

Consumers' Identity Construction Driving Ethical Consumption Behaviour

lina Rantanen



Author(s) lina Rantanen	
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<p>This study was conducted for a bachelor's thesis in the major of Customer Relationship Management and Communication, with the aim to view how consumers identity construction drives their ethical consumption behaviour. More specifically, the focus was on how ethical consumers' identity influences their consumption of ethical fashion in the marketplace.</p> <p>The research was divided into four areas of focus. Firstly, research was conducted to view the factors of ethical consumption of fashion that are deemed important for an ethical consumers identity building. This was followed by placing the acquired knowledge of self-identity into the ethical decision-making processes of an ethical consumer, and how consumer behaviours assist in understanding consumption. The role of gender was viewed as an external factor that influences the behaviour and decision-making of ethical fashion consumption. Finally, viewing what aspects should be highlighted when advertising ethical fashion to ethically orientated consumers allowed for an international and organizational scope into the research.</p> <p>In order to gain an overall understanding of ethical consumers and their consumption behaviour, both primary and secondary research was conducted. Secondary data was collected in the form of theories, concepts and models through academic articles and books. Primary research was attained through performing a total of 14 interviews, with an equal number of responses from both genders to tackle the role of gender. These interviews allowed for a personal point of view of ethical consumption of fashion from an ethical consumer, and made it possible to view the construction of identity projects.</p> <p>The research findings were analysed and discussed. The interview findings concerning the key elements of identity construction and decision-making processes were utilized in developing the answers for the role of gender and marketing content. The research showed that an ethical consumer's identity is influenced by both internal and external factors, and how ethical decision-making is a result of consumer behaviour constructed through pride and self-value. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated how both genders play a role in being ethically conscious and the eco-gender gap is not as evident any more in today's society. Lastly, the transparency of organizations is key for appealing towards ethical consumers through marketing efforts. In addition, the benefits of utilizing Corporate Social Responsibility efforts into the core business model justifies organizations to convert towards being ethically conscious.</p>	
Keywords Identity construction, consumer behaviour, ethical consumer, ethical consumption, ethical fashion, consumer culture theory, corporate social responsibility	

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1 Introduction

This thesis is a research-based bachelor's thesis for the Degree Programme in International Business studied at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, and specifically for the major of Customer Relationship Management and Communication. The central scope of the research is to focus on the base concept of consumer identity construction and how this influences consumer behaviour. The introduction chapter aims to provide an overview and justifications to the research. This includes background knowledge of consumer identity and ethical consumption to give a strong understanding of the overall theme of the thesis. The research question and the formulated investigative questions will also be presented. In addition, demarcations will be stated and reasoned, followed by the international aspect as required by the degree programme for the thesis. Lastly, the benefits that this research will generate to different stakeholders, and the key concepts that are central to the research will be presented.

1.1 Background

Consumers are becoming increasingly more aware of how their consumption affects the world, as the damaging effects are taking a toll on climate, habitats and communities. This includes deforestation, global warming and animal cruelty. Ethical consumers are utilizing available information into evaluating products based on where, what, who, and how it is made. (Jarvis 2020.) Both consumers and businesses are beginning to see these impacts and are committing towards ethical consumerism, whether it be in their daily lives or business processes. Ethical awareness by both stakeholders have resulted in 25% increase of the term ethical consumerism in the past six years (The Green Hub 2020). The fashion industry is still one of the largest polluters, as many high street clothing companies produce disposable fashion. Furthermore, fast fashion brands only focus on over producing in bulk and using cheap materials and labor. The fashion industry has moved towards the concept of fast sale and fast use. (Crumbie 2019.) This results in direct environmental and social impacts that are becoming more evident to the mainstream media.

Individuals are constantly trying to find their place in society and identified groups, which creates a sense of belonging and community. As consumers begin to change their consumption behavior and become more aware of environmental and social impacts, they begin to develop their self-identity. Consumer identity is an aspect that is persistently changing, as consumption is a process for the consumers to construct, sustain and develop their identities. This ultimately ties into ethical consumption acting as a reflection

on self-identity. (Reed II, Forehand, Puntoni, Warlop 2012, 310-321.) When consumers are part of a movement, such as consumption of ethical fashion, their value orientation shows the positive choice that they are making for the world (Stets & Burke 2003). This develops their perception of the marketplace and the consumers will search for ways to fit into the idea of ethical consumerism (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 868–882).

1.2 Research Question and Investigative Questions

This thesis aims to increase the awareness and knowledge of consumer identity construction and its direct impact on consumer consumption behavior, concerning the target group of ethical consumers. The outcome will provide insight into how to target, predict and follow ethical consumer trends in the desired ethical fashion market. This can be utilized and implemented at a company level and by other businesses.

The research question is:

How do consumers' identity construction drive their consumption behaviour?

In order to provide a clear scope to the thesis, the research question is broken down into four investigative questions.

The investigative questions are:

1. What factors of ethical consumption of fashion are important for consumers' identity building?
2. What are decision-making processes that ethical consumers use?
3. In what ways does gender influence ethical consumption of fashion?
4. What aspects should be highlighted when advertising ethical fashion to ethically orientated consumers?

Table 1 below presents the theoretical framework, research methods and findings chapters for each investigative question.

Table 1. Overlay matrix.

Investigative question	Theoretical Framework	Research Methods	Findings (chapter)
IQ 1. What factors of ethical consumption of fashion are important for consumers' identity building?	Consumer culture theory, identity projects, consumer value orientation, fast fashion	Interview of qualitative data of ethical consumers	4.1

IQ 2. What are decision-making processes that ethical consumers use?	Theory of planned behaviour, market place theory, role of available information of environmental and social issues, ethical-decision making model	Interview of qualitative data of ethical consumers	4.2
IQ 3. In what ways does gender influence ethical consumption of fashion?	Consumer culture theory, identity projects, consumer value orientation, consumer behavior model	Interview of qualitative data of ethical consumers	4.3
IQ 4. What aspects should be highlighted when advertising ethical fashion, because of the importance to the consumer?	Factors affecting ethical decision making, corporate social responsibility (CSR)	Interview of qualitative data of ethical consumers	4.4

1.3 Demarcation

The main focus of the research is on the ethical consumers' perspective on consumption of fashion. The target group does not limit itself to one geographic location, but instead focuses on the self-identity of being an ethical consumer. The demographic of the target group is narrowed down to young adults who have their own 'free-will' to buy products that they desire. In addition, it is optimal that there will be an even amount of answers from both genders in order to answer IQ 3. The desired aim is to have seven answers from both females and males. Moreover, collectivistic identity will not be discussed as the focus is on self-identity. Thus, the ethical consumers are independent and live outside of home. In terms of geographical location of the target group, it is vital for the research to only focus on developed countries as developing countries do not have the same availability of information and resources of ethical fashion. Therefore, the target group are young adults, living outside of home in developed countries, with no children.

The chosen target group will focus on the fashion industry and more specifically ethical fashion. This will allow for the thesis to focus on one sector in the market, which is accessible to the demographics at hand. The reason why the term ethical fashion was chosen over sustainable fashion is because ethical fashion focuses on the human rights, animal welfare and the environmental impact at every stage of the production process and supply chain. Whereas, sustainable fashion focuses only on the environmental impact. (The Green Hub 2020.) The choice of ethical fashion provides a variety of different topics to focus on and to analyze. The term ethical fashion must be clearly defined, as this specific sector in fashion will only be analyzed and it must be made aware to the ethical

consumers in order for them to stay on topic during the interviews. However, the categories of fashion products will not be limited. This will influence the construction of the interview questions and the viewpoint the ethical consumers will create their answers.

The research will consist of a qualitative method approach where the findings from the interviews will be analyzed to help answer each IQ. However, the findings will not generalize any phenomenon. The aim of the qualitative research is to collect information from the target group to receive a deeper understanding about consumer identity construction and ethical consumption from a personal point of view of an ethical consumer. Therefore, the target group may influence the findings due to different consumer demographics and ethical values. Nonetheless, demographic groups will not be analyzed, and the interviews will be conducted with the general consensus that all interviewees have the same ethical values that define ethical fashion.

The qualitative method is aiming to interview ethical consumers, making it important to become aware that 'ethical consumer' does not have a definite definition. Thus, in the qualitative research in the form of interviews, the interviewee will provide their own conception of how they are ethical consumers. This will create a fusion of different perceptions of ethical consumers and ethical consumption. These answers will generate the knowledge base that is tied into the theory in order to support the findings.

As the target group perspective is focused on the consumers, brand and business perspectives will not be analyzed until IQ 4. This is where advertising initiatives for businesses will be analyzed from the view point of ethical fashion and CSR processes.

Part of ethical consumption is the sustainability and morality aspect that will be discussed as effects on consumer self-identity. However, the discussions should not delve too deep into the sustainable and moral practices as the underlying theme is ethical consumer identity. Morality will arise in IQ 1 when discussing consumer value orientation and self-identity building. Sustainability is a concept that is tied along with CSR and ethical consumption, nonetheless the processes will not be discussed.

1.4 International Aspect

The international aspect requirement of the thesis will be fulfilled by having interviews with ethical consumers that are living in different countries. This criterion will also be fulfilled when tackling the fourth IQ concerning the advertising aspects of ethical fashion, as any international business can utilize the findings.

1.5 Benefits

The benefits to possible stakeholder's result in product orientated companies who are planning to ethically orientate their products, to receive insight into consumer self-identity. In addition, take measures to implement the new concept of consumer self-identity into their business model and processes. This change in businesses has a direct impact on consumers who are ethically conscious, as more products will become purchasable according to their self-identity. Especially fashion brands will benefit from looking into deciding factors of consumption. The ethical decision-making model will also gain more awareness in terms of consumers and not only organizational ethical decision-making.

Furthermore, this area is an interest of mine as it combines both the marketing aspect but also the psychological aspect. After graduation my aim is to continue into master's degree focusing on sustainability and marketing. This thesis will aid in my application and future understanding in education and career level tasks.

The expected end findings will enable the different stakeholders to get a better understanding and awareness of consumer self-identity in the market, and how ethics plays a role in forming this identity.

1.6 Risks & Risk Management

The risks that may arise in the research is difficulty in obtaining the needed number of ethical consumers for the interviews, and furthermore identifying if they truly are ethical consumers. These are the factors that set limitations to the research. The risk occurrence is high, thus utilizing connections of known ethical consumers and the snowballing technique will aid in finding the desired consumer group. The effect of not receiving a sufficient number of interviews has a direct impact on the research, as these ethical consumers fulfill the primary and qualitative research. This empirical research is the personal point of view analysis for ethical consumption and self-identity.

A criterion must be created in order to obtain the ideal ethical consumer, which will result in accurate interview answers. Furthermore, forming questions that are not misleading and that are relevant to the topic in question will be essential. This can be managed by having story answers to receive a narrow but wide answer. A technique to achieve this is

to use follow-up questions to provide more in-depth answers if more information is needed from the ethical consumer.

1.7 Definitions of Key Concepts

The thesis includes various significant concepts that will be stated and defined in order to fully understand the research. Below is a list of the most important key concepts.

Identity construction – “The search for an identity involves the establishment of a meaningful self-concept in which past, present, and future are brought together to form a unified whole. Identity remains a lifelong concern.” (Erikson 1950.)

Consumer identity – “we define an identity as any category label to which a consumer self-associates either by choice or endowment. A category label becomes an identity once the consumer has begun to incorporate it into his or her sense of who he or she is and has initiated the process to become that kind of person.” (Reed II & al 2012, 310-321.)

Consumer behaviour – “consumer behavior is the study of consumers and the processes they use to choose, use (consume), and dispose of products and services, including consumers’ emotional, mental, and behavioral responses (Radu 2019).

Ethical consumer – “being an ethical consumer means buying products which were ethically produced and/or which are not harmful to the environment and society” (The Guardian 2001).

Ethical fashion – “is more or less a combination of both Fair Trade and sustainable fashion. It focuses on both the social and environmental impact of fashion, seeking to improve the working conditions of laborers, along with the environmental impact of the clothing production process.” (Hayes 2017.)

Consumer culture theory (CCT) – “a method of assessing consumption apart from the usual frames of economics and psychology, CCT provides a distributed view of cultural meaning one created, sustained, and transformed by larger social and cultural forces such as myths, narratives, and ideologies”. (Joy & Li 2012, 2-3.)

Marketplace culture – “marketplace cultures are theorized as agentic social actors engaging in the appropriation of consumption norms to satisfy their desires for sociality” (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 868–882; Arnould & Thompson 2007, 3–22).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) – “is a self-regulating business model that helps a company be socially accountable to itself, its stakeholders, and the public” (Chen 2020).

2 Self-Identity and Ethical Consumption

This chapter presents the key concepts, models and theories used throughout the thesis in order to formulate the knowledge base. There are four main categories that build the knowledge base model, which will aid into developing both the research design but also the data collection tool.

Below in figure 1 is a visual demonstration of the knowledge base with four main categories to be analyzed including the consumer identity theories, consumer behaviour theories ethical fashion, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ethical consumption of fashion.

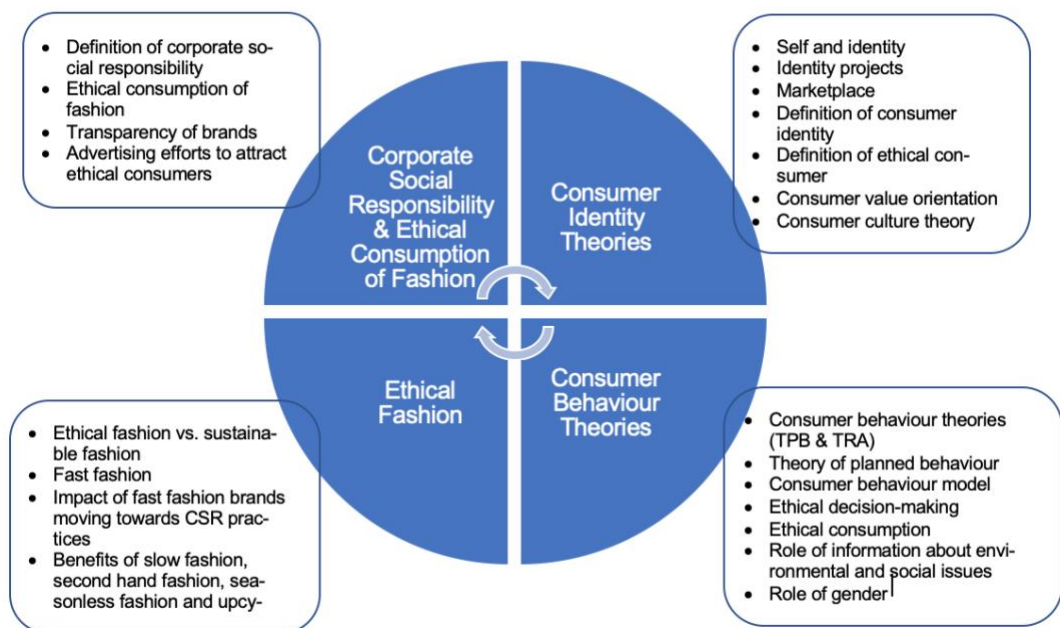


Figure 1. Knowledge base visual demonstration.

The knowledge base of consumer identity theories will allow for the reader to gain understanding on the underlying theme of the thesis, which is the definition of self-identity. This definition is derived from the concept of self and identity as separate entities and will tie itself into identity projects, from which it will be directed into defining ethical consumers from the previously attained knowledge. The definition of ethical consumer will be utilized in the consumer value orientation and the consumer culture theory (CCT), where the identity construction is being carried out. From these different definitions, concepts and theories it will build the base of the interviews, where the interviewees will be allowed to interpret themselves as ethical consumers and provide their own viewpoint of ethical consumption in today's society.

