

KYMENLAAKSON AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

University of Applied Sciences

International Business/International Trade

Liu Tingting

The main factors influencing green consumer's purchasing behavior in Chinese clothing market

Case RYB

Bachelor's Thesis 2012

## ABSTRACT

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Ulla Puustelli, Msc (Econ.)

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Green clothing has emerged as the new products in the green market in China. With the improvement of living standard, the demand transfer of consumer from practicability of clothing to ecological and health clothing especially in the children's clothing has increased. It is significant for marketers to understand the main factors influencing green consumer purchasing behavior in the Chinese clothing market.

The main objective of this thesis was to find out the major factors influencing green consumer purchasing behavior in the Chinese clothing market, in order to build a green marketing mix effectively.

As to the research methods, only qualitative method is adopted in this thesis. An interview was made with a retailer of children's clothing company which has implemented the green strategy already and four loyal customers of this company to get the information by the in-depth interview.

The main conclusion demonstrates the safety of clothing is the most important factor considered by consumers in the green clothing market. And different consumers have different methods to judge the safety of clothing, such as label, design, brand and promotion. In addition, high price can be accepted by green consumers, specialty store is the most credible place for consumers to buy green clothing and innovate promotion may have a big effect on consumer purchasing behavior.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Clothing industry is the pillar industry in China which accounts for 7.6% of total trade volume. There are more than 50,000 textile factories, and it not only brings huge benefits but also serious environmental pollution (Greenpeace 2011, p.26). According to survey, it indicates that China is the most polluted country in the world especially for water pollution. The majority of rivers, lakes and reservoirs are being influenced by various types of pollutants, which are discharged from the clothing industry (Greenpeace 2011, p. 14). Obviously, the clothing industry plays an important role in the improvement of the environment in China. As the world's factory, green marketing is necessary for Chinese clothing companies to boost. Certainly, the government should carry out some compulsive policies and consumers should increase consciousness of consuming green clothing.

Shen and Hu (2011, p.104) mentioned that many consumers are not concerned with environment in the aspect of green clothing consumption. Earlier, Chinese consumers paid attention to the green food, green building and green transportation but not green clothing. It was not thought that green clothing can make a huge difference to the environment. However, with the substantial improvement of people's living standards, the demand transfer of consumer from practicability of clothing to ecological and health clothing has increased especially in children's clothing. In China, there are 380 million children who are under 16 years old. The demand for children's clothing grows at 10-13% every year. And children's clothing market is the fastest growing market in China. In the recent years, the safety problems of children's clothing are increasing as well which leads to a phenomenon that parents pay more attention to the safety of children's clothing. (Shen & Hu 2011, p. 104.) Therefore, a company should implement the green strategy to meet the green clothing requirement of consumers.

## 1.2 Objective of the study and research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to study the factors affecting Chinese consumer's green purchasing behavior.

The main research question:

What are the main factors influencing green consumer's purchasing behavior in Chinese clothing market?

The main research question can be divided into four sub-questions:

- 1) What are the differences between green marketing and conventional marketing?
- 2) What is the current situation of Chinese green consumers?
- 3) What kind of factors may influence green purchasing behavior?
- 4) Why should Chinese companies go green?

## 1.3 Research methods

In the theoretical part, a majority of data and information were gathered from articles, news, websites and reports which are published by the authoritative and economic institutes. One previous survey related green consumption is regarded as a secondary data to analyze Chinese green clothing consumers. The survey of consumption psychology and behaviors of green clothing consumers is mainly conducted by Zu Yidan. The reason why I choose this survey is that the contents of this survey are related to green clothing purchasing behavior. It can analyze factors influencing green consumer purchasing behavior in Chinese clothing market in detail.

In the empirical part, primary data was gathered with a qualitative interview. In addition, one children's clothing company as the case study was presented and one interviewee is the retailer of this company. This children's clothing company implements the green marketing strategy and considers the children's health and environment as their priorities. Moreover, as a franchisee of the company, the retailer

knows her consumers' purchasing behavior distinctly, thus, I can analyze the consumers' purchasing behavior from different aspects. Certainly, consumer should be interviewed for purpose of analyzing their purchasing behavior directly. Four mothers who I interviewed are the loyal customers of this company and the opinions related product, price, place and promotion of this company are told. These four interviewees have different backgrounds and these four identities are so common in China. Therefore, to analyze the purchasing behavior of them also can partially know green consumers who have the similar background with them in Wenzhou area. The main method of case study is interview via an in-depth interview in Wenzhou in spring 2012.

