, traditions, and values. The cultural environment varies from one environment to another, from one country to another, which will explain preferences and consumption behavior. It is also important to know that an individual's choice of consumption may differ depending on whether it is made in the presence of someone else or alone. The process of influence refers to the fact that an individual will change his/her behavior because of others. This will influence the individual's consumption choices as they will be influenced by their environment as there is an interaction between them.

Concerning the importance of ecological clothing in a clothing shop, it was possible to deduce from the figures that it is obvious that it is more important for the Finns that a shop offers ecological clothing. Furthermore, question 10 emphasized this point, as Finns buy ecological clothing more often than Belgians. Finns are more environmentally aware than the Belgians and are therefore more likely to buy environmentally friendly clothing. This leads to the conclusion that Finns and Belgians will be influenced by the internal environment in a different way as they will rather make purchases according to their personality and values. The perception that each Finn and Belgian has is unique as each person perceives things differently and has a different personality. The fact that a product is environmentally friendly will motivate a Finn to make a purchase more than a Belgian since it is more important to a Finn that a clothing shop offers environmentally friendly products.

The social image that an individual wants to portray can have a significant influence on a consumer's consumption and indeed, question 16 was able to provide an answer to this question. Belgians are more sensitive to the social image they want to show around them which will influence their purchase. When a Belgian buys an ecological garment, the consumer will find it important that the purchase of this type of garment is influenced by the fact that the consumer pays attention to the image that they want to give of themselves. In contrast to the Finnish, who will pay less attention to this. It is complicated to know what exactly is going on in the consumer's brain. That is why the characteristics that make up a consumer will be taken into account. The aim here is to better understand why consumers pay so much attention to their social image or why they do not pay so much attention to the social image they want to project. The black box will therefore make it possible to discover the why and the how of an individual's behavior.

## 9.2 Conclusions

This questionnaire was mainly launched to enable the author but also people who might have the same idea of starting an ecological clothing brand. The main goal was to understand whether it would be better to start up in Belgium or in Finland. In order to understand this, it was essential to understand the values of the respondents and to see whether Belgians or Finns were more sensitive to fashion and ecology, but also which of the two was more sensitive to ecological clothing. In order to do this, it was important for the author to analyze consumer behavior and to understand what might influence them to buy such clothes or what might influence them not to buy such clothes. Indeed, this study answered the first question the author asked at the very beginning, which was “What do young Belgians and Finns expect from eco-friendly clothing?” The empirical part of the study provided an answer to this question, while the theoretical part of the study dealt with various topics such as the internal and external environment as well as consumer behavior and their buying process.

The striking similarities between the Belgians and the Finns are that both are neither aware nor unaware of ecological awareness. Indeed, the percentage of Belgian and

Finnish respondents is at the same level. It was also possible to observe that both populations are almost equally fashion-conscious, there is a difference of only 12%. It was also possible to observe that both Belgians and Finns attach great importance to the social image they want to project, which explains the fact that they would be willing to wear environmentally friendly clothes in order to save their social image.

The author also observed significant differences between the Belgian and Finnish respondents. Regarding the external influence of the Belgian and Finnish consumers, it can be observed that the Belgians are more sensitive to the environment around them, as they shop more often with others than alone, which will influence their buying behavior. In contrast, the Finns are more likely to shop alone and therefore not be influenced by their external environment. The expectations of Belgian and Finnish respondents regarding eco-friendly clothing are very different as Belgians place much more importance on affordability than Finns. The Belgian respondents also expect the garment to be "Made in Europe", which is less important to the Finnish respondents.

After analyzing this information it is finally possible for the author to answer the question "What do young Belgians and Finns expect from eco-friendly clothing? As a result of the quantitative study conducted by the author, different information on consumer expectations was revealed. The writer observed that Finnish and Belgian respondents were similar in many ways regarding fashion and ecological awareness, however, it was possible to observe that Belgians and Finns did not shop in the same way and that one of the two populations was more sensitive to being influenced by their external environment. Expectations are different as one population expects affordable prices and another expects high quality. Finally, the high prices and lack of choice in the market for eco-friendly clothing can also be a barrier to the consumer's purchase of eco-friendly clothing.