The category of consumer behaviour theories will connect the theory of consumer identity into how identity directly impacts the consumption behaviour of ethical consumers. It will tackle the original theory of reasoned action, which has been developed into the theory of planned behaviour. This is followed by the consumer behaviour model to show a visual representation of how ethical consumers' identity will influence the behavioural outcome. The ethical decision-making model will utilize the above consumer behavioural theory to demonstrate the process of ethical consumers decision-making process. Ethical consumption will be the outcome of the decision-making process, which is directly influenced by the availability of information on environmental and social issues and gender. The role of gender is an area that has to be taken into consideration, to see if there are gender differences in ethical consumption or ethical awareness.

The phenomenon of consumer identity will be applied to the topic of ethical fashion, where the knowledge base is not only built on research but on the opinions of the ethical consumers. Distinguishing the difference between ethical fashion and sustainable fashion will help demarcate the thesis further and enable the reader to focus only on ethical fashion, ethical consumption and ethical consumers. The concept of fast fashion will be researched and implemented into questions for the ethical consumers to demonstrate their opinions on the matter. In addition, viewing the impact of fast fashion brands implementing sustainable lines into their collection on consumers perception of the brand. Researching different forms of ethical fashion will further tackle the question of how the relationship between consumer identity and ethical fashion drives ethical consumption.

CSR plays a role in the availability of information provided to the consumer and the size of the market for ethical consumers. Therefore, defining CSR will create an organizational level viewpoint into the thesis. This will reveal factors affecting the ethical decision-making of ethical consumers when evaluating the product and brand. The interviews will mostly tackle the first three IQ's and the analysis of these will be implemented into answering the fourth IQ concerning CSR and advertising. Furthermore, explaining ethical consumption of fashion and viewing advertising methods to attract ethical consumers will further demonstrate an organizational viewpoint to the research.

2.1 Consumer Identity as a Phenomenon

CCT is the base for the development of consumer behaviour and ultimately fosters consumer identity, this concept will be researched first to receive a big picture of consumer identity in the marketplace. As the underlying theme of the thesis is consumer identity, it is vital to introduce the separate entities of self and identity that will lead to

identity construction and the definition of an ethical consumer. This is followed by ethical consumerism and what it means to be an ethical consumer along with the development of pride and value orientation. Referring back to CCT, marketplace culture is analysed as a source for consumer identity construction.

2.1.1 Consumer Culture

Consumers are seen as identity seekers and makers as they form a diversified sense of self as they use the marketplace as a resource to construct narratives of identity (Belk 1988, 139–168). Thus, consumer identity projects tend to be regarded as goal orientated, where consumers' sense of self-identity is built in relationship with marketplace positions where consumers personalize their consumptions that align with their goals (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 868–882).

CCT is a key definition for the basis of the thesis, as it assesses the cultural meaning that is created, sustained and transformed by both surrounding social and cultural forces (Joy & Li 2012, 2-3). The aim of CCT is to study the full consumption cycle at a micro, meso and macro level, which includes a consumer's acquisition, possession, consumption and disposition. This can only be achieved by focusing on the sociocultural context where consumer consumption occurs through the marketplace. (Askegaard 2015.) CCT has developed consumer behaviour knowledge over the years that expands to sociocultural processes and structures that tackle consumer identity projects, marketplace cultures, the sociohistoric patterning of consumption, mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 868–882).

The study of marketplace cultures sees the consumers as the cultural producers rather than the cultural carriers. This study brings forth the idea of consumers changing the cultural blueprints, as consumption becomes the dominant human practice that influences marketplace cultures. (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 868–882.) Maffesoli (1996) illustrates how the socioeconomic lifestyle has transformed from a very traditional sense of sociality into a solid individualistic way of living where individuals search for personal identity. The change has come about by consumers creating social solidarity through consumers shared consumption interests.

Sociohistoric patterning of consumption focuses on the institutional and social structures that has a direct impact on consumer consumption, which includes class, community, ethnicity and gender (Kim, Lowrey & Otnes 1993, 229–244). Gender is a distinguished aspect that affects ethical consumption that will be analyzed further in chapter 2.2.1. CCT

also tackles consumer experiences and practices within the institutional and social structures. Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001, 412–432) demonstrates an example of how branded communities try to build consumer communities through the consumption of commercial brands. Thus, arising the contradiction if consumers are in charge of developing self-identities or is it constructed by marketplace structure.

Mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies entails how commercial media sends messages about consumptions and how the consumers depict these messages and formulate their personal response. This research focuses on how consumers are the interpretative agents who decide how the commercial message is interpreted to fit into their lifestyle. (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 868–882.) Producer brands utilize consumer culture by inflicting images, texts and symbols into the marketplace with the aim to orient consumer identities (Kozinets 2001, 67–89). Therefore, Geertz (1983) views CCT as the “very fabric of experience, meaning, and action” as the consumption of commodities is the focus of consumer culture that is constructed by consumer self-choice (Holt 2002, 70–90).

2.1.2 Consumer Identity

Before looking into consumer identity this phenomenon must be broken down into different aspects. An individual self, according to Stets and Burke (2000, 224-237) “is reflexive in that it can take itself as an object and can categorize, classify, or name itself in particular ways in relation to other social categories or classifications”. It is portrayed as a conscious sense of self, which has the ability to interpret the surrounding environment and thus builds a relationship. This ultimately transforms into the notion of identity. (Stets & Burke 2000, 224-237.) Mead (1934) sees the sense of self being constructed when interacting with different situations, and the sense of self evaluates these situations to interpret the interaction and alters itself based on the outcome. Thus, self visualizes itself as an object that can alter and control itself (Mead 1934). Self-concept is where the self evaluates itself in a positive or negative way, which leads to individual self-esteem that allows for further construction of self-identity and values (Rosenberg 1979).

The above creates the base of self in an individual, which leads to the construction of identity for a consumer. Identity construction involves the creation of self-concept where the past, present and future self are combined to form a unified whole (Erikson 1950). According to Reed II & al (2012, 310-321) “we define an identity as any category label to which a consumer self-associates either by choice or endowment. A category label

becomes an identity once the consumer has begun to incorporate it into his or her sense of who he or she is and has initiated the process to become that kind of person.”

Based on the two definitions it can be deduced that self and identity are separate concepts, where self produces an individual's identity. However, identity is not a singular form instead an individual can possess multiple identities. Thus, identity is constantly changing depending on the environment and situation the individual is placed in. This brings forth the aspects of structure and agency that influence self and identity. Structure refers to the external and structural factors that can influence an individual's identity construction. (Stets & Burke 2003.) The marketplace has become a source where individuals can construct their own narratives of identity, however in the era of liquid modernity some consumers may reject the marketplace to depict their identity (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 868–882; Arnould, Bardhi & Eckhardt 2012, 510-529). The movements that resist marketplace ideology can be seen in ethical consumers, as they go against the norm of convenience and availability that is fast fashion. Rather these ethical consumers take into consideration the environmental and social responsibilities of a consumer, by criticizing organizational methods and bringing forth a new conscious-based movement. However, this is argued against by Thompson (2004, 162-180) by presenting with a conundrum of whether it is identity orientated or is it the marketplace that directs the consumers' choices, decision and identity by guiding them down a fixed path. There is both an internal and external relationship when ethical consumers develop their self-identities by contributing both individualistic and social practices. Jenkins (2014) views this as a parallel concept to identity, with the concept of choice that is the core of identity projects, however this will be further discussed in subchapter 2.2 consumer behaviour aspects.

The agency factor can be related to the identity projects of an individual. According to Arnould & al (2012, 510-529) the identity project suggests that the consumers are actively situated on creating, enhancing, transforming and maintaining their own sense of self. This statement reveals that identity projects are reflective and continuous in their nature as the consumers infuse their past, present and future self into their identity. Therefore, Jenkins (2014) argues that the individual and social are undeniably associated, as identity is not possessed by the consumer but rather constructed by society. Identity projects are influenced by commodification that is created by marketplace consumption where production of goods is created at mass at minimal cost (Thompson 2004, 162-180).

Identity theory defined by Stets and Burke (2000, 224-237) is when an individual incorporates their sense of self into their characteristics and identities, only then can

individuals be placed in situations to further construct their identities. This refers to salience hierarchy where the individual plays a significant role in the situation (Stets & Burke 2000, 224-237). Nonetheless, Stets and Burke (2003) also discuss the role of prominence hierarchy that focuses on the values of an individual and the impact on the situation. Individual's values develop a more personalized form of self-identity where the values shape the behavioural outcome of a situation. Nonetheless, identity is not only built by the individual as it is also influenced by the social factors, which refers to ingroup association. Group membership creates a sense of belongingness for an individual and therefore influences their sense of self in order to comply with the values of the group. (Stets & Burke 2003.)

The characteristics of consumer identity are the focus group for this research, which entails being ethically conscious both environmentally and socially, independent, and a consumer of ethical fashion. Therefore, the consumer identity being researched is of an ethical consumer. However, the term ethical consumer varies in its definitions and various sources have different opinions of what an ethical consumer is in practice. The Guardian (2001) defines ethical consumers as "buying products which were ethically produced and/or which are not harmful to the environment and society". Nonetheless, to receive an adequate understanding of this term the interviewees will be asked to describe themselves as ethical consumers or how they perceive others to be ethical consumers. This approach will provide an unbiased and personal point of view directly from an ethical consumer, which gives a strong base to understanding the target group.

The values of a consumer that were created through development of self will align with their actions. Schwartz (1992) defines values as desirable goals that vary in importance, which serves as a guiding principle for the individual in their choices, judgments and behaviours. Values refer back to an individual's self-concept that evaluates the situation in a positive or negative manner, which guides the consumers behavioural decision (Schwartz 1992). Consumer values change through the constant development of consumer identity construction where the agency and structures influence the importance of a certain value.

By carrying out values through different situations, such as consumption, the ethical consumer creates their own consumer value orientation. This plays a significant role in building consumer self-identity, because each variable is measured to the extent of the consumers' needs and wants. (Stets & Burke 2003.) Value orientation also has an impact on consumer decision-making processes, which will be discussed in 2.2.2 ethical decision-making chapter (Diddi 2014).

Consumer pride is another internal factor affecting identity construction. Pride defined by Robins, Tangey and Tracy (2007) is a self-conscious emotion that results from achieving an internalized standard. It fosters positive behaviour by reinforcing the consumers motivation for achievements while encouraging prosocial behaviour by rewarding “doing the right thing”. Pride reinforces an individual’s self-identity through the development of consumer characteristics, internal attributions and social group identification. Pride is a positive outcome in the construction of self as consumers pursue their values in different situations that results in more security of one’s identity. This is followed by internal attributions as consumers receive a sense of achievement by following values constructed by the sense of self and being assured by their behavioural outcome. Furthermore, the consumer reinforces self-identity by aligning values and behaviour with ingroups, which ultimately results in self-pride. (Robins & al 2007.)

From the acquired knowledge it can be deduced that consumer identity or identity projects are argumentative as they are forever changing by consumer constructing and deconstructing through individual and social interactions (Erikson 1950). Thus, when applying identity projects to this research of ethical consumers it must be taken into account to what degree are identities built by the agency (individuals) or by the structure (marketplace).

2.2 Consumer Behaviour Aspects

This chapter will develop the acquired knowledge of consumer identity into contextual situations, from which consumer behavioural aspects will arise and influence the outcomes of consumer decision-making. This includes researching both theory of reasoned action and theory of planned behaviour, construction of the consumer behaviour model, viewing how an ethical consumer’s behaviour affects ethical decision-making of consumption in the role of gender.

2.2.1 Consumer Behaviour Theories

In order to track the consumer behaviour the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) will be analyzed. The TPB is utilized in order to understand and predict behaviours in specific contexts, which suggests that behaviours are directly determined by behavioural intentions and under certain circumstances that results in perceived behavioural control. The consumers behavioural intentions are determined by three factors which are, attitudes toward behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. (Kan &

Fabrigar 2017.) The TPB was created by Icek Ajzen as an extension to the theory of reasoned action (TRA), which was created by Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein. The theory was developed because the first model had limitations when dealing with volitional control. (Ajzen 1991, 179-211.) This assumption can be unrealistic when dealing with different contexts and the volitional behaviours can alter in different situations that the consumers are placed in. Due to this, Ajzen added the perceived behavioral control into the TRA to understand and predict consumer behaviour. (Kan & Fabrigar 2017.) Therefore, in this chapter of consumer behaviour aspects it is important to also analyze the TRA as it contains the underlying factors of TPB.

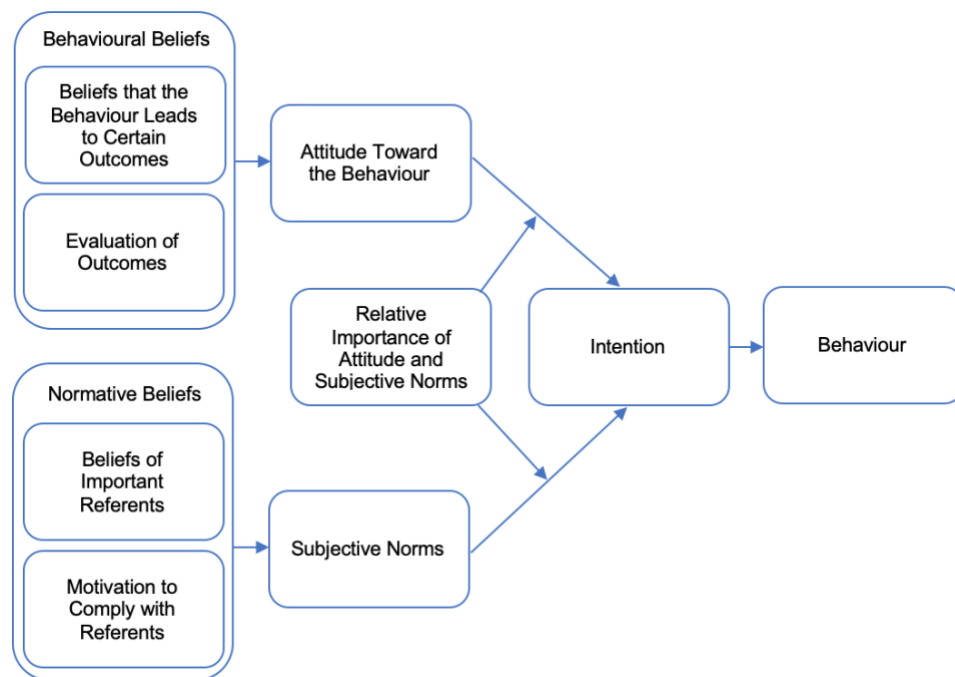


Figure 2. The theory of reasoned action (Kan & Fabrigar 2017).

The above figure provides a visual demonstration of the original model of TRA. The TRA focuses on predicting the volitional behaviour that consumers possess, as they prematurely consider the outcome of their actions before they decide to act or not act towards a specific behaviour. This is because the consumers use rational thinking by consuming information that is available to them, which results in a systematic behaviour caused by different actions performed by the consumer. Therefore, consumer behaviour can be seen through four different components of action, target, context and time that can range from one situation to multiple situations. These four components must be measured if the behaviour of a consumer is to be understood, however it is vital to be aware that the outcomes of the measurements are the possible results of behaviours and not the behaviours themselves. (Kan & Fabrigar 2017.) A central theme in TRA is the behavioural intentions that reveals how motivated the consumer is in order to carry out a behaviour.