## 2 GREEN MARKETING

### 2.1 Change towards green marketing

The term of "green marketing" appeared officially in the late 1980s (Peattie & Crane 2005, p. 358). Many marketers began to take part in different kinds of green marketing. However, it is not easy for companies to go green. Consumers do really care about the environmental issues but they didn't turn it into purchasing behaviors (Schrum et al. 1995, p. 72). Namely, the main obstructer against development of green marketing is the consumers' purchasing behavior in some degree.

During the implementation of green marketing, several marketing performances leading to the failure of green marketing have considered by Peattie and Crane (2005, pp.360-363).

- 1) Deny and disbelieve the criticism from society
- 2) Take an opportunistic method by putting some green claim in existing products with the purpose of sales promotion
- 3) Costs saving are still the reason for marketer to take green marketing
- 4) Marketers don't know the wants of consumers when they develop green products



The companies simply comply with environmental legislation because it is an opportunity for them to promote their products with green certificates. In a word, only the companies have a sincere intention for long-term business development, the green marketing can be successful.

Gradually, consumers not only regard individual value but also social value. They become a large target group to green market. In the late 1990s, a similar term of green marketing environmental marketing emerged, these two terms can use interchangeably. (Hartono 2008, p.56.) Moreover, green marketing is considered as one of the main trends in the modern business (Gurařu & Ranchhod p.547). Also the environmental issues become more attentive by government, companies and individual. With the rapid economic development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, environment is concerned by everyone, especially by green consumers. Ottman et al. (2006, p. 26) think green marketing is making a 'comeback'. Depending on the gradually worsening environment, business and consumer should possess the consciousness of going green.

## 2.2 Definition of green marketing

The narrow idea of green marketing defined by people is one kind of promotion methods which advertises the products with environmental features at the beginning (Polonsky 1994, p. 1).

Academically, there are different definitions from various scholars. According to American Marketing Association, products are presumed to be environmentally safe in green marketing (Sandeem 2009, p. 99). From the view of the relationship among the economy, the society and the environment, Peattie (1992, p. 11) defines green marketing as a green and beneficial way which satisfies demands of the society and the customers and also minimizes the negative influences to environment. What's more, some concepts put emphasis on the whole process of products, like Pride and Ferrell, they define green marketing is carried out by an organization which do not danger to environment and consumers' health in the course of product design,

production, delivery, promotion and use (Mishra & Sharma 2010, p. 1). Above all the explanations of definition, green marketing is involved in the scope from product design to promotion. All in all, there are two tasks for marketers who want to implement green marketing: improve environment and satisfy customer's green needs (Ottman et al. 2006, p. 24).

In order to develop green marketing effectively, Ottman (2006) presents five simple rules for those companies who want to make use of this new chance to develop green marketing. Know your customer and confirm that your products are satisfied by your customers or not. Make your consumers feel that it is distinctive to use your products. Make your consumer trust your products and claims. Make your consumers believe the usability of products is still good. Afford premium for your products with a green price. (Ottman 2006.)

### 2.3 Conventional marketing vs. Green marketing

Green marketing is the continuation of conventional marketing. As a new marketing mode, green marketing is more complicated. For the green marketing, how to balance the relationship between business and environment is the main problem. But how to deal with 'magic triangle' — company, customer and competitor is the core of conventional marketing (Peattie 1992, p. 45), the differences between green marketing and conventional marketing can be seen from several aspects in Table 1.

Table 1: The comparison between conventional marketing and green marketing  
(Ottman, 1998, p. 48)

	Conventional marketing	Green marketing
Consumer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As individual concern about material goods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As human beings concern about safety and environment</li> </ul>
Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Throughout life cycle (Cradle-to-grave)</li> <li>● Mass marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recycle (Cradle-to-cradle)</li> <li>● Flexible</li> </ul>
Marketing and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sale orientation</li> <li>● End with benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Educational</li> <li>● Values</li> </ul>
Corporate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reactive</li> <li>● Independent</li> <li>● Competitive</li> <li>● Segmental</li> <li>● Short-term oriented</li> <li>● Profit-maximizing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pro-active</li> <li>● Interdependent</li> <li>● Cooperative</li> <li>● Holistic</li> <li>● Long-term oriented</li> <li>● Profit and ethics</li> </ul>

The requirements from the customer need to be satisfied by marketers, so different customers lead to different markets. Each product will go through a life cycle (cradle-to-grave), material is desired to be used in a green way so that the life can be continue (Ottman, 1998, p. 47). In addition, conventional marketing in the premise of benefits gives purchase orientation to their customers. However, green marketing is a way which educated customers and let themselves achieve value. Types of company also can result in diverse markets and customers. Green companies are those that are pro-active in nature because they know their companies' activities are depending on the nature and the human can't live without nature. (Ottman, 1998, p. 47.) They are aiming at a long-term orientation. On the contrary, conventional marketing is just looking for short-term orientations (Ottman, 1998, p. 47). How to deal with the relationship between profit and ethics will be a crucial problem for companies.