## 10 FINAL WORDS

Conducting a quantitative study was a simple task for the author as she has already had the opportunity to create several quantitative questionnaires during her studies. However, finding the right questions was not very easy as it was necessary to find questions that were simple to understand and that could help the author to answer her fundamental question which was to analyze consumer behavior toward eco-friendly clothing. Before creating the questionnaire, the writer looked at the types of questions and questionnaires she had created before to get inspiration from them. The author also asked several people around her to read her questionnaire before sending it out to others to get an external opinion. This shows that the author had a fair approach in order to carry out the study.

When reading the thesis, the author noticed that the latter had given a lot of examples when explaining certain concepts which is an excellent idea as this can allow a better understanding for the reader. However, some of the sentences were too short, so the author had to change the sentences. Next time the author should make sure that the sentences are long enough and more comprehensive as this may lead to misunderstanding by the reader.

For further study, the author may suggest asking for help when needed to enable the work to progress. This is something she was not afraid to do because in this kind of long-term work one should not hesitate to ask for support from those around her. This work was carried out with patience and desire because the chosen subject was a source of motivation for the author as she was passionate about it. What the author can suggest is to choose a subject that the writer is passionate about.



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## ECO-FRIENDLY CLOTHING - SURVEY

As part of my thesis, I decided to carry out a study to analyze the behavior of young Belgians and Finns regarding eco-friendly clothing.

Thank you in advance for your time in answering this questionnaire.

Duration of the questionnaire: 5 to 10 minutes

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**\*Obligatoire**

### Part I. Respondents information

What is your gender? \*

- Female
- Male
- Other

In which age bracket do you fall? \*

- 18 - 20 years old
- 21 - 23 years old
- 24 - 26 years old
- 27 - 30 years old

In which country do you live? \*

- Belgium
- Finland

Part 2. Questions about ecological clothing and fashion

1. Who accompanies you most often when shopping for clothes? (choose only one alternative) \*

- Friends
- Parents
- Sister/Brother
- No one

2. When you go shopping, do you make the same purchases when you are alone or accompanied? \*

- Yes
- No

3. How ecologically aware are you? \*

- Strongly aware
- Aware
- Neither aware nor unaware
- Unaware
- Strongly unaware

4. How sensitive to fashion are you? \*

- Strongly sensitive
- Sensitive
- Neither sensitive nor insensitive
- Insensitive
- Strongly insensitive

5. How important is it that the clothing shop offers trendy clothes? \*

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not at all important

6. How important is it that the clothing shop offers quality clothes? \*

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not at all important

7. How important is it that the clothing shop offers ecological clothing? \*

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not at all important

8. How important is it that the clothing shop offers affordable clothes? \*

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not at all important

9. What do you expect from an ecological garment? (you can choose more than one alternative) \*

- Affordable prices
- Trendiness
- Made in Europe
- Handles/Produces by fairly paid workers
- High quality

10. How often do you buy eco-friendly clothes? \*

- Vert often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Not very often
- Rarely or not at all

11. How often do you buy non-ecological clothes? \*

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Not very often
- Rarely or not at all

12. How often do you buy second-hand clothes? \*

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Not very often
- Rarely or not at all

13. How important are the following factors when you buy eco-friendly clothes? Reduce ecological footprint \*

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not at all important

14. How important are the following factors when you buy eco-friendly clothes? Show awareness of the impact the textile industry has on the environment \*

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not at all important

15. How important are the following factors when you buy eco-friendly clothes? Avoid clothing made with synthetic fibers \*

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not at all important

16. How important are the following factors when you buy eco-friendly clothes? Show/Express social image \*

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not at all important

17. How important are the following factors when you buy eco-friendly clothes? Seek for a quality price \*

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not at all important

18. What are the reasons why you will not buy eco-friendly clothes? (you can choose more than one alternative) \*

- High prices
- Not environmentally conscious
- Limited choice of eco-friendly clothing
- Non-fashionable clothing
- No reason

19. If an ecological garment is more expensive than a non-ecological one, would you be willing to buy it? \*

- Definitely buy
- Probably buy
- Not sure
- Probably not buy
- Definitely not buy