Therefore, the stronger the desire to show a behaviour, the more likely it is carried out, though this is only applicable if the situation is volitional. Ajzen brings out the discussion of how some behaviours depend on non-volitional factors, such as opportunities and resources. (Ajzen 1991, 179-211.) TRA studies have been carried out in the apparel and textiles industries to predict purchase intentions and behaviours of consumers in retail clothing, online apparel shops, and counterfeit apparel clothes. In addition, studies of ethical choices in the use of sweatshop labor and environmental effects of apparel purchasing and disposal. A study conducted by Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire revealed that participants were willing to purchase clothing if the business' had transparency in their brand and not willing if this information was not available (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire 2011, 135-149).

Behavioral intentions are broken down to attitude toward the behaviour and subjective norms. The attitude toward the behaviour is the consumer's individual evaluation whether to carry out the behaviour at hand, while taking in the four components of action, target, context and time. TRA defines that the consumers' attitude is a belief-based structure, as the consequences of carrying out a specific action results in an evaluation of the consequences. Each consumer firstly evaluates the different consequences that are associated with the beliefs. Measuring attitude is difficult as a very positive attitude can occur when the result is seen as very positive in nature and very likely to occur. Similarly, a negative attitude is to occur when the behavioural result is seen as very negative and very likely to occur. In addition, only the most important behavioural belief will be the deterrent in the consumers attitude to the behaviour. Subjective norms in relation to behavioural intentions are the consumers perception that important individuals to the consumer should comply with the behaviour at hand. Kan and Fabrigar state that subjective norms are determined by normative beliefs and the motivation to comply with specific referents. The normative belief is that the important individuals should carry out the desired behaviour. (Kan & Fabrigar 2017.)

Another element of the TRA is the assumption that external factors are related to the consumer behaviour only when they have an effect on the two behavioural intentions of attitude toward the behaviour and subjective norms. Therefore, external factors influence behaviour indirectly, otherwise there is no influence of external factors on behaviour as it varies across different behavioural intentions. (Kan & Fabrigar 2017.)

These elements are the base of TRA that will be developed further into TPB while adding the intention of perceived behavioural control, which can be seen in the visual demonstration of TPB in figure 3. Ajzen received knowledge about the role of perceived

behavioural control from the studies done by Bandura and the concept of perceived self-efficacy. Both relate to the idea of how individuals behaviour is strongly influenced by judging the amount of confidence one has to execute the behaviour at interest. TPB places this notion into the perceived behavioural control to relate towards beliefs, intentions, attitudes, and behaviours. (Ajzen 1991, 179-211.)

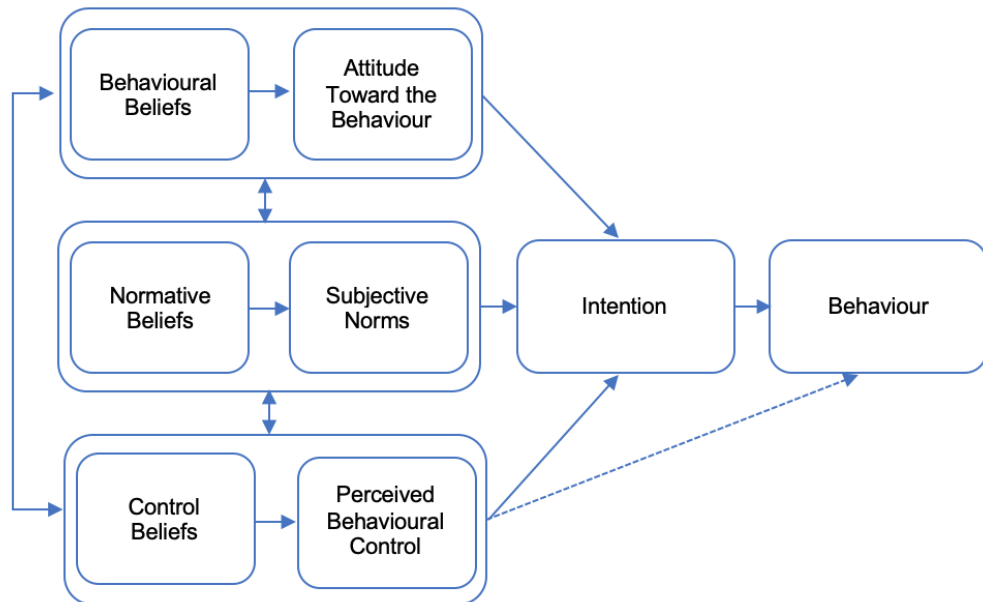


Figure 3. The theory of planned behaviour (Kan & Fabrigar 2017).

Perceived behavioral control can influence the actual behaviour by intentions and beliefs. Individuals have low intentions to carry out a behaviour when they believe that they do not have the necessary resource or opportunities to carry out the behaviour. Despite even when there would be very promising attitudes or subjective norms towards the behaviour. (Kan & Fabrigar 2017.) Furthermore, TPB can combine perceived behavioural control and behavioural intention to foresee behavioural achievement (Ajzen 1991, 179-211). Perceived behavioral control can also be viewed as an actual behaviour when the individual has the necessary information and resources concerning the desired behaviour. Due to perceived behavioural control being determined by beliefs, the performance of the behaviour is influenced if the individual has the needed resources and opportunities without any obstacles. (Kan & Fabrigar 2017.)

Utilizing TPB and Radu's (2019) definition of consumer behaviour being the study of the consumers process of choice, usage and disposal of products and/or services, creation of an emotional, mental and behavioral response, this definition is represented in the consumer behaviour model. The model demonstrates the external and internal factors

affecting an individual's self-concept and lifestyle that ultimately influences decision-making processes (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010, 26-29).

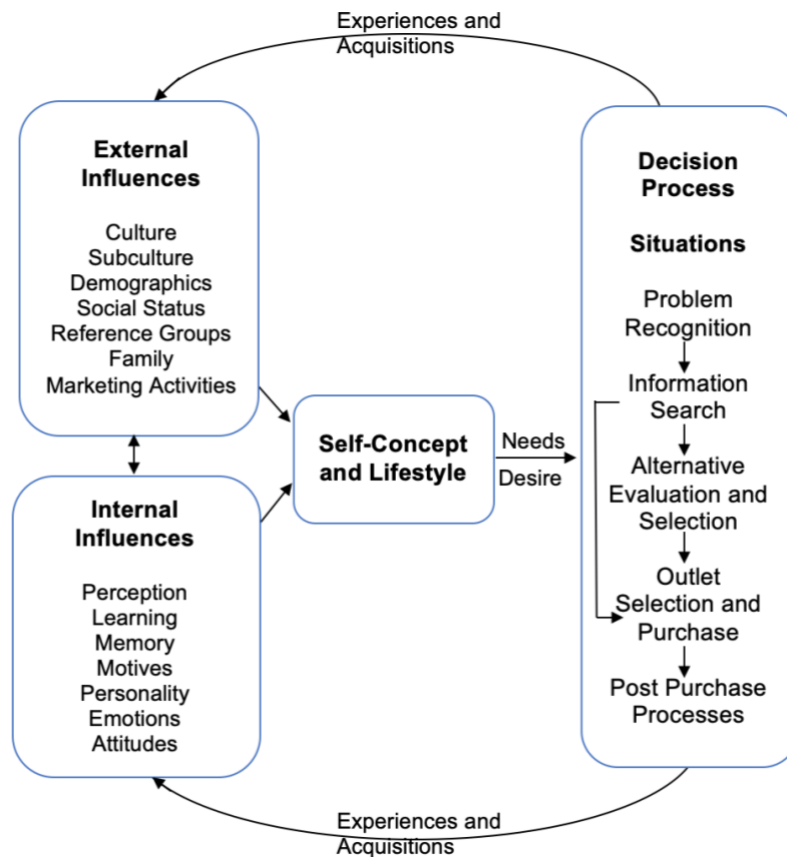


Figure 4. Consumer behaviour model (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010, 26-29).

The core of the model is an individual's self-concept and chosen lifestyle that are influenced by various internal and external factors. Self-concepts, as stated before in consumer identity along with the lifestyle, create the needs that individual desires, which are followed out by consumption. Therefore, when a situation arises to fulfill the needs and desires, the consumer goes through the decision process. The decision-making process will be further researched in 2.2.2 with the focus on ethical decision-making. Experiences and acquisitions are the outcomes of the process, which ultimately influence an individual's self-concept and lifestyle by affecting the internal and external factors. It is important to point out that arrow going between internal and external influences, as both factors interact and thus influence with the other.

2.2.2 Ethical Decision-Making

The ethical decision-making model has been mostly used on organizational levels rather than on individual consumption in the marketplace. Figure 5 below demonstrates the three

pieces that create the ethical decision-making model. Trevino's organization factors will not be analysed in the ethical decision-making for the purpose of the research, as it does not apply towards consumers. The model demonstrates how ethical decisions are influenced by both individual and organizational factors, which consists of three different creators of the ethical model, who are Jones, Rest and Trevon. (Jones 1991, 366–395.) Rest's four-stage model focuses on the individuals ethical decision-making process that can be used when analyzing an ethical consumers decision-making process. The four stages include recognition, judgment, intention and behaviour. (Rest 1986.) Therefore, the model of ethical decision-making provides a strong representation into factors affecting consumers' buying behaviour.

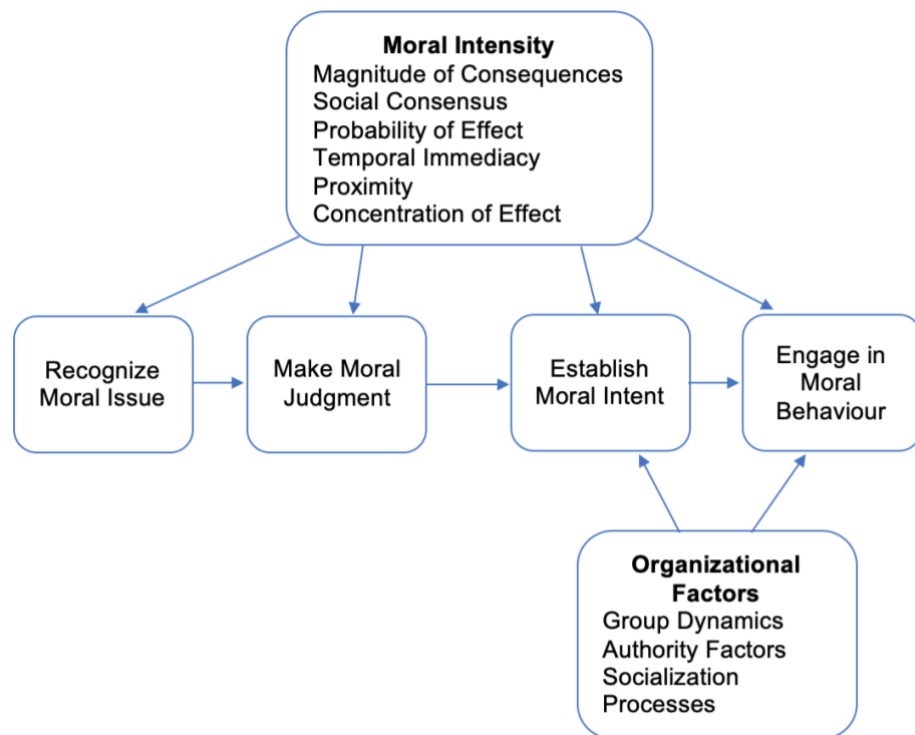


Figure 5. Ethical decision-making model (Jones 1991, 366-395).

The first stage focuses on recognition that the ethical consumer perceives that there is an ethical dilemma faced upon them, however this depends on the individual's moral awareness of the situation (Rest 1986). The research mainly focuses on distinguishing the characteristics of the ethical issue and not focusing on ethical awareness being affected by differences in individuals (Reynolds 2006, 233–243). In the study of ethical consumers decision-making process Atif, Charfi and Lombardot (2013) state that an individual's ethical awareness is an "individual-level phenomenon", where the distinguished characteristics of an ethical issue vary in saliency. Suggesting that not all ethical consumers, despite similar identities, will react or recognize the ethical issue in the same way. However, personal judgments are formed when taking into consideration the moral

intensity of the issue, and if the individual pays more attention to the characteristics of the situation it can result in the individual seeing it as an ethical issue (Jones 1991, 366–395; Reynolds 2006, 233–243).

Grunert and Juhl (1995, 39-62) describe ethical consumers as individuals that have knowledge on organizational production, distribution, use and disposal of products that ultimately result in external costs, which are negative impacts both environmentally and socially. Thus, these ethical consumers aim to minimize this process in their behaviour and decision-making. In the ethical consumer decision-making process the consumer will identify the issue and then relate to their values to determine if the issue is concerning. If so, this is followed by purchasing products that do not go against their values, such as second hand clothing. This is seen as ethical development, when an individual evaluates the issue and creates their own judgment based on the characteristics. (Atif & al 2013.)

Recognition and judgment build the ethical consumers self-identity, which develops into ethical predispositions that creates the process of ethical decision-making (Beauchamp & Bowie 2004). Relating back to the TPB, the perceived self-belief connects to the ethical consumers self-identity where the effort instigated is seen adequate for a solution to the issue (Vermeir & Verbeke 2006, 169–194). Thus, the higher the self-belief the higher constructions of the consumer's identity and behaviour. The ethical consumer's value orientation is used in the decision-making process as these ethical values must be matched through choices. By utilizing a consumer's value orientation, it provides insight into how the individual will respond to an ethical issue. (Diddi 2014.) Atif & al (2013) states that ethical consumers who believe that their actions have a direct impact in dealing with ethical problems, they are more likely to construct adamant ethical identities and thus in ethical behaviours.

Ethical intent is not the same as ethical judgment, as ethical intent is the choice to act upon the judgment that was recently produced (Jones 1991, 366–395). During this stage the ethical consumers will be comparing the moral factors to one's self-interests. Beginning from recognition of the issue, to the judgment, to the intention, this process has led to the last stage of the ethical consumer carrying out the desired behaviour for the ethical issue. (Atif & al 2013.)

2.2.3 Ethical Consumption

Oh and Yoon (2014, 278-288) describe ethical consumption as “a conscientious consumption that takes into account health, society and natural environment based on

personal and moral beliefs". In the clothing industry ethical consumption concerns the ethically conscious decision making of consumers when they are purchasing, using or disposing of the clothing. Examples may include buying less and not binge shopping, buying from ethically orientated brands and overall increasing the lifespan of the clothes by taking care of them. Second-hand and slow fashion stores are perfect locations for ethical consumption, and a new concept of renting clothes instead of buying is another alternative for ethical consumption. This concept usually includes expensive or unique pieces of clothing that you would wear a few times and then return. Nonetheless, some consumers may see individuals or organizations turning towards ethical consumption for the purpose of social image or greenwashing done by companies. Boycotting is a new idea used by ethical consumers to make purchases that relate to ethical issues that have similar values to them. Through utilizing consumer activism these ethical consumers redirect the marketplace towards a more ethically conscious setting. (McGregor 2018.)

As seen in the consumer behaviour theory, information is an underlying factor that affects decision-making and thus ethical consumption. Therefore, looking into the role of available information about environmental and social issues concerning fashion to the consumer is vital in identity development. Availability of viable information for consumers is only achieved through transparency of organizations and their processes. Consumers cannot make reliable decisions on ethical consumption, because they cannot deduce whether or not the brand or piece of clothing reflects upon their values. Social media has played a significant role in spreading awareness and information about corporate behaviours, that has enabled consumers to make judgements on brands being ethical or unethical. Hustvedt and Dicksons (2009, 49-65) research suggests that consumers with high levels of awareness on environmental and social issues concerning the apparel market, are more likely to reflect these issues in their decision-making processes. Thus, it can be deduced that the more available information there is concerning unethical practices of brands the more likely consumers will purchase ethical fashion.