## 2.4 Green marketing mix

Conventional marketing brings marketing mix. And marketing mix is a method which company should consider before they present their products to consumers. Like conventional marketing, green marketing also has its own four Ps. Each company has their own marketing mix, and it is very significant for the companies which want to go green to understand how to build specific marketing mix.

### 2.4.1 Product

Green product, implied by its name, is a kind of environment friendly products. Peattie (1992, p. 103) points out from the consumers' view that green product should possess the features of safety in use and disposal, also have long longevity with less environmental impact. And green clothing is mainly introduced in this thesis.

Green clothing is also known as ecologic clothing made of raw material which is harmless to the environment and human body (Fang 2004, p.42). Specifically, green clothing should contain the three principles which are production ecology, user ecology, and disposal ecology. Production ecology means less pollution during production process, user ecology means less effect on the health and welfare of consumer when has been use and disposal ecology means dealing easily after the clothing in used. (Fang 2004, p.42.)

Green design is an important step in the whole process of making clothing. Take the green design in the children clothing for example, there are several aspects should be considered in the green design which are green material selection, green style design, green production, green package and green recycling design (Yan & Wu 2010, p.94).

Material decides the comfort of clothing which impacts the consumers' purchasing. Material not only includes the outside fabric and inside fabric but also includes sewing thread, button, zipper and padding (Yan & Wu 2010, p.95). Certainly, safety of

clothing is the most important thing considered by the designers. For example, if fabric includes excessive formaldehyde, it may cause the respiratory and skin disease. And the metal content of button is exceeded which is harmful to children's health. (Yan & Wu 2010, p.95.) For the style design, safety, comfort, functionality and aesthetic should be considered by designer. Children like grabbing and biting clothing so that the style of children clothing should be simple with less metallic decorations. Functionality is inevitable which can add more value to the clothing. (Yan & Wu 2010, p.95.) All the processes of production, sewing, splicing and hanging tag have effect on the quality of clothing. Furthermore, green package is another significant part of green clothing. Select tractable, recyclable and reusable as the material of package that can increase the competitiveness and green image, reducing environmental pollution after discarding. (Yan & Wu 2010, pp.95-96.) Green recycle design is a significant part for the clothing industry. Because clothing recycle can solve the problems of high costs of green clothing and wasting of resources (Yan & Wu 2010, p.95).

Green label is the sign of green product, and it is the most convenient way to recognize the green product. In China, the ecologic textile authentication GB/T 18885 from CQC (China quality authentication center) refers to the Oeko-tex standard which is the most authoritative over the world. This standard tests not only the product itself but also the environmental management of company. (Yu 2010.) And the tested textile products according to this standard can be divided into four classes: products for babies, products with direct contact to skin, products without direct contact to skin and application sort (CQC 2010). Companies should get through a series of strict procedures then they can get the label illustrated in figure1. For marketers, green label can help them build green image and improve the company's competitiveness to by promoting their goods. As to customers, it can help them to select the green products and ensure the safety and environmental protection of the products.



Figure 1: CQC Ecological Textile Product Certification Mark (Yu 2010)

#### 2.4.2 Price

Price is an important part of marketing mix which can influence customers' purchasing decision. On one hand, price plays a role to tell people how much value the product is (Peattie 1992, p. 240). It means most consumers are willing to pay more if they think green products have the extra value. Of course, green value can be added by improving the performance, function, design, material and appearance in a green way. On the other hand, price determines how much profit the product can create and who the competitors are. (Peattie 1992, p. 240.) To make an affordable price which reflects the special value is the key section for marketers.