2.2.4 Role of Gender

There is a gap in the relation of ethical consumption and the role of gender, and further distinctive differences of ethical consumption between females and males. The Mintel Press Team (2018) recognizes this as the 'eco-gender gap', where men are less likely to carry out ethical behaviours than females. The research also reveals how ethical campaigns and ads tend to be marketed towards female consumers, as the general notion still is that women are caretakers of the household and perform most of the domestic shopping. The supplies that are under the category of domestic shopping, such

as cleaning, food preparation, and overall necessities for a household, are becoming more sustainable. (Mintel Press Team 2018.) Furthermore, marketers connect females and ethical consumption as females tend to be more compassionate and empathetic to ethical issues (Michelletti 2004). However, these campaigns and ads may portray the wrong message that being ethically aware is a woman's responsibility. (Mintel Press Team 2018.) Thus, the gender focused ethical campaigns create a disconnect between men and ethical consumption, as being environmentally and socially aware might undermine masculinity (Hunt 2020).

Ethical fashion consumption differs by gender, as women overall spend more time planning on shopping and on shopping itself as it provides emotional experiences that women tend to seek for more than men. Due to this, women have been labeled as addicted to fashion shopping that usually entails buying unethical clothing and in masses, which is a result of impulse buying. (Yurchisin & Johnson 2010.) These are hast decisions that usually end in short-term usage of the clothing, while taking into consideration how the clothing is disposed. According to Woods (1998), younger consumers are more immune to impulse shopping than the older consumers but the gender-gap is smaller than in older consumers, where women tend to impulse shop more than men. Furthermore, this gender-gap is minimized in young consumers when focusing on quality, brand or price of clothing. However, men focus on the convenience in purchasing and women on recreational shopping. (Workman & Cho 2012, 267-283.) These results are influenced by factors of income within gender and age groups, as environmentally aware consumers tend to be women who are well educated and have higher incomes (Oksanen 2002). Nonetheless, younger consumers do show awareness in environmental consumption despite having lower incomes (Niinimäki 2017, 7-18).

When purchasing, garment disposal is something that both genders consider as it is a concerning process for them. Women make more effort to find alternative clothes before they make their final decision than men, who spend overall less time on the shopping experience. Armstrong, Niinimäki, Kujala and Lang (2016, 18-31) refer this to the idea of 'fashion hunt', when women take time to consider the clothing, brand and overall the act of purchasing than men. Men do not tend to venture far from their comfort zone of style, brand, and clothing, whereas women like to experiment and adapt their fashion sense with trends.

Fashion industries pressure consumers to purchase clothing when new trends are made public, especially with the new concept of social influencers also pressuring and further advertising new trends to consumers. The fashion industry is still more directed towards

women and their emotional connection that they receive from purchasing products because society has inflicted an idea that women must appear put together. Therefore, when new trends come about, women feel that they need to update their wardrobe. (Niinimäki 2017, 7-18.) This especially influences the new generation of teenagers of both genders due to the development and wide use of electronics, they are constantly being influenced to keep up with trends in order to fit in.

2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility and Ethical Consumption of Fashion

CSR is gaining momentum in corporations as they are altering their supply chain and practices to meet ethical consumer demands. This has also emerged as a competitive strategy amongst various industries because the consumer mindset is changing, and brands are trying to keep up and not lose customers (Moosmayer & Fuljahn 2010, 543-549). Carroll (1979, 497-505) took CSR and categorized it into four issues; economic (producing what the market demands), legal (adhering to relevant legal requirements), ethical (doing what is just or fair) and philanthropic (working to improve the overall quality of life for individuals).

There are multiple benefits that arise from organizations implementing CSR practices into their business model. Companies can maintain their competitive position in the market while tackling the growing consumer sensitivity towards ethically responsible practices (Moosmayer & Fuljahn 2010, 543-549). This positively impacts the financial performances of companies because when companies comply with consumer demands this results in positive consumer attitudes towards the company and its products. Transparency is something that is tied with CSR practices and what consumers demand from companies if they claim to be ethically conscious in their production lines. (Epstein-Reeves 2012.) From this, consumers can evaluate and form their own decision on whether the company meets the consumers' values. Cone Inc. (2013) conducted a global CSR research where it revealed that one in three consumers believe that companies should align their operation with environmental and social issues. Furthermore, 93% of these consumers expect those companies to develop their production line in order to tackle the environmental and social issues (Cone Inc. 2013). Smith and Alcorn (1991, 21-37) also conducted a study that resulted in 46% of consumers stating that they would likely change brands if it supported ethical issues.

There are five stages and seven dimensions to the CSR journey, and the clothing retail industry holds issues concerning all aspects. The seven dimensions are; citizen concept, strategic intent, leadership approaches, organizational structure, issue management,

stakeholder relationship, and transparency (Mirvis & Googins 2006, 104-126). The clothing industry's supply chain expands into the materials, resources, manufacturing, transportation, use, and disposal that all connect to the dimensions of CSR. Materials used in the product of clothing are both natural and man-made fibers, due to this the clothing production contributes to pollution. The process requires non-renewable energy, harmful chemicals and natural resources that have been stripped away unethically and in masses, thus dramatically increasing the environmental degradation (Hethorn & Ulasewicz 2008). The result of these natural and man-made fibers being used in production leads to an environmental impact, because companies use pesticides in the natural fibers, harmful chemicals to dye materials and creating non-recyclable fibers. This results in massive landfills and both air and water pollution. (Fletcher 2008.) The clothing industry has been criticized largely for outsourcing labor and manufacturing into developing countries, where there are sweatshops and child labor in use. This has resulted in immense negative media attention regarding the fair treatment and conditions of workers in developing countries with the use of sweatshops, poor working conditions, low wages, and the unethical source of raw materials (Hethorn & Ulasewicz 2008).

Due to these reasons ethical issues are now integrated into organizational levels through CSR practices, which connects the environmental and social issues to the economical aims. This has been made possible by the consumers who are ethically aware and demand organizations to reshape their entire supply chain to meet ethical standards. Consumer awareness and actions made ethical consumption more aware in today's marketplace by boycotting and demanding transparency between companies and their consumers. Nonetheless, CSR practices in the clothing industry are still lacking efforts, because of the high demand of fast fashion and their trends, low prices and availability.

Hayes (2017) described ethical fashion to be "more or less a combination of both Fair Trade and sustainable fashion. It focuses on both the environmental and social impact of fashion, seeking to improve the working conditions of laborers, along with the environmental impact of the clothing production process." Common Objective, which is a B2B company, found that Google searches for 'sustainable fashion' has grown by 46% and the term 'ethical fashion' by 25% in the past six years. Furthermore, 60% of millennials stated that they are interested in certified clothing (Pinnock 2018). This reflects upon today's society as these ethical consumers are changing the marketplace by demanding organizational level development into their supply chain by asserting CSR motives. Nonetheless, of the millennials only 37% have purchased any certified clothing. This research shows that there is an interest and concern for ethical consumption in the

marketplace, however the level of ambiguity and not enough transparency is holding consumers into buying ethical clothing (Pinnock 2018).

2.3.1 Consumption of Fashion

The fashion industry heavily influences consumer identity and behaviour as the marketplace for clothing is seen as a necessity. The consumption of fashion creates a sense of belonging for consumers as they follow trends set by the market, especially for women as it creates positive emotional responses. The most important factors that consumers focus on in their consumption of fashion are suitability, multi-functionality, need, colour, quality, price, brand and current trends (Niinimäki 2017, 7-18). Consumers build their identity by buying from brands that they want to identify themselves as to create a specific image of themselves to others. There are two areas of fashion consumption that will be research, which are fast fashion and ethical fashion.

2.3.2 Fast Fashion

Fast fashion is an ongoing trend but also a growing discussion issue, as the name entails it has fast production rates, consumer purchasing is fast, and the clothing is worn fast and quickly disposed of for the new fast trend (Crumbie 2019). The entire model is unethical, and despite of this it has become the norm throughout clothing brands. This is due to the entire system is designed for consumers to constantly update their wardrobe. Purchasing clothing has been made easier by companies over producing and by consumers over consuming the products. Furthermore, purchasing has moved from brick and mortar stores to online stores and social media platforms where influencers are constantly promoting new trends and clothes. Another appealing aspect is the price of the clothing, where consumers do not have to go spend much time on the decision-making process because the price is so low.

After the fast production and consumption results in fast use as the clothes end up being used a few times, or never worn, and quickly disposed of. This is a result of bad quality but also because of new trends that are being advertised by the brand and by social media influencers. Research performed by McKinsey & Company (2019) stated that an average consumer buys 60% more clothes than 15 years ago and these clothes are kept only half as long. This is a growing concern in the younger generations as a study done by Barnardo's (2019) estimated that a quarter of consumers would not wear the same outfit

to a special occasion more than once, especially if it had been posted on social media, and this is relatable to 37% of consumer ranging from 16-24 years old.

2.3.3 Ethical Fashion

Ethical fashion was used in this research's demarcation, where it was explained why ethical fashion was chosen to analyze instead of sustainable fashion as it would provide a more beneficial impact for the thesis. There are many different forms of ethical fashion and ethical consumption of fashion. Organizations can implement different methods of ethical fashion into their organizational levels of resources, production, transportation, and disposal. In addition, different methods that consumers can utilize in their consumption of fashion by increasing their knowledge on environmental and social issues that influences ethical decision-making on consumption and disposal. This includes second hand fashion, slow fashion, seasonless fashion, and upcycling.

Second Hand Fashion

A form of ethical fashion is utilizing second hand fashion, where the disposal of clothing ends up in second hand stores or thrift stores to be reused. Reinhart (2019) predicts that the second hand clothing sector will reach US\$ 51 billion within the next five years, and possibly overtake the fashion market by 2028. This is a result of consumers becoming increasingly more aware of their ecological footprint and should focus more on the circular economy. However, due to second hand fashion being a trend many people are greenwashing and may not continue once the trend is over. Nonetheless, roughly 52% of millennials of the age group of 25-34 bought second hand clothing in the last year and 50% are selling unwanted clothes forward. Fashion rental is a new concept that Gen Z consumers are taking an interest in as 57% have rented clothing or are interested in renting. (Halliday 2020.)

Slow Fashion

Slow fashion is an alternative concept to fast fashion, which takes into consideration the resources and products required to manufacture clothing and making it more ethically conscious (Hill 2020). This process results in fair treatment of environmental and social issues, as well as higher quality that leads to longer lasting clothes. Slow fashion also aims to minimize production of new trends, but rather produce clothes that can be timeless. Fast fashion brands such as H&M who state to be moving towards CSR processes by introducing sustainable lines and providing discounts to customers who return clothing to the store, are still burning 12 tonnes of unsold clothes per year (Hill 2020).

Seasonless Fashion

Brands take advantage of seasonality by producing new trends and clothes throughout the year, in order for the consumer to feel a need to keep up and comply with social expectations of being on trend. Luxury brands have moved from producing two seasons into five or more seasons as the consumer marketplace is growing. Nonetheless, fast fashion brands, such as Zara, are producing up to 52 seasons with new trends that usually arise from selling designer knockoffs at a much lower price. (Hardy 2020.) For example, brands like PrettyLittleThing and SHEIN release up to 2000 clothes per day to their online stores. In the fashion industry there is a constant pressure to differentiate a brand's last season to the new season, for the consumers to visualize it as a need and to keep up with competitors. This is because, if the seasons are visually the same to the consumer, they do not get the urge to buy the clothing. (Hardy 2020.) Therefore, the benefits that arise from seasonless fashion is well designed clothes, less production (meaning less environmental and social issues), reduction in impulse buying of consumers, and overall waste.

Upcycling

An alternative to re-purchasing used clothes from second hand stores, is the idea of upcycling by which used clothes get altered and receive a 'second life'. The clothes' materials are improved by creating a new product with a higher value from its original form. Therefore, upcycling is a creative process of re-adapting or re-purposing a piece of clothing to expand its lifespan. Patagonia is a brand that utilizes upcycling to their advantage, as they take materials that are unfit to wear anymore and use them to create a new piece of clothing. However, there is a difference between upcycling and recycling, as upcycling does not break down the material like in recycling but instead reuses it into a different form. (You Matter 2020.)

3 Research Methods

This chapter will establish the different methods of research that have been selected, the research process, qualitative research, both primary and secondary data collection methods. Furthermore, providing reasoning as to why these specific methods were chosen and why they are best suited for the topic being researched.

3.1 Research Design

The secondary research design that was constructed for this research can be seen in figure 6 below. It demonstrates how the research utilizes the qualitative research approach, by interviewing ethically orientated young adults who are living independently in developed countries with no children. These respondents will be equally distributed between male and female interviewees. Analysis of geographic locations as a factor will not be analysed, instead will only be taken into consideration for the international aspect of the research criteria. In order to achieve the desired sample population, previous contacts must be utilized and also using a snowball sampling affect. This sampling technique utilizes the known ethical consumers and they will distribute interview requests onwards to their ethically orientated acquaintances (QuestionPro 2018). The data collection method, in the form of interviews, will contain descriptive, cross-sectional and open-ended questions to receive the necessary information. Due to the research method being qualitative the findings will be statistically analyzed through qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions. This analysis will be implemented into all four IQs.

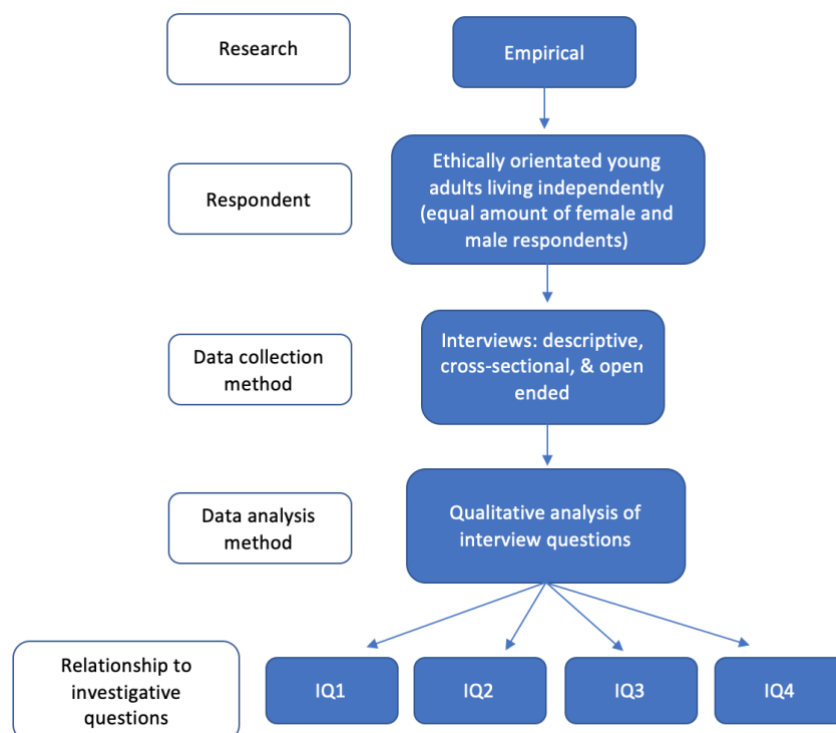


Figure 6. Research design.

3.2 Sampling

The sample group had very specific criteria and therefore being able to use connections and the snowball sampling technique, enabled for the research to receive a total of 14 ethical consumers. This was split evenly across both genders, allowing for seven females and seven males respondents. The snowball sampling can also be referred to as the chain-referral sampling, it is a non-probability sampling technique where the samples have traits that are specific and rare to find. Therefore, utilizing referrals is crucial to recruit samples for the research, as the method involves a primary data source suggesting other potential data sources. The snowball sampling technique can only be successful in qualitative research where the sample population is rare to find, which matches the research at hand. (QuestionPro 2018.)

Table 2 below demonstrates the overview of the interviews with the sample population staying anonymous but split into both genders, with age, country currently living in, and the date that the interview was conducted.

Table 2. Overview of interviews.

Interviewee (P)	Gender (F/M)	Age	Country	Date
P1	F	22	Finland	21.10.2020
P2	F	22	Scotland	16.10.2020
P3	F	22	Denmark	18.10.2020
P4	F	25	Finland	23.10.2020
P5	F	26	Netherlands	12.10.2020
P6	F	23	Sweden	13.10.2020
P7	F	24	Germany	15.10.2020
P8	M	24	Netherlands	15.10.2020
P9	M	25	United States	17.10.2020
P10	M	23	Finland	16.10.2020
P11	M	22	Scotland	25.10.2020
P12	M	25	Finland	18.10.2020
P13	M	24	Denmark	19.10.2020
P14	M	23	Germany	20.10.2020

3.3 Data Collection Method

The data collection tools used are interviews through online video and/or calls as face-to-face interviews cannot be conducted during the COVID times. The focus surrounding the interviews is on the ethical consumer and their consumption and perception on ethical fashion. This allows for a personal approach to the thesis, from an individual who first handedly lives and experiences ethical consumption. These concepts ultimately focus on consumer identity, consumer behavior, and social and cultural factors. Nonetheless, desktop research is also conducted to be used for the theoretical framework research of theories, models and concepts using platforms such as HH Finna for e-books.

The reasons as to why a qualitative research method approach was chosen is because the interviews provide an in-depth view point into ethical consumers and their behaviours. These findings would not have shown if the research method was conducted through a survey, as the respondents would only choose the “positive” answers. Furthermore, the interview will not generalize but instead present a basis of ethical consumers for the specific target group and research. It is not meant to be generalized, especially as there will not be a sufficient number of interviews to do so. Narrative research also makes use of stories, which provides a visual representation of the ethical consumer to the research. Narrative research is either spoken or written words, with the aim to tell stories of individual experiences through the identification and understanding of meaning. It reveals the experiences of individuals that occur in specific situations, which takes into consideration the social and cultural factors. (Julmi 2020, pp. 435-441.)

When constructing questions for the interviews it is essential to refer back to the IQs, in order for the questions to provide valuable data into answering each of the IQs and ultimately the research question. However, specific terminology could not be used as the interviewees may not be aware of the true definitions and understandings of specific concepts or words. This may discourage the interviewees from answering the interview questions and damage the relationship between interviewee and interviewer. Instead rudimentary words were used in order for the interviewee to understand the question. Each of the IQs had a theme that was utilized in forming the interview questions. IQ 1's theme was factors of ethical fashion consumption affecting identity building, with the main focus on different factors. IQ 2 had a theme concerning decision-making processes of ethical consumers, where the questions focused on decision-making factors influencing consumption. IQ 3's theme focused on the influence of gender on ethical fashion consumption, in order to receive viewpoints on gender differences in the consumption of ethical fashion. For IQ 4 there were no direct interview questions formulated, because

when IQ 4 it will be a construction of different research and interview findings in order to tackle what aspects ethical consumers seek for in ethical fashion advertising. The themes demonstrate the overall focus of each question, and what research and data is necessary in order to reach the desired answers. From researching into the different models, theories and concepts it enabled the construction of the interview questions.

3.4 Data Analysis Method

The data analysis method will be the qualitative analysis of the open questions, which will be utilized into answering each of the IQs. IQ 1 concerns that idea of researching factors that are important to consumers to build their identity while consuming ethical fashion. The qualitative analysis will provide insight into aiming to define the ethical consumer and what role does value orientation play in their lives. The qualitative analysis of open questions will assist in answering IQ 2 in the role of information about environmental and social issues in the consumers ethical decision-making processes. IQ 3 will seek to find the gender gap between ethical consumers by having equally distributed data of both genders in the interviews. Lastly, IQ 4 will focus on CSR and ethical consumption and the consumers' outside perspective on different areas of fast fashion but also the benefits of slow fashion. In the theme of IQ 2 the interviewees were asked to state the three most important factors when consuming ethically.

Thematic analysis will be used as a data analysis method for the qualitative findings of the interviews. Thematic analysis "is a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into, patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset." This method enables to make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences, while analysing the data in different ways. Meanings can be analysed throughout the whole dataset or only analyse one aspect of a phenomenon in depth. Furthermore, thematic analysis allows for possibilities to report the semantic meanings within the data or to cross-examine the assumptions and concepts from what is stated. (Braun & Clarke 2012, pp. 57-71.)

3.5 Reliability and Validity

The research method of the snowball sampling technique is a form of non-probability sampling, which alloww for one source of an ethical consumer to seek out others. This was a crucial technique in terms of gathering enough recipients for the interview findings to be reliable, but also in order to fulfill the international aspect of the research by reaching different ethical consumers in developed countries. However, this method came with both

advantages and disadvantages. It was quicker to find the sample population, but the recruiter could have been biased in findings in a margin of error (QuestionPro 2018). Nonetheless, all recipients were confirmed before the interviews to match the needed criteria of an ethical consumer for this research. The primary data collected through the interviews can be tested as reliable as it is a direct answer and viewpoint of an ethical consumer.

The data collection method may have resulted in errors from both the interviewer and the interviewee. These can be intentional or unintentional errors that occurred while conducting the interviews. The interviewees may have felt pressure on time or on the adequacy of their answers, which could have had an effect upon the answers. By having 14 interview findings in total, it aimed to minimize any error done by the interviewer or the interviewee and create reliability in the findings. In addition, if the sample population was too small no direct conclusion could have been drawn from the primary research, and it would not benefit the overall research.

The secondary data collection required the most time and accuracy, because only relevant information and studies had to be gathered to support the research. Furthermore, making sure that the sources that were used were reliable. Finding information and studies surrounding the area of identity building and ethical consumption was not difficult, as it is a growing discussion topic in the field. However, when finding good sources, it was vital to stay demarcated and not stray into an unnecessary topic.

4 Findings

This chapter includes the findings from the primary research in the form of interviews. The data acquired will be connected to the IQs and knowledge base figure 1 seen in chapter 2. The purpose is to gain a deeper understanding into identity construction of ethical consumers and the behaviour of ethical consumption of fashion. The findings will also aim to further provide information for each IQ and ultimately the research question of 'consumers identity construction driving ethical consumption behaviour'. The interviews were conducted through various video telephony platforms in order to record the answers from the ethical consumers.

4.1 Factors of Ethical Fashion Consumption Affecting Identity Building

The interviewees were first asked their understanding of ethical consumption. All interviewees demonstrated a wide array of knowledge in their definitions of ethical consumption, with focusing on aspects such as social and environmental issues that must be taken into consideration while consuming. Interviewee P5 defined ethical consumption as "consuming in a way that is not creating new waste or production. Consuming things that are already in the market, such as second hand clothes." This definition focuses on the external influences of production and consumption on the environment, by consuming products that already exist in the market such as second hand clothing. All of the ethical consumers touched on the idea of being conscious in every step of consumption based on their own beliefs as consumers. Interviewee P11 stated that consumption should not become too excessive when an individual buys a piece of clothing and tries to minimize the consumption per purchase and per month. Only one female out of the sampling group raised the aspect of disposal into the description of ethical consumption. She stated that consuming ethically is the main point, but the disposal of the product can be counterproductive if it is done unethically. Another concept that was brought up in the definitions was social issues in production, such as labor conditions. Interviewee P11 stated that ethical consumption is not only being cautious with consuming but taking into consideration the labor conditions of workers. Making sure that sweatshops or child labor was not used in the production.

When describing how the interviewees view themselves as ethically orientated consumers, all of the findings revealed that their consumption occurs in second hand stores. This included buying used apparel pieces such as clothing and accessories but also other interior pieces. Three females and two males stated that their current studies reflect on their ethical consumption and vice versa, the reason why they decided to study

the degree was because they are ethically conscious consumers. Interviewee P3 said that she does not consume recklessly just to buy something but rather having informed decisions and purchasing things that she needs. In addition, interviewee P2 said that she does not want to buy a product just to buy something and feel better, because in the end that product will not be used or will be disposed of back into a second hand store shortly after. This lifestyle finding was also seen in interviewee P13's, as he cannot buy anything without considering where it is from and what materials were used. Thus, he does not spend a lot of money on stuff that is unethical.

All of the interviewees found ethical consumption of fashion to be highly important to them. Interviewee P9 stated that 90% of his clothing are from second hand stores, not including socks and underwear. Furthermore, when he does buy clothing that is new he tries to buy it from places that treat their workers right and their whole supply chain is as clean as possible. Interviewee P4 said that it is critical to reduce production, especially fast fashion production, because the material production is very unsustainable and the actual production of the product itself is very unsustainable. Many of the interviewees demonstrated awareness of fast fashion brands that exploit many factors, such as workers and natural resources. This was a reason why they became ethical consumers due to the unethically of fast fashion brands. The interviewees demonstrated how their consumption of fashion is influenced also by the disposal of clothes. Taking care of clothes as much as possible is something that is important for the ethical consumers, because then they do not have to buy more due to the clothes becoming unwearable and breaking down. Interviewee P10 said that it is becoming more aware the impact of fast fashion has globally, so as a generation we must be more aware and make more ethically orientated choices as consumers.

The next question concerning identity construction through ethical consumption of fashion, was how the interviewees perceived themselves as being ethical consumers reflect in their fashion purchasing behaviour. All of the interviewees view themselves as being sustainable in their fashion consumption, especially because it is an important aspect about themselves. However, it is not something that they do to make themselves feel better about themselves per say, but rather something they do because it is right and otherwise would feel guilty. Interviewee P8 said that he expects it of himself to be ethically conscious in his fashion consumption. Nonetheless, there was a mix of responses from both genders, as some males said that they binge buy clothes, but some only buy a few pieces at a time. This was a common trend in females where some go on a shopping spree and others only buy specific pieces. For example, interviewee P12 said that he tends to binge buy clothes, especially in second hand stores as he does not have a lot of

intention when buying second hand. He justifies this by saying that consumers are bound to get disappointed if they go around looking for something specific or they will be searching for a long time, therefore he goes in with an open mind. On the other hand, female interviewee P7 said that she does not go on a shopping spree and she does background research into style inspirations from different sources and looks for that specific piece and tries to find it in a second hand store.

The interviewees were asked what kind of fashion purchases would go against their personal values as ethical consumers, and all interviewees answered everything from fast fashion stores. This was justified by the interviewees because fast fashion is tied to using non-natural and synthetic materials in their production such as polyester and fleece that contains microplastics, which creates more plastic waste. Leather was a contradicting fashion material by the ethical consumers, because leather alternatives have a negative impact on the environment as the materials are man-made. Therefore, used leather bags or belts are products that would not necessarily go against their values. One exception was shoes as individuals wear shoes out quite effectively and if they are not of high quality and contain synthetic alternatives that wear down due to the microplastics, it is preferable to buy long lasting real leather shoes instead. Interviewee P10 said that leather is one of the most durable materials and it can be sustainable, especially as it is a by-product from multiple industries. Therefore, he stated that he is not against the leather material necessarily but rather towards the industry, which he decides on a personal level not to consume. The follow-up question of whether the product would be reused or upcycled did not alter the findings as much as predicted. Many said that they would be more likely to buy the piece of clothing but would still probably not buy it. This is again due to the non-natural materials used in production causing lower quality that would not last long, consequently the ethical consumers would have to purchase clothing more frequently.

4.2 Decision-Making Processes of Ethical Consumers

Moving towards purchasing behaviour and the decision-making process that guides the ethical consumers, the interviewees were asked a series of questions focusing on these two aspects. The most frequent clothing purchases by the ethical consumers were trousers/jeans and shirts, which was followed by sweaters. All of the interviewees shop at second hand stores where several interviewees stated that they shop at UFF, which is a well-known second hand store in Helsinki. The average frequency of shopping of the interviewees was twice a month, where females were seen to have higher frequencies than the males. However, this depends on how much each ethical consumer buys per

shopping trip. Some interviewees noted that they shop less now due to the current circumstances of social distancing, whereas others experienced shopping more than regularly. The reason why others shopped more is due to the increase of sales that stores are having in order to maintain income. In addition, an increase in consumption was because there are more products and diversity as people are cleaning their wardrobes during the social distancing periods. Furthermore, interviewee P5 said that trends are an influence in her consumption behaviour in order to have pieces of clothing that are up to date in terms of fashion.

The influence of price while shopping is an external factor that influences consumer consumption. Thus, the interviewees were asked how price influences their decision-making when buying ethical clothing. Due to the sampling group being mostly young adults and students the overall budget is less than for full-time employed adults. Interviewee P13 stated that “if it is more expensive and I’ve done my research and all of the environmental and social regulations are met, then the price tag does not scare me too much.” Six of the interviewees (three male and three female) noticed that when moved away from fast fashion into ethical fashion the tendency to buy clothes that are more expensive became a higher occurrence. The consumers focused more on the quality of the product rather than price, so that the piece of clothing will last longer, and they would not have to keep on buying the same piece of clothing again. Furthermore, if the piece of clothing was a basic style the ethical consumers could wear it through different trends. Nonetheless, interviewee P5 said that the overall shopping experience in second hand stores the products will be cheaper because they have been used. In addition, she noted that there is a difference between charity stores and thrift stores where thrift stores would be more expensive because it is curated.

Fast fashion is the current marketplace for apparel, and the findings showed that 11 out of 14 of ethical consumers do not buy from fast fashion brands. Whereas, the remaining three said that their reasoning for buying fast fashion was for buying a piece of clothing that they needed and could not find anywhere else. Interviewee P2 wanted a jacket that was on trend and she could not find that style in any of the second hand stores, therefore she turned towards fast fashion brands. In addition, the three ethical consumers said they occasionally buy underwear or socks from fast fashion stores, but also try to buy them from non-fast fashion stores. The reasons for these purchases were due to convenience and availability. Researching further into fast fashion brands, the interviewees were asked to give opinions of fast fashion brands introducing sustainable/ethical clothing lines. None of the interviewees had positive opinions on this, as they see it as incredibly suspicious and a form of greenwashing the brand. The key reason for this as explained by the ethical

consumers is the lack of full transparency from the brand to its consumers. This leads to them believing in the idea of organizations greenwashing, by making the brand appear ethical to entice consumers and making themselves seem more ethically responsible. Interviewee P7 said that the effort is only a ploy to attract a new consumer base of ethical consumers to buy their “sustainable” fast fashion clothing. Overall, there was no trust or interest in fast fashion brands introducing sustainable lines as it is a strategy to greenwash the brand and receive revenue.

This question was followed up by asking if the country of origin of the materials or production has an impact on the interviewees fashion consumption. All of the findings showed that the consumers would rather buy local products, because they would know the process is ethical and the workers are paid fairly. The countries of origin that were stated by the interviewees from which they would not buy clothing from is China and Bangladesh. However, interviewee P13 said that it is argumentative because a lot of people’s livelihood in poor countries depend on fast fashion brands or other brands that export their production to their countries. Nonetheless, it is difficult for the consumer to know if the workers are being treated fairly and getting paid, because the consumers would not support sweatshops or child labor. In addition, interviewee P3 stated that air pollution is something she considers as a negative effect of buying new clothing as it would be produced and transported from another country. Interviewee P3 also stated that if she is buying second hand the country of origin does not have an impact on her fashion consumption, because it is considered “local”. The countries include China and Bangladesh, or any other country where environmental and social issues are being exploited.