As usual, the green product has higher price compared with the non-green product. But if consumers take the long-term working efficiency into consideration, green products might be not so expensive for them, as it can help them to save total expenses (He, Zou & Fin 2010, p. 624). Therefore, green product is not only designed for the customers of wealth but also for the price sensitive customers who can take long-term benefit into account. Nevertheless, what's the price of green product can be accepted by customers? According to figure 2, more customers were willing to pay a higher price for green products in the world especially in European countries, America

and Japan. As to China, more than 50% customers want to pay 5%-20% more for green products. (Manget, Roche & Münnich 2009, p.17.) In other words, Chinese consumers can accept green products with higher price. The major reasons are that Chinese regard that green product can present their virtues and be respected by others also can increase their social identity. (He, Zou & Fin 2010, p. 625). For marketer, setting right price is a complex task as well as a key point to succeed.

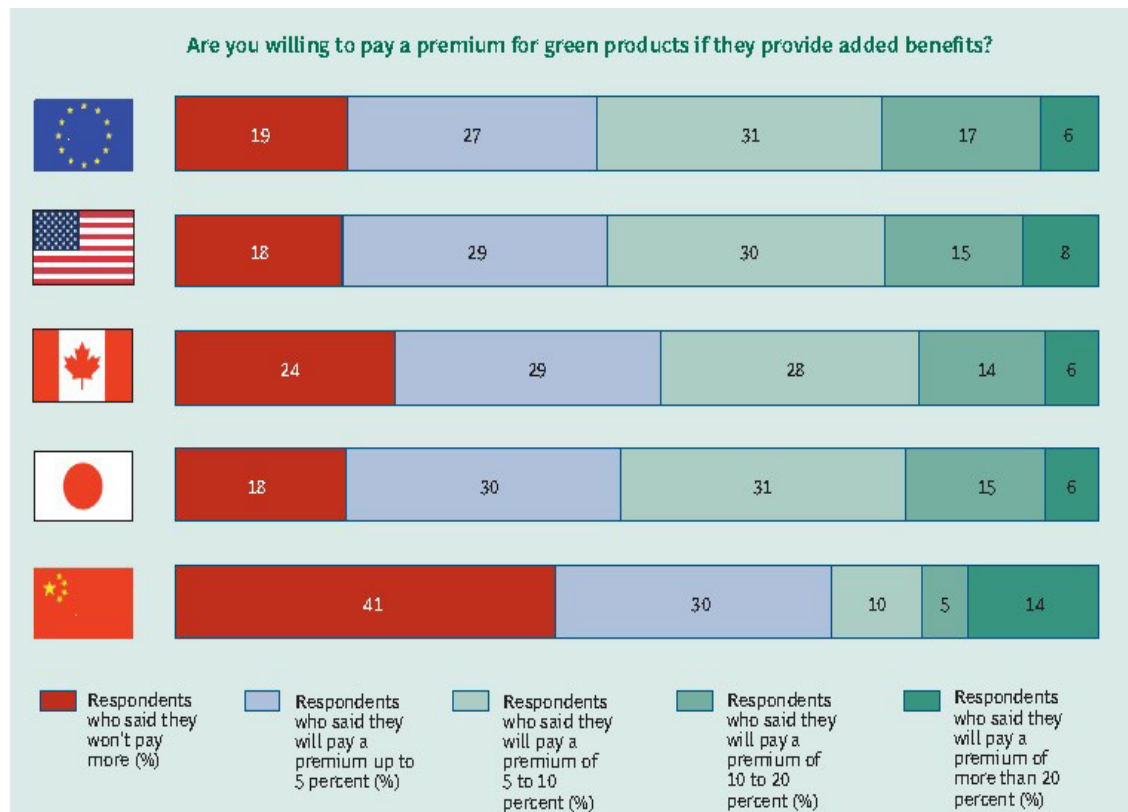


Figure 2: Attitude of green products' price in different counties (Manget, Roche & Münnich 2009, p.17)

### 2.4.3 Place

The place of transition from supplier to consumer is another issue to be considered. A majority of customers are willing to buy green products in some green products counters and specialty stores, because it is convenient for them to find green products (All-China Environment Federation 2009). Certainly, the place should be differentiated from competitors as it usually delivers the brand image of a company.

Furthermore, online shopping is a common way for consumers to buy products. It is also a channel which green marketer can present products for more people in different cities.

In order to make place greener, companies have to cut down the emissions of transportation or use fuel more efficient vehicles. Also they can simplify the supply chains, because more resource will be used if they use longer supply chains. (Peattie 1992, pp.185-186.) Sometimes, marketers may use special supply chains, for instance, selling green clothing in some health textile stores.