The new concept of slow fashion was asked in the interviews if the ethical consumers have heard of it and what was their viewpoint of this concept. Nine interviewees of the respondents had heard about slow fashion and five interviewees had not heard about it. In the cases where the interviewees had not heard about the concept of slow fashion, they were read the Hill’s (2020) of slow fashion that it is an alternative concept to fast fashion, which takes into consideration the resources and products required to manufacture clothing and making it more ethically conscious. Of the nine interviewees who said they had heard of slow fashion two interviewees were not entirely sure what was included on the concept. All interviewees believed that slow fashion is a good alternative to fast fashion, as it is a method that fast fashion consumers can turn to in order to be more ethically conscious. However, they stated that fast fashion brands will continue on inventing trends every so often to keep people feeling that they need to update their wardrobes in order to keep up with trends. Interviewee P9 said he would enjoy the

concept of slow fashion if it meant that trends would move slower in both print and production. Interviewee P4 thought it is a good concept to try and create pieces that are timeless, but also noted that consumers are so into trends and they are so individualistic. Therefore, it might be limiting to consumers who have specific, unique styles when shopping from slow fashion brands.

The interviewees were asked to state the three most important factors for them from the ethical viewpoint when buying clothing. The options included form of labor being ethical (including no sweatshops or child labor), sustainable materials, country of origin, upcycled materials, slow fashion, second hand clothing, vegan/cruelty free, and their own factor of choice. The three most popular factors chosen by the interviewees in ranking order were form of labor being ethical, sustainable materials, and vegan/cruelty free. All of the interviewees chose form of labor being ethical in their three most factors, which entails that social issues such as the wellbeing of workers is imperative to ethical consumers. None of the interviewees gave their own factor of choice that was not on the list, suggesting that the options covered all of the possible factors concerning ethical consumption. In addition, slow fashion and upcycled materials were not chosen, which may be due to the concept of slow fashion being fairly new to the marketplace in terms of awareness and availability. Upcycled materials can also be related to slow fashion stores as the products are not readily available to the marketplace, because it takes more time to create the pieces of clothing. Second hand clothing was the fourth most important factor when buying clothing, because it is the most common form of ethical consumption for the consumers. Country of origin was chosen by two of the respondents, which can relate to both environmental and social issues that portrays the country as exploiting natural resources and workers.

Lastly in the topic of decision-making processes of ethical consumers, the interviewees were asked to give an example of their latest fashion product purchase. Six of the responses were jeans and/or trousers, five were shirts, and three were sweaters. The reasons for the purchase varied from product brand, need and desire. The interviewee who bought jeans said they bought it because the brand is popular and also high in quality. However, this was a desired based purchase and not a need, which demonstrates the impact of brand image on consumer behaviour and purchases. In addition, interviewee P2 purchased a shirt due to desire and personal style. The sweater was bought by interviewee P8, because he needed a new sweater as the weather began to get colder. All of the products that were purchased cost under 25 euros, even the Levi jeans that are high quality and popular were 20 euros.

4.3 Influence of Gender of Ethical Fashion Consumption

There were two interview questions that concerned the influence of gender in ethical fashion consumption. The first question tackled the overall gender role in ethical consumption of fashion, and whether the interviewee believes there is a gender gap in the ethical marketplace. The findings were split 10-4, where ten of the interviewees did not believe there is a gender gap in male versus female consumption of fashion. This was justified by stating as individual's are becoming more open as a society where the traditional gender roles are not as rigid as they once were. However, four interviewees still believe women are more ethically conscious than males, and it can be seen in the amount of people in second hand stores.

The reason why ten of the ethical consumers did not believe in the gender gap in ethical consumption of fashion, is because the respondents are of the generation where both males and females consider ethical issues in their consumption. Whereas, the four ethical consumers who view the gender gap in the ethical fashion marketplace, is because the fashion industry overall affects women more. Interviewee P11 brought up a very interesting point of androgynous fashion. He stated how it should become much more mainstream and normalized for people to wear clothing that does not necessarily assign to their conformed gender.

The second question asked was if the ethical consumers believed there is a male generational difference in the ethical consumption of fashion. All of the interviewees believed that there is a generational difference in male consumption of ethical fashion. They believe the male mindset has changed quite a lot in the recent generations and that the younger generation of males are more ethically conscious in their consumption. In compassion the older male generations tend to go for the "safe option" of clothing and brands that they have always purchased from. Interviewee P14 read the same article used in the research concerning the "eco-gender" gap by Mintel Press Team (2018), where he stated that it is not a masculine aspect to consider the supply line, rather males buy what they need. Therefore, men perceive marketing sustainable products or ethical consumption as feminized and less masculine.

4.4 Appealing Ethical Fashion to Ethically Orientated Consumers

The ethical consumers were asked what kind of marketing content would appeal to them as ethically orientated consumers. This question was designed to tackle the fourth IQ concerning what aspects should be highlighted when companies advertise products to

ethically orientated consumers. All of the answers had the same idea of transparency of the brand when brands advertise their products. The ethical consumers said that they want to see concrete actions and facts of the brand if it is ethically conscious, and it is not just an act of greenwashing the brand. Interviewee P3 said that it is appealing when smaller companies have the backstory to the brand and the clothing advocating towards ethical issues. This creates a good reason for her to purchase from them. Interviewee P13 also stated transparency through facts is an appealing marketing campaign, but took this idea into increasing his own knowledge and awareness of his buying decisions. In addition, this would enable himself to view his buying decisions on a bigger scale and making more ethically conscious decisions.

5 Analysis and Discussion

The findings will be discussed and analysed in the order of each IQ, which were divided into different themes to organize the findings. The research was conducted to view the importance of consumer identity construction and how this influences the behavioural outcome of ethical consumption. This includes focusing on ethical fashion and the gender gap in ethical consumption.

5.1 Consumer Identity Building with Ethical Fashion

The first key element that was discovered in the findings was the consumer identity building with ethical fashion that addresses IQ1. This was split into the ethical consumption perceived by ethical consumers, the importance of ethical consumption of fashion on self, and constructing the consumer identity aspects of an ethical consumer.

5.1.1 Ethical Consumption Perceived by Ethical Consumers

The interviewees were asked to describe their own understanding of what ethical consumption is on a general basis, this allowed for each interviewee to express their own practices and viewpoints on ethical consumption. When analysing the findings, it was noticeable that each answer related to the same concept of being environmentally and socially conscious in consumption. The findings showed that waste is not only created by the unethical disposal of the product, but also in the production of the materials and the overall product. Waste can be produced in every step of the process from exploiting raw materials, making non-natural materials, production, transportation, and disposal. Therefore, ethical consumption focuses on consuming products that do not create excess waste into the environment. The consumer's displayed a wide range of knowledge concerning ethical consumption. This reflects upon their consumer identity and the reassurance of their sense of self and behaviour when consuming ethically. Furthermore, knowledge and behaviours reveal that the consumers are not greenwashing their sense of self and identity by acting ethically in their consumption. (Stets & Burke 2000, 224-237.) Instead, it is further constructing their identities to match their values as ethical consumers (Erikson 1950).

The aspects of desire and need were brought forth in the findings as a central concept, where ethical consumption in the consumer's viewpoint is trying to consume only what you need and sometimes what you desire. However, it was noted that in times of

consuming out of desire it is important to stay conservative with consumption. This connects back into the consumer behaviour model where the need or desire of an individual depicts the decision process based on their self-identity. (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010, 26-29.) Fast fashion brands create a sense of desire within their customers, which is achieved by creating new trends that are marketed as needs in the consumers wardrobe (Niinimäki 2017, 7-18). Whereas in reality, individuals do not need new pieces of clothing from every trend that is released into the marketplace. Mass-mediated marketplace ideologies enhance this idea of need as the marketplace is a strong social and cultural force that constructs consumer self-identity (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 868–882). Ethical consumers utilize the era of liquid modernity by going in the opposite direction of fast fashion being the norm, and constructing an individualistic sense of self-identity through ethical consumption through their ethical practices (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 868–882; Arnould & al 2012, 510-529).

The male consumers talked more about the amount of consumption that should be minimized when focusing on ethical consumption. The findings showed that consumption should not become too excessive when an individual buys a piece of clothing but tries to minimize the consumption. This mindset reinforces consumers' value orientation by producing a sense of pride by not over consuming even if it is second hand clothing (Robins & al 2007). The consumer's value orientation acts as a concrete guiding principle when dealing with fast fashion but also with ethical consumption, as the consumers values hold importance in building identity (Schwartz 1992).

Following the descriptions of ethical consumption, the interviewees were asked to describe themselves as ethically orientated consumers. Due to their values, the interviewees mentioned that they cannot purchase anything without having an informed decision at first, which connects to the TRA as ethical consumers use rational ways of thinking by analysing different factors that align with their values (Kan & Fabrigar 2017). This allows for the consumers to restrict themselves from buying and spending too much money on products that do not reflect positively on their values (Schwartz 1992).

It is evident within the findings that the consumers interact with the surrounding environment and situation they are placed in to alter themselves based on the possible outcome. This refers back to Mead's (1934) sense of self, where the self is constructed through interactions and evaluations of situations to alter its identity on the outcome. If the ethical consumers would buy products that go against their values this would deconstruct their self-identity, and their self-concept would have a negative impact on individual self-esteem. However, if the consumers evaluate the situation and the behaviour results in a

positive impact, their identity project would be enhanced and maintained as it is reflective upon their self-values. (Rosenberg 1979.)

5.1.2 Importance of Ethical Consumption of Fashion on Self

The first two questions allowed for background knowledge about ethical consumerism and how the consumers associate themselves as ethical consumers on a general basis. Afterwards, the questions become more directed and focused towards their self-identity as ethical consumers and focusing only on the consumption of ethical fashion. The interviewees were asked in what ways is ethical consumption of fashion important to them as individuals. The findings revealed that ethical consumption of fashion is very important to ethical consumers on an individualistic level, especially through fashion being a commodity that can be seen as a necessity in today's society (Armstrong 2016, 18-31) . Furthermore, fashion is a reflective image of an individual that is judged by society and can alter an individual's sense of self if their identity is questioned (Kan & Fabrigar 2017). The findings revealed that the majority of the ethical consumers clothing was second hand. However, when the ethical consumers do buy clothing that is new and not from second hand stores factors of environmental and social importance are taken into consideration. This demonstrates the identity construction where the consumer's self-concept is orchestrated with their past, present, and future self when faced with different situations (Erikson 1950).

Fast fashion was seen as a significant purchase that would go against the values of the ethical consumers. The findings further revealed that these values against fast fashion are not altered even if the piece of clothing was reused or upcycled. These values are justified due to the unethical practices of fast fashion brands using non-natural materials used in production, causing lower quality and decreasing the lifespan of clothing. Consequently, resulting in the ethical consumers having to purchase clothing more frequently. Ethical consumers' values are enhanced when confronted with clothing from the marketplace that goes against their values that are tied with their self-concept and lifestyle (Schwartz 1992). Thus, in the decision process of the consumer behaviour model the ethical consumers use the information available to make an alternative selection of clothing that fulfills their values (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010, 26-29). This is seen as ethical development as the ethical consumer evaluates the issue and creates their own judgment based on their characteristics (Atif & al 2013). The consumer's ethical predisposition enhances the process of ethical decision-making with the continuum of evaluating issues and aiming to create positive behavioural outcomes (Beauchamp & Bowie 2004).

The interviewees view unethical brands as organizations that act unsustainably and exploit multiple factors, such as workers and natural resources. By being aware of the unethical practices of fast fashion brands ethical consumers' self-identities are further justified as they are taking into consideration environmental and social issues. The ethical consumer's sense of self and identity reflecting upon ethical issues, directly results in being the focal point in their consumption. (Stets & Burke 2000, 224-237.) Ethical fashion is a marketplace source where identity projects take place, as individuals and social are undeniably associated (Jenkins 2014). Even though ethical consumers resist marketplace ideologies that are fast fashion, they are still being influenced by social and cultural factors. This can be seen as a factor that transforms consumer self-identity, because second hand stores do not meet every need or desire of ethical consumers. (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 868–882; Arnould & al 2012, 510-529.) Therefore, the marketplace directs the consumers by guiding them down a fixed path that may later their identity projects by transforming sense of self (Thompson 2004, 162-180).

These different aspects lead into how the ethical consumers' perception of themselves reflect in their own consumption of fashion. The findings revealed the lifestyle idea of the ethical consumers not being ethically conscious in order to boost self-esteem, instead it is more of a decision they make as otherwise it would have a negative impact on sense of identity (Rosenberg 1979). This demonstrates how many of the interviewees expect it of themselves to be ethically conscious in their fashion consumption due to their values. Otherwise their unconscious consumption reflects negatively upon themselves and their self-identity, where ethical consumption is a core sense of their identity. (Reed II & al 2012, 310-321.) The findings revealed a mix of responses from both genders in terms of consumption patterns, which is a result of fashion purchasing behaviour. This reveals that every ethical consumer's sense of self and identity vary, as it is constantly changing depending on the environment and situation they are placed in (Stets & Burke 2003). Here the concept of choice arises in the internal and external dialogue that is occurring in their individualist and social practices, creating a parallel standpoint on their identity (Jenkins 2014).

5.1.3 Consumer Identity Aspects of an Ethical Consumer

By combining the gathered primary and secondary data of ethical consumers from the data and theories, an image of an ethical consumer's self-identity can be formed. This allows for further exploration into the self-identity of an ethical consumer in the consumption of fashion, which can be applied to real-life marketplaces. For the purpose of the research the ethical consumers self-identity was constructed and can be seen in figure

7 below. The figure demonstrates the consumer identity aspects of an ethical consumer, which includes characteristics, pride and self-value.

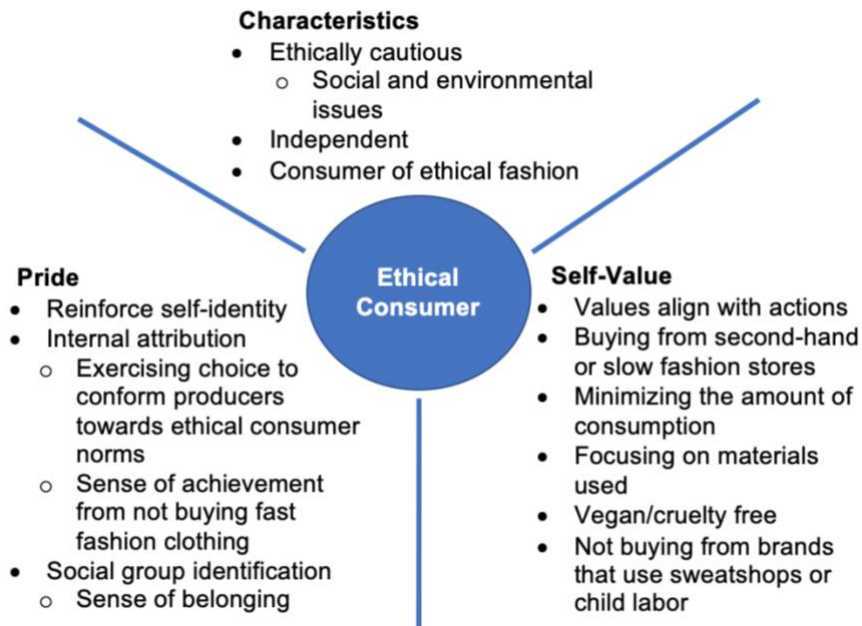


Figure 7. Consumer identity aspects of an ethical consumer.

The ethical consumers characteristics include being ethically conscious in both environmental and social issues, being independent to form their own sense of self and identity as separate entities, and being a consumer of ethical fashion in all of its aspects from materials, labor, production, transportation, and disposal.

Pride of an ethical consumer includes reinforcing their self-identity that is their characteristics, having internal attributions and social group identification. Pride reinforces an ethical consumer's self-identity through the positive impact of carrying out their values in behaviours and decision-making when purchasing ethical fashion rather than fast fashion. Nonetheless, pride arises whenever the ethical consumer's self-identity is matched by their actions in consumption. An aspect of internal attribution is exercising the ethical consumers' control and choice to conform producers towards new norms, and away from the current marketplace of fast fashion and the negative impacts it carries. Producers rely heavily on consumers to buy their products and it is the responsibility of the producer to follow consumer trends. Thus, by enforcing ethical consumption behaviours into the marketplace the producers must respond to this need in order to maintain sales. This allows the consumers to pursue their internalized standards by fostering motivation for achievements in their self-values. The sense of achievement arises as an internal attribution when the consumers do not buy clothing from fast fashion brands, which ultimately reinforces self-identity. Furthermore, the ethical consumers get a

sense of belonging as they are tied to a social group that reflects positively upon their values, which creates pride to be associated with these ingroups. (Robins & al 2007.)

The values of a consumer align with their actions, and with ethical consumers their values are aligned with being ethically conscious. Ethical consumers purchase clothing from second hand or slow fashion stores instead of fast fashion stores, because consuming from fast fashion stores go against their constructed values and goals as a consumer. Furthermore, minimizing the amount and occurrence of consumption enhances ethical consumers' self-concept as they evaluate the situation in a positive manner. Ethical consumers also gain self-value by focusing on the materials used in the production and aim to purchase vegan and cruelty free clothing. This excludes the ethical consumers by not purchasing clothing from brands that use sweatshops or child labor in their production processes. By carrying out values through consumption the ethical consumers create their own consumer value orientation. This plays a significant role in building consumer self-identity, because each variable is measured to the extent of the consumers' needs and wants. (Schwartz 1992.) This will be further discussed in the data of decision-making processes of ethical consumers where the action-based consumption further enhances self-identity, pride, and self-values of ethical consumers.

5.2 Decision-Making Processes of Ethical Consumers

The second key element that was discovered in the findings was the decision-making processes of ethical consumers that addresses IQ2. This was split into the ethical consumption behaviour of an ethical consumer, the external factors in ethical consumption, and constructing the ethical consumer behaviour model.

5.2.1 Ethical Consumption Behaviour of an Ethical Consumer

Moving towards purchasing behaviour and the decision-making process that guides the ethical consumers, the findings demonstrate how consumer behaviour and decision-making is influenced by the marketplace (Askegaard 2015). This was done by instilling the urge for consumers to consume more products when they are on trend or on sale. This results in consumer desire to purchase more than needed, through the attraction of non-volitional factors such as opportunities and resources in the form of trend and sales (Ajzen 1991, 179-211). Trends were seen as an influencing factor of consumption in the findings of ethical consumers. Kozinets (2001, 67-89) demonstrates how producer brands utilize consumer culture by instilling images, texts, and symbols into the marketplace, with the

aim to orient consumer identities. Thus, the findings reveal how CCT entails the experience, meaning and action of fashion consumption that is decided upon by consumer self-choice (Holt 2002, 70-90). Nonetheless, the findings also revealed that not all ethical consumers were influenced by trends in their consumption behaviour. Ethical consumers depict their own response to mass-mediated marketplace ideologies through consumers' interpretive strategies in order to fit their lifestyle (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 868–882).

Ethical consumption behaviour of an ethical consumer was further seen through the three most important factors for ethical consumers when purchasing clothing. The findings revealed that form of labor being ethical, sustainable materials, and vegan/cruelty free were the three most important factors on average. These findings assist in predicting ethical consumer behaviour, as they use rational ways of thinking by referring to their actions based on self-values resulting in a systematic behaviour (Kan & Fabrigar 2017). The behavioural intentions of consumers show how motivational the consumer is, and of the available information concerns the three most important factors the stronger the desire is to carry out the behaviour. However, if the ethical consumers are not exposed to the necessary resources of information this results in low intentions to carry out a behaviour. Thus, due to the consumer's attitude being a belief-based system the evaluation of consequences can either be highly positive or negative (Kan & Fabrigari 2017). Therefore, non-volitional factors such as information is a factor that affects ethical consumption behaviour of ethical consumers. The examples of previously purchased clothing pieces provided by the ethical consumers, demonstrate self-identity being carried out by consumer behaviour and decision-making as non-volitional factors were available to them. (Ajzen 1991.)

5.2.2 External Factors in Ethical Consumption

The ethical consumers were asked how price influences their decision-making process, as price is a deciding factor in the behaviour of consumption. The influence of price and social status are seen as an external influence in the consumer behaviour model (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010, 26-29). Price is connected to the marketplace, the interviewees being students is a social influence of status, and also the student budget influences the availability of resources and opportunities. Availability of information is a prominent deciding external factor that influences consumer behaviour and decision-making. Especially for ethical consumers, as it is a necessity to decide if the piece of clothing or brand matches their values of being environmentally and socially aware. The country of origin was seen as a deciding factor for ethical consumption as specific

countries are tied to unethical environmental and social practices that organizations exploit. The country of origin discourages consumers from purchasing the piece of clothing due to the negative factors that accompany it, which influences the consumers behavioural intention due to their belief-based system (Kan & Fabrigar 2017).

Thus, despite fast fashion brands introducing sustainable clothing lines in their collection the ethical consumers lack trust in the brands CSR efforts due to the brands lack of transparency. Instead the ethical consumers view fast fashion brands CSR as greenwashing the brand to further direct consumers down a fixated path of fast fashion (Thompson 2004, 162-180). This further justifies Grunert and Juhl's (1995, 39-62) statement of ethical consumers having the knowledge on organization production, distribution, use and disposal of products that have external costs, which negatively impact environmental and social factors. Through the ethical decision-making of evaluating the situation based on the availability of information on the brand and piece of clothing, the ethical consumers can make a justified behavioural outcome based on their self-identity. This ethical-decision making process is referred to as ethical development. (Atif & al 2013.)

These are factors that influence the ethical decision-making by focusing on recognition, judgment, intention and behaviour (Rest 1986). Despite all of the ethical consumers values being against fast fashion, the findings revealed that a few of these ethical consumers have purchased from fast fashion stores. These interview findings touch on the aspect that an individual's characteristics of an ethical issue vary in saliency. The consumers who infrequently shop in fast fashion stores have varying characteristics of ethical issues, but not in ethical awareness (Atif 2013). Personal judgments varied in saliency when the consumer bought a piece of clothing from a fast fashion store that could not be found in ethically orientated stores. Despite similar identities of the ethical consumers they will not react or recognize ethical issues in the same way, nonetheless, this does not alter the consumers ethical awareness. (Jones 1991, 366–395; Reynolds 2006, 233–243.)

Despite not all of the ethical consumers being aware of what slow fashion was, the findings revealed that all of them believed that it is a better alternative to fast fashion. However, due to the concept being slow fashion many ethical consumers believed that it could not overcome fast fashion. This was because fast fashion brands will continue to create trends that the entire marketplace will follow. Furthermore, addressing the issue of individuality may not be achieved through slow fashion. The ethical consumers' recognition and judgment of slow fashion reflects positively on their self-identity, where

they see slow fashion as an adequate solution to the issue of fast fashion (Beauchamp & Bowie 2004; Vermeir & Verbeke 2006, 169–194). This develops the process of ethical decision-making, as the ethical consumer’s self-belief directly impacts the behavioural outcome towards ethical issues (Atif & al 2013).

5.2.3 Ethical Consumer Behaviour Model

Implementing the acquired qualitative data from the interviews and the knowledge of ethical consumer identity, consumer behaviour and ethical decision-making processes, these aspects are applied to the consumer behaviour model designed by Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2010, 26-29).

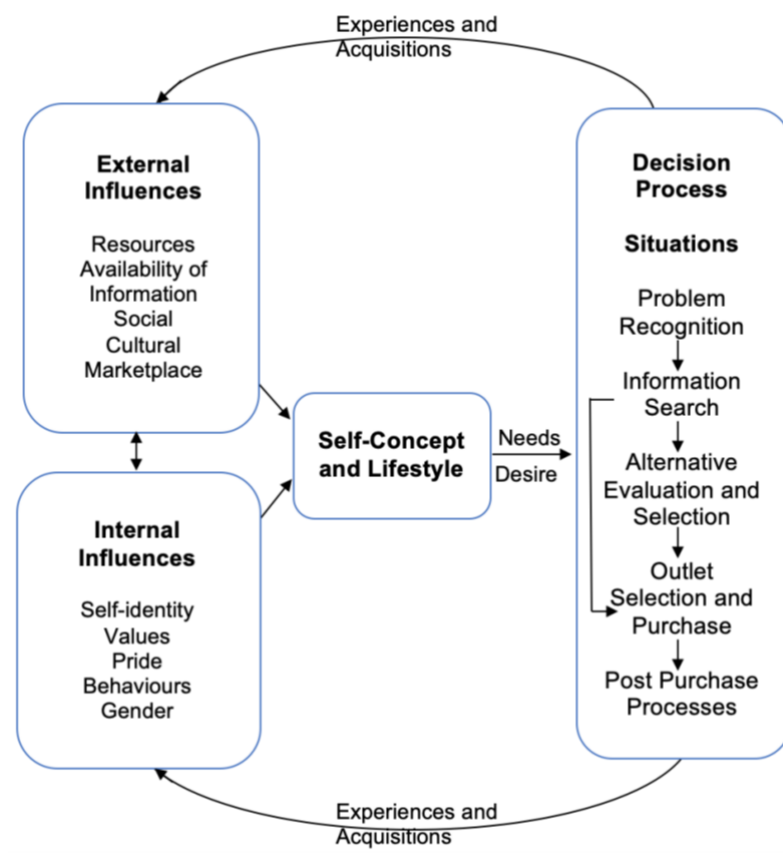


Figure 8. Ethical consumer behaviour model, inspired by Hawkins & Mothersbaugh (2010, 26-29) consumer behaviour model.

Figure 8 demonstrates the base structure of Hawkins & Mothersbaugh’s (2010, 26-29) consumer behaviour model with changes to the internal and external influences to match those of an ethical consumer. These influences have been gathered from the primary and secondary research and the analysis of the research to construct different aspects that will have an impact on ethical consumers self-concept and lifestyle and ultimately the decision

process. The external influences include resources, availability of information, social, cultural, and marketplace. On the other hand, the internal influences include self-identity, values, pride, behaviours and gender.

The availability of both resources and opportunities to ethical consumers influence their consumption behaviour (Kan & Fabrigar 2017). If there is a lack of ethically orientated stores the consumers ethical consumption is limited, and are more influenced down the fixed path of fast fashion (Thompson 2004, 162-180). Furthermore, it will be more difficult for the consumer to go against the norm of fast consumption. As the efforts of boycotting and subjective norms are limited in order to redirect the marketplace and consumer towards a more ethically conscious consumption. (McGregor 2018.) Information is successful through organizational transparency, and without this the consumers cannot make ethically just decisions on the brand and its clothing. This discourages the consumers from purchasing clothing due to the lack of trust in the CSR processes. (Epstein-Reeves 2012.)

Social and cultural factors are constructed by narratives and ideologies that are placed in the marketplace to influence consumption by creating, sustaining and transforming ethical consumers' identities (Joy & Li 2012, 2-3). This refers back to CCT being the focus of commodity consumption that is constructed by consumer self-choice (Holt 2002, 70–90). Marketplace creates social and cultural forces that are derived from the consumer culture theory, where consumers are influenced by social actors in forming consumptions norms to fulfill their desires in social placements (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 868–882; Arnould & Thompson 2007, 3–22). In addition, the marketplace creates marketing activities that aim to influence consumer behaviour down a fixated path (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 868–882). Thus, it can be placed as one of the external factors affecting ethical consumers' behaviour as it also creates choice for the ethical consumer. Ingroups in social and cultural context have an impact in shaping and maintaining consumer identity, therefore there is an internal and external dialogue occurring when measuring consumer behaviour (Stets & Burke 2003; Jenkins 2014).

It is vital to notice the arrows between the external and internal influences because identity is not concrete as it is constantly changing due to the external situations the individuals are placed in. In addition, the external influences interact with the internal, because the individual can depict what factors they are exposed to and in some situations the external factors are subconsciously influencing the individual. (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010, 26-29.) Self-identity is constructed through the sense of self and identity as separate entities of an individual (Stets & Burke 2000, 224-237). Identity is built

on structure and agency, where structure is the marketplace and agency are the identity projects and individuals utilize the marketplace for consumption to construct their self-identity (Stets & Burke 2003).

Once self and identity are created the individual incorporates these aspects into their consumer identity, which results in the development of consumer value, pride, attitude, and behaviours. Value orientations are created once the consumer depicts the importance of different values in their self-identity. (Stets & Burke 2003.) These values aim to guide the consumer in their ethical decision-making concerning purchases of fashion in order to reach their goals of being an ethical consumer (Schwartz 1992). Consumer values are measured by the needs and desires of their self-concept, which can be seen as a leading aspect in the ethical consumer behaviour model that leads to the decision process. Thus, values have a direct impact on consumer ethical decision-making processes. (Diddi 2014.)

By following the values constructed by self-identity the ethical consumer will begin to experience emotions of pride when the behavioural outcome of a situation reflects positively back upon their self-identity and values (Robins & al 2007). Self-esteem is a result of the ethical consumer achieving its values and being reassured by the positive behavioural outcome from the decision-making process (Rosenberg 1979). The internal influence of gender will be further discussed when answering IQ 3 on the role of gender on ethical fashion consumption.

5.3 Influence of Gender on Ethical Fashion Consumption

The interview tackled two questions concerning the influence of gender of ethical fashion consumption. The first question concerned if the ethical consumers believed there was a gender gap in ethical consumption of fashion, and the second if there are male generational differences. The findings were split where some believed that traditional gender roles are not as rigid as they once were, and the rest supported the research conducted by Niinimäki (2017, 7-18) where women tend to be more ethically orientated than men. The fashion marketplace still tends to favor women more than men, consequently the fashion industry overall affects women more. This reflects back to society creating a space in the market where a woman's self-worth, confidence, or professionalism is very easily targeted by fashion (Yurchisin & Johnson 2010). When analysing the findings for generational differences many of the ethical consumers believed there were generational differences. These findings fit the idea of an eco-gender gap still existing to some extent in the marketplace for ethical fashion (Mintel Press Team 2018).

As men see being ethically conscious as feminized and women feeling more pressured by mass-mediated marketing efforts to consume ethically (Hunt 2020).

When defining ethical consumption there were no noticeable gender differences when the interviewees were asked to define ethical consumption. However, the male interviewees talked more about the amount of consumption of products and how this should be controlled. Males were shown to shop less than women in general as the act of shopping creates a greater emotional response in women than men (Niinimäki 2017, 7-18). Nonetheless, when defining ethical consumption, it is important to keep in mind that it is their own perception of what ethical consumption is as ethical consumers.

The interviewees were asked how being an ethical consumer of fashion reflects in their purchasing behaviour, and there was a mix of responses from both genders. Some males said that they binge buy clothes, but some only buy a few pieces at a time and the same for females where some do not go on a shopping spree but only buy specific pieces. These findings confirm that there are not big differences in consumption of fashion in the younger generations as consumers strip away from social norms. (Workman & Cho 2012, pp. 267-283.) However, multiple female consumers showed to spend more time on the idea of fashion by finding style inspiration from different sources. This matches the research conducted on the role of gender in fashion consumption, where women were shown to spend more time on shopping before and during the experience. (Yurchisin & Johnson 2010.) Furthermore, women use the concept of 'fashion hunt' as they consider the clothing, brand and the overall act of purchasing (Arsmtrong & al 2016, 18-31).