#### 2.4.4 Promotion

All products need an effective promotional method, especially for green products. Many customers think green products with attitudes of confusion, uncertainty, narrow understanding and cynicism (Peattie 1992, p. 190). Therefore, a helpful marketing promotion may have an impact on the potential customers.

Generally, marketers define the green promotional message of their products and put forward the green claims and commitments. During the promotion, marketers can put more emphasis on the functional utility of green product to attract those price conscious consumers, also can build the buyer image which desired by society in order to appeal more consumers who want to get respect from others because of purchasing behavior (He, Zou & Fin 2010, p. 625). What's more, the green certification and achievement gained by the companies should be presented in the green promotion channels, like advertizing, sales force, publicity and sales promotion (Peattie 1992, p.194). Green consumers accept the green certificate and green label easily. For the companies' perspective, green certification and green label can lead to the credibility of companies and products will be increased.



## 2.5 Green consumers

Green consumer is a group who facilitates the formation of green market rapidly. At the same time, the enterprises should know the importance of taking the responsibility for society, and consumers also want to understand who the green consumers are and the factors influencing their purchasing decisions and behavior. Green consumer is defined by Shrum et al. (1995, p. 72) in a simplified way that someone's buying behavior is affected by environmental and safety issues. Thus, it is vital for marketers to know more about their customers and understand your customer purchasing behavior.

Mostafa (2007, p. 221) regards green purchasing behavior as the consumption of products that are profitable to the environment or concern to ecological aspects. Briefly speaking, green purchasing behavior refers to buying or using products that have minimum influences on the environment. Also some terms can be used interchangeably with green purchase behavior, such as green buying behavior, pro-environmental purchase behavior and environmentally responsible purchase behavior. (Tan & Lau 2011, p. 560.) Actually, there are diverse influences on the green purchase behavior are demonstrated in figure 3, such as age, gender, education level, economic position and lifestyle.

The internal influence in green consumer purchasing behaviors is personal influence. Personal green purchasing behaviors are different because of the consumers' age, gender, education level, occupation, income, value and other personal features which can affect on the green purchasing behavior (Peattie 1992, p.116). Consumers are in the different life stages concern about different issues, e.g. young people care fashion and most educated people may concern more about the environment. As to the information factors, the more information related to green products consumers is accepted, the more green purchasing behavior is presented by consumers. People with different cultural background and social status have different product preferences. (Peattie 1992, p.117.)

For the external force, the peer group and the family which the consumers live with are the significant leverage. With respect to the basic reason for green purchasing, the environmental issue is the root of this green consumption. The problems with respect to environmental pollution arise around people. And becoming a green consumer is the remedy that they can get along better with nature. People want to have a better environment to live and improve a better environment for the next generations. (Peattie 1992, p.117.)

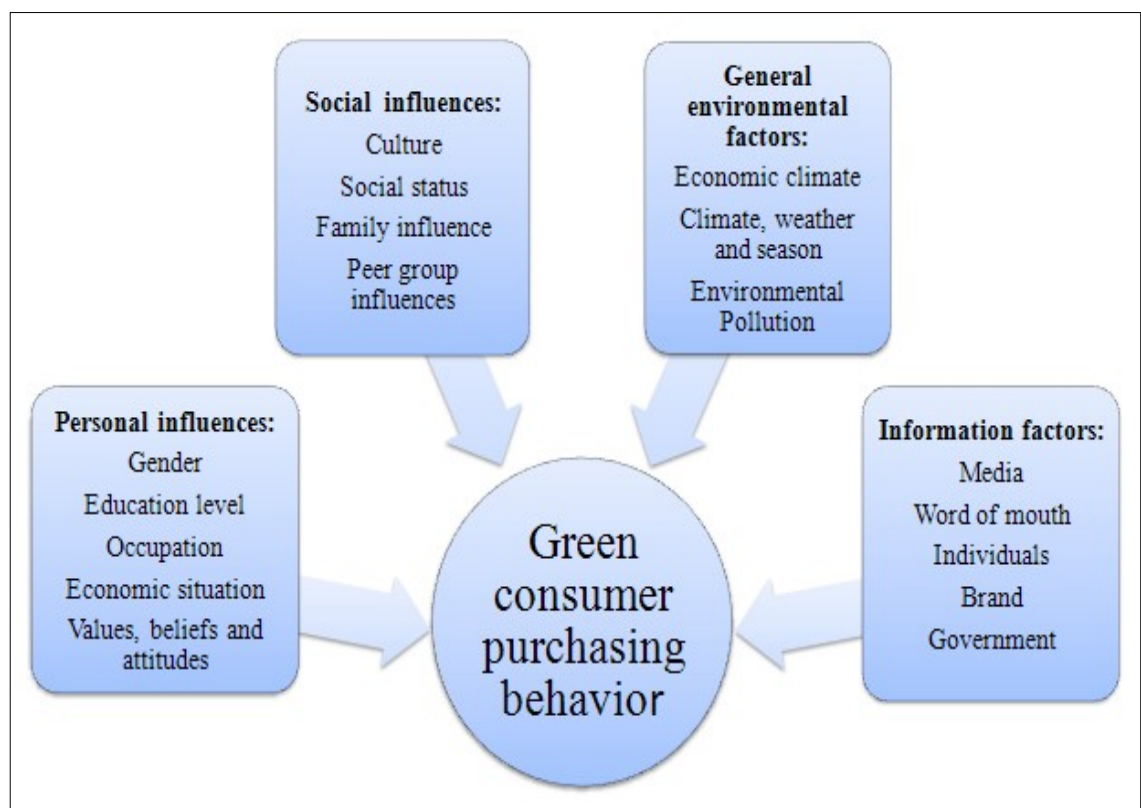


Figure 3: Factors affecting green consumer purchasing behavior (Peattie 1992, p.116)

### 3 GREEN IN CHINA

#### 3.1 Current situation of green market

China green market began with green food which was deeply rooted among consumers nowadays, and the green clothing is just a new concept in recent years. In the early market phase, green clothing was in an embarrassing state. At present,

green products become more and more popular. There are lots of industries have involved to green. According to the research from All-China Environment Federation in 2009, the major industries the green consumer concentrated are green food and green building material respectively. Because green food entered China market relatively earlier than other industries, which has been accepted by consumer for a long time, and building's security is always the most concerned topic among Chinese consumers. Although green clothing is an emerging market which is popular in recent years in China (All-China Environment Federation 2009), some people even still don't know the existence of green clothing. Even for some clothing companies, they don't want to develop the green clothing. Without doubt, green clothing was paid low attention in comparison with other products. As can be seen from figure 4, female consumers focus more on the green products than male consumers.

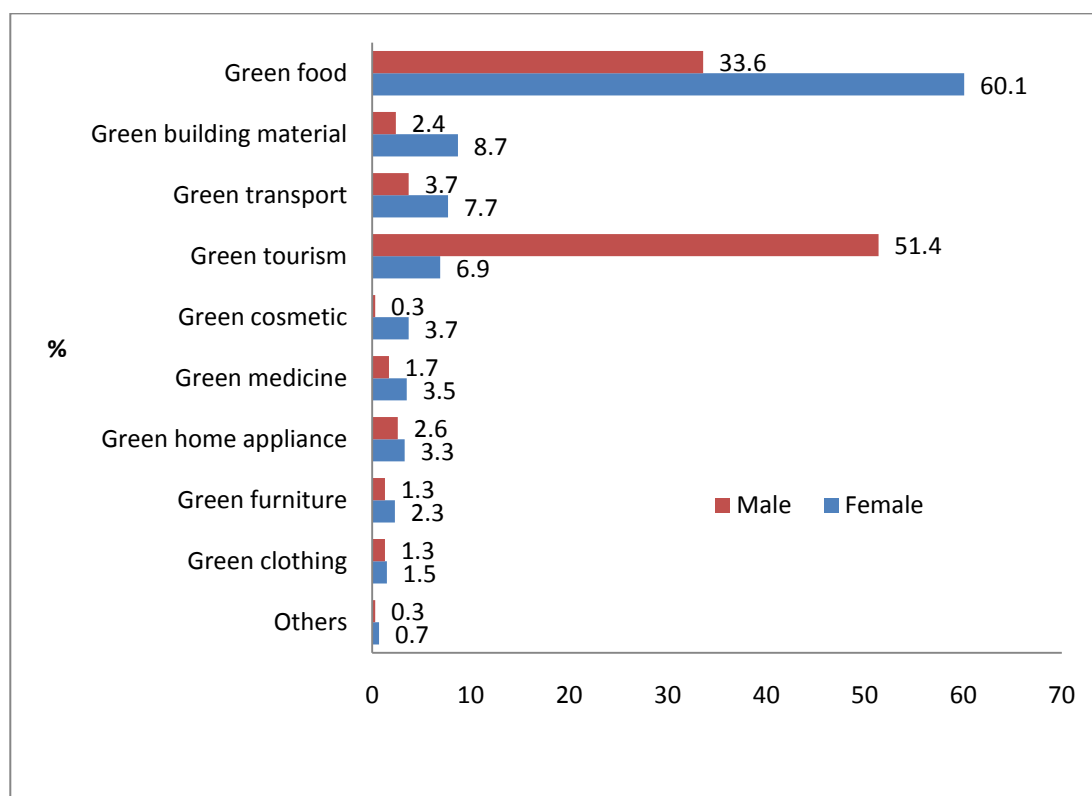


Figure 4: Major areas of green consumption (All-China Environment Federation 2009)