When asked how often the ethical consumers purchase clothing the average frequency was twice a month, where females were seen to have higher frequencies than the males. The fashion industry is still more directed towards women, which correlates to more availability of clothing compared to men. Therefore, women have a higher selection of clothing resulting in higher time spent shopping than males, which is further enhanced during sales. (Workman & Cho 2012, pp. 267-283.) The gender gap is further seen when asked if the ethical consumers shop at fast fashion stores. The few females who stated that they have purchased a piece of clothing from a fast fashion store, shows how desire drives female consumers whereas need mostly drives male consumers. Women are more pressured to stay on top of trends and update their wardrobes due to social standards. This leads female ethical consumers to shop in fast fashion stores when the desired piece of clothing cannot be found in ethically orientated stores as the trends are set by fast fashion brands. (Niinimäki 2017, 7-18.)

The findings that were gathered that demonstrated gender influences in ethical consumption are due to sociohistoric patterning of consumption. The reasoning for the findings is due to the institutional and social structure that displayed a direct impact on the ethical consumers consumption. These structures include class, community, ethnicity and gender. (Kim & al 1993, 229-244.) Figure 9 below represents these findings that displayed gender differences comparing male and female consumers in ethical fashion consumption.

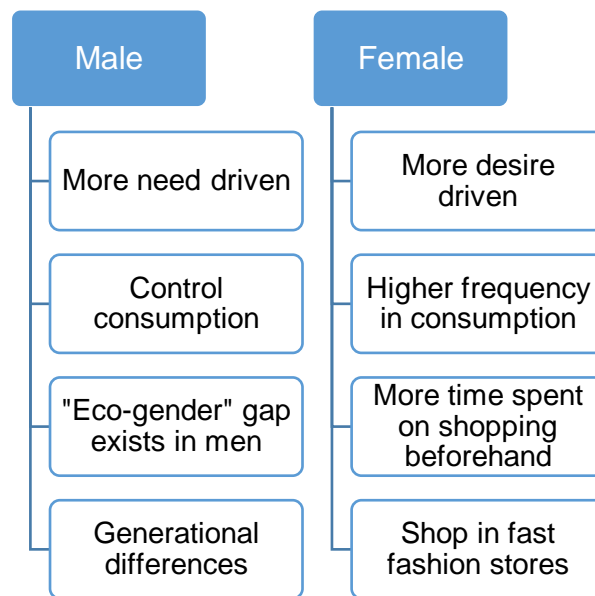


Figure 9. Male versus female consumers on ethical fashion consumption.

The “eco-gender” gap exists in men as females are more ethically orientated in their consumption of fashion and consider the environmental and social issues (Mintel Press Team 2018). This gap is further expanded with the male generational differences, where the younger generation of males are seen as ethically orientated as the females. However, the older generations lack ethical awareness and practices. Males tend to be more need driven rather than desire drive, however this does not mean that males do not binge buy out of desire (Niinimäki 2017, 7-18). Furthermore, males also tend to pay more importance in controlling consumption even when consuming ethical fashion.

On the other hand, females were shown to spend more time on the idea of shopping beforehand, by finding style inspiration through different online resources. This results in females being driven more often by desire than by need, such as the males are. By the increase of time spent on the idea of shopping and the desire to consume fashion, the female consumers were noticed to be consuming more frequently than males. (Yurchisin & Johnson 2010.) The effect of using online resources for style inspiration resulted in some of the female ethical consumers to purchase pieces of clothing from fast fashion

stores. This connects back to the desire to consume a specific piece of clothing that cannot be found in ethically orientated stores, resulting in consumers turning towards purchasing from fast fashion stores.

5.4 Advertising Ethical Fashion

The findings from what type of marketing content would appeal to the ethical consumers, revealed that the ethical consumers consumption is highly influenced by the transparency of the brand. The ethical consumers are concerned with viewing facts in order to create a positive behavioural outcome.

Utilizing the three most important factors stated by a mix of ethical consumers, these can be incorporated into the aspects that are advertised in ethical fashion to ethically orientated consumers. These include ethical forms of labor, sustainable materials, vegan/cruelty free clothing, second hand clothing and the country of origin of production not resembling developing countries where unethical environmental and social practices have been carried out by companies. Furthermore, resembling slow fashion or upcycled materials are also ethical factors that will appeal to ethical consumers as they also match their values. Overall, these factors can only be used successfully in advertising fashion, if the organization has full transparency of their entire CSR processes to the ethical consumers.

From the research and the interview findings the argument can be made that women tend to be more orientated towards fashion shopping and searching for emotional pleasures, whereas men are more rational consumers focusing on quality and trust-worthy brands (Yurchisin & Johnson 2010). Thus, another method to attract ethical consumers through marketing efforts for fashion is to advertise the female and male audience separately. Women should be approached through aesthetics of design and trend, and men should be approached through the quality and functionality of clothing. To achieve emotional attachments to the brand by consumers women seek for aesthetic pleasure and men seek for trustworthiness of the brand and its clothes. (Niinimäki 2017, 7-18.)

On the other hand, the concept of androgynous fashion was brought up in the findings. Revealing how androgynous fashion should become more mainstream and normalized for people to wear clothing that does not necessarily assign to their conformed gender. Brands can have androgynous fashion and advertise fashion in gender-neutral marketing efforts, which would get rid of the perception that being ethically conscious is a women's responsibility (Mintel Press Team 2018). Breaking down this barrier will reveal ethical

fashion to a larger audience and redirect the marketplace towards a new norm (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 868–882; Arnould, Bardhi & Eckhardt 2012, 510-529).

Another marketing effort for brands to attract ethical consumers is using cause-related marketing tactics. According to Smith and Higgins (2000, 304-322) there has been an increase in the use of cause-related marketing efforts for ethical consumption, as it allowed organizations to be viewed as “doing good”. This includes brands selling products and connecting their CSR processes by donating to a specific cause, for example the pink ribbon for breast cancer awareness (Smith & Higgins 2000, 304-322).

The findings of ethical consumers demanding transparency of organizations **accept** the study conducted by Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire. Where consumers are willing to purchase clothing if the organizations have transparency in their brand and were not willing if this information was not available to them. (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire 2011, 135-149.) In order for organizations to market or even attract ethical consumers, CSR efforts must be implemented into the core beliefs.

Organization can utilize Carroll’s (1979, 497-505) categorization of CSR into four issues to visualize the benefits and methods of using CSR processes. The categorize included economic (producing what the market demands), legal (adhering to relevant legal requirements), ethical (doing what is just or fair) and philanthropic (working to improve the overall quality of life for individuals) (Carroll 1979, 497-505).

Benefits	Methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation • Cost savings • Brand differentiation • Long-term thinking • Customer engagement • Employee engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency • Cause-related efforts • Androgynous fashion • Gender-neutral marketing • Attract women through aesthetic pleasures • Attract me through trustworthiness of brand

Figure 10. Benefits and methods of CSR for organizations.

The above figure 10 shows a simplified overview of the benefits of CSR and the methods to succeed in CSR from research and data collected from the interviews of the ethical consumers. The different forms of methods have been stated above in the display of findings and the discussion of these findings that help to answer the fourth IQ in the

research. One beneficial factor of CSR is that it allows for greater innovation within the company internally and also externally towards society. Companies are able to innovate their products to have fewer environmental and social impacts that benefits both the company in the long-run and also the consumers indirectly. Therefore, innovation pursues greater research and development in companies while saving costs through materials, production, packaging or transportation. In the beginning companies implemented CSR due to brand differentiation, where companies implemented values into their business model. However, due to consumer demand for companies to be more ethically conscious, CSR is a method for companies to stay competitive in the marketplace while differentiating through different ethically orientated efforts to minimize their ecological footprint. CSR allows for companies to pay attention to their long-term position and ensure how it can progress further in their ethical efforts. Saving costs and differentiating through CSR are factors that have a direct positive impact on company long-term thinking. Utilizing CSR can enable companies to engage with current and potential consumers, by communicating the message of “doing good”. Furthermore, CSR also engages employees through different initiatives that create transparency and communication between company and employees. (Epstein-Reeves 2012.)

6 Conclusion

This research was conducted to broaden the knowledge of consumer identity construction and how these drives and influences their consumption behaviour in order to understand consumer consumption in the marketplace. Previous research and academic articles were combined with data collection from 14 in-depth interviews to answer the IQs and the RQ. Based on this wide ray of information the research constructs the final conclusions on the topic area and provides recommendations to companies.

6.1 Key Findings

Using the theoretical framework and the knowledge base designed for this research, it enabled the research to find and conclude on the research question as a whole by answering to each IQ. The key findings of this research include the construction of an ethical consumer's self-identity, the behaviour and ethical decision-making of ethical fashion done by an ethical consumer, viewing the role gender plays in ethical fashion consumption, and highlighting ethical fashion advertising aspects to attract ethically orientated consumers.

Researching the underlying theme of the research being consumer identity, it was vital for the construction of the theoretical section of the research to introduce the sense of self and identity as separate entities. Through these different interactions and construction of sense of self, this ultimately leads to the sense of identity of an individual. (Stets & Burke 2000, 224-237.) An ethical consumer's sense of self and identity is constructed through the act of self-concept and evaluating ethical situations they are placed in. This results in the ethical consumers self-esteem and the development of self-values and pride that are part of an ethical consumers self-identity. (Rosenberg 1979.) Ethical consumers build their identity through the act of choice by the internal and external interactions, where the external factor is the marketplace and the internal is their identity projects (Reed II & al 2012, 310-321; Thompson 2004, 162-180).

Through the practice of self-identity in different environmental situations the ethical consumer begins to develop values of being ethically aware in their fashion consumption. Through the qualitative data analysis, it was shown how ethical consumption of fashion plays a vital role in the construction of self-identity within ethical consumers. The sense of pride and self-value were created through consumer behaviour and the ethical decision-making process of consumption. Consumer culture theory was seen in the ethical consumers acquisition, possession, consumption and disposition of fashion (Askegaard

2015). The factors that were most important for ethical consumers when consuming fashion is that the brand does not practice unethical forms of labor, including sweatshops or child labor, using sustainable materials in their clothes, and both the materials and the production being vegan/cruelty free. Furthermore, this demonstrates how ethical consumers are changing the cultural blueprints as ethical consumption is transforming marketplace cultures away from fast fashion (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 868–882). With this knowledge organizations are able to measure consumer behaviour, through the studies conducted by Icek Azjen and Martin Fishbein in both TPB and the further developed TRA. The behaviours of ethical consumers are influenced by varying and different factors under certain environmental situations (Kan & Fabrigar 2017).

Gender has been viewed as an influence in ethical consumption, however this norm is slowly changing with newer generations of both male and female consumers taking accountability and being more ethically conscious on their fashion consumption. Research shows that women tend to be more ethically conscious in their consumption due to societal stereotypes of purchasing items for the household. This has resulted in men viewing ethical consumption as being feminized and less masculine. (Mintel Press Team 2018.) However, within this research the “eco-gender” gap was not as evident, where both men and women showed awareness and concern for ethical issues. Nonetheless, due to societal norms women were seen to be more pressured to consume clothing and stay on trends than men were. Therefore, ethical consumers are still vulnerable for the idea of desire, which resulted in purchasing from fast fashion. The findings further showed that there might be a generational difference in men concerning ethical consumption. Possible reasons for this may arise from men being more need driven and seeking for brands that provide loyalty, which can be seen through their rational ways of thinking. (Niinimäki 2017, 7-18.) Overall, there were no significant gender differences in the sampling group acquired for this research, but there may be generational differences in the ethical marketplace.

The research demonstrated how marketplace cultures and mass-mediated marketing efforts have a direct impact on consumer identity construction and influences their consumption behaviour. The ethical consumers displayed a strong demand for organizational transparency within their business model, in order to deduce whether the organization is greenwashing their brand. Transparency was shown to be only achievable through CSR where the organization is viewed as being socially and sustainably conscious in their business processes (Epstein-Reeves 2012). Cause-related marketing efforts is another form of advertising that attracts ethical consumers, as the brand is

connected with an environmental or social cause that supports the ethical consumers values (Smith & Higgins 2000, 304-322).

Despite the research not having a commissioned company to carry out the investigation into consumer identity construction influencing consumption behaviour, the findings can be utilized by organizations. This can be achieved by viewing the importance of the concept of consumer identity and how this has a direct impact on their consumption. Furthermore, having a focus on ethical consumers and ethical consumption reveals how the marketplace is changing with consumer demand for environmental and social consciousness. In addition, how organizations should implement CSR processes into their business model that has benefits on both organizational and consumer levels.

6.2 Recommendations for Future Research

In the beginning stages of the research it was decided upon to conduct an interview for the primary research, however it would have been interesting and beneficial to the research if both an interview and a survey would have been conducted. The survey would have provided numerical data into ethical fashion consumption and consumer behaviour, whereas the interview provided qualitative data in the form of viewpoints and personal opinions. In addition, targeting a wider range of age groups that are ethical consumers could provide a different scope into the data analysis and further tackle the role of gender in different generations.

Due to the research not using a commissioning company, it would have been interesting to apply the acquired knowledge towards a specific brand and product and see how it plays out in the real marketplace and with a certain consumer group at hand. This would alter the research from a consumer focus to an organizational focus where more research would have been conducted on CSR.

6.3 Self-Evaluation and Development Ideas

During the beginning stages of the research, it was difficult to demarcate the research question and find theories, models, and concepts that would benefit this research and not stray into a different topic. Therefore, most of the time spent on the thesis was perfecting the IQs and the knowledge base figure, seen in chapter 2, in order to move forward towards the theoretical chapter. The interviews were deemed to be a difficult task to fulfill due to the amount and diversity of the respondents, but with utilizing contacts and the

snowball sampling technique this stage did not require as much time. Throughout the writing process at times it was difficult to view the big picture of the research and to understand the benefits of the theoretical framework. However, this obstacle was always overcome by referring back to chapter 1 to get an overview of what is needed.

The researcher received more knowledge on consumer consumption behaviour and topics concerning CSR processes, which were not covered to such an extent in courses. This was a self-learning experience that is an interest of the researcher and was eager to conduct a research on this topic. Therefore, not having a commissioning company enabled the research to tackle different aspects, such as choosing ethical fashion as the main consumption and the role of gender in ethical consumption.

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Appendices

Interview Questions

- What is your age and current country that you live in?
- Describe what you understand as ethical consumption?
- How would you describe yourself as an ethically orientated consumer?
- Do you consider ethical consumption of fashion to be important for you as a person? If yes, in what ways?
- How does your perception of being an ethical consumer reflect in your fashion purchasing behaviour?
- What type of clothing do you purchase most frequently?
- Where do you usually buy your clothing?
- How often do you buy clothing?
- How does price influence your decision to buy ethical fashion of clothing?
- Is there something you would refuse to consume entirely due to ethical reasons?
 - What if it was reused/upcycled, would it change your mind? If yes/no why?
- Do you buy from fast fashion brands? If yes, what were the reasons for your purchase?
- What is your opinion of fast fashion brands introducing sustainable/ethical clothing lines?
- Does the country of origin, of materials or production, have an impact on your fashion consumption? If yes, how and what countries does this include?
- Have you heard of the new concept of slow fashion?
 - If yes, can you explain your viewpoint on it?
- What factors are the three most important ones to you from the ethical viewpoint when buying clothing?
 - Form of labor being ethical (including no sweatshops or child labor), sustainable material, country of origin, upcycled material, slow fashion, second hand clothing, vegan/cruelty free, own factor of choice.
- What kind of marketing content would appeal to you as an ethical consumer?
- Could you give me an example of what was your latest fashion product purchase? What, why, where, what did it cost?
- Do you believe that gender plays a role in ethical consumption of fashion? If yes, how?
- Do you believe that there are male generational differences? If yes, how?
- Is there anything you would like to add?