However, after China's accession to WTO, the emergence of the green trade barriers let many Chinese clothing enterprises get into trouble. Since then, green clothing become a tendency in Chinese clothing market. (Tang & Liu 2008, p. 69.) To develop green clothing not only breaks through the green trade barriers but also to improve the domestic green market. And the attention of green clothing is increasing especially in the children market. With the development of Chinese consuming ability, parents begin to stress the importance of safety in relevant to nurture their Children. Therefore, it's not strange to witness the popularity of green clothing, regardless of relative higher price.

Compared with developed countries, it has not been a long time since the beginning of the development of green clothing in China and many Chinese clothing companies implement marketing without green marketing awareness. Obviously, the product and technology between developed countries and China are incomparable. Particularly when China has joined the WTO, the import tariff has dropped. It is a big opportunity for foreign clothing companies to seize China's domestic market. (Fang 2004, p.43.) Nevertheless, most Chinese green consumers will choose the imported green clothing because of high quality, safe material, green authority label and better design. For the international market, Chinese companies can't enter into foreign market because they can't reach the green standard and get the green label. Equipment backward, poor in technique and poor design are all the reasons of failure. In contrast with general clothing, green clothing often has simple design and single color with low market share. Green clothing pursuits the idea green excessively which may fail to bring the sense of fashion to consumers. If the products don't have the consumer market, the companies can't keep a foothold. (Tang & Liu 2008, p. 69.)

### 3.2 Reasons of going green for Chinese clothing companies

#### 3.2.1 Social responsibility

Social responsibility is required by the company, which means companies manage their business with less negative influence on society and the environment. And companies concern about social and environmental problems from a beneficial business perspective. (Yperen 2006, p. 2.) In China, clothing industry is being regarded as one of the largest polluting sectors. It is necessary for clothing company to undertake more social responsibilities particularly for those companies which want to be green. In addition, there are lots of procedures from fabric to sales items, as well as many participants involved in the textile and clothing product chain. All these participants should take the social responsibility. Since clothing may be polluted in each section of chain if these participants don't work in a green way. The major participants in the textile and clothing supply chain are brand owners, raw materials suppliers, textile and clothing producers, financiers, retailers and customers. (Greenpeace 2011, p. 59.)

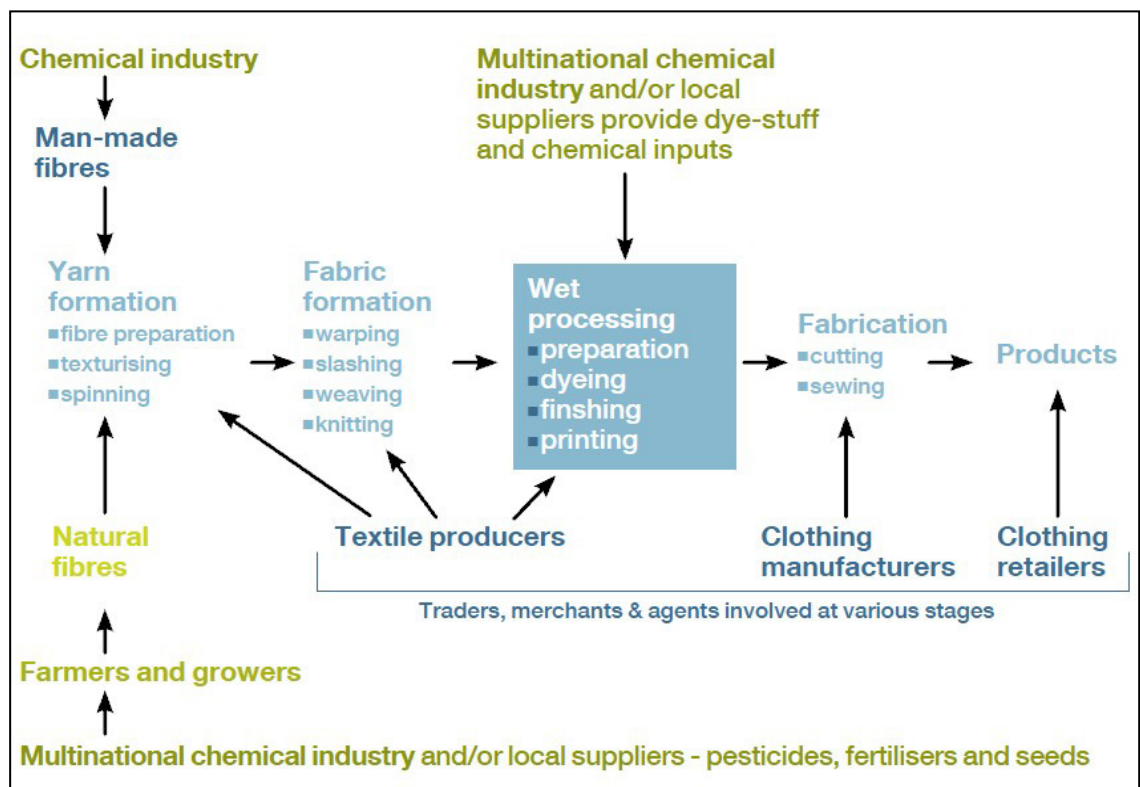


Figure 5: The businesses involved in the textile and clothing supply chain (Greenpeace 2011, p. 59)

Also the clothing process is presented in figure 5, it tells that many chemical input in the whole process may lead to large influences on the environment. Furthermore, as can be seen from table 2, there is a high consumption of water, energy and a large amount of wastewater discharging during the clothing processing. (BSR 2008, p. 2)

Table 2: Environmental impacts of clothing processing (BSR 2008, p. 2)

Chemicals	25% of chemicals produced worldwide are used for textiles
Water	Growing cotton: 8,000-40,000 litres /1 kg cotton Finishing of textiles: up to 700 litres of freshwater / 1 kg textile Wastewater in production: up to 600 litres / 1 kg textile
Energy	High energy consumption in production, transport, retail and use

Apparently, clothing industry bears a heavy burden to improve the environment. Currently, the water pollution in China is so serious with rapid development of the clothing and textile industry. Until the summer in 2011, 70% of rivers, lakes and reservoirs were affected by various types of pollutants, and most of them were discharged from clothing and textile industry (Greenpeace 2011, p.14). As the center of the Chinese textile industry, Shaoxing is faced with the water pollution problem which can be seen from figure 6 (Textile World Asia.com 2010). The water pollution problem also disturbs the residents, companies and government. After all, companies should afford the social responsibilities because they open the headstream of the pollution.



Figure 6: Water pollution in Shaoxing which is the center of the Chinese textile industry (Textile World Asia.com 2010)

### 3.2.2 Governmental pressure

Government is another major role to force the clothing companies to go green. Furthermore, the regulations established by government can control mechanisms to comply with the use of hazardous chemicals and their subsequent discharge into water (Greenpeace 2011, p.8). Thus, companies have to pay high price to improve the environment they damaged but also destroy the image of their companies. For instance the Clear Production Standard, which requires companies to cut down the input of toxic chemicals and make a list of the main hazardous substances for clean production auditing (Greenpeace 2011, p.29).

In addition, the government can do some publicity to try to encourage consumers to become more environmentally responsible (Polonsky 1994, p. 4). Gradually, green product is expected to gain more attention. With the increasing green consumers, companies have to develop the green market under the governmental pressure.

Otherwise, they will lose huge profits from the green part and pay a fine due to harms to environment.

### 3.2.3 Large profit

Some companies think going green is uneconomic because of high capital investing. In fact, the company can be more beneficial through going green. As to the profit of companies, it can help companies to: cut down expenses of input materials and energy; reduce handling expenses; enlarge production revenues; produce the better quality of products; increase reputation and brand value; enhance efficiency and productivity; increase total earnings; increase sales volume and customer loyalty; attract investors and business partners. For the benefits to the environment, going green can remove toxic materials and reduce the toxic emissions and wastewater outputs. (Yperen 2006, p.5.)

Going green also bring benefits for workers in the company: better working conditions and more workers motivation; decreased overtime and reworking; increased productivity and salaries; enhanced company image; better ability to attract and keep quality employees. In addition, green company can comply with the green standard relatively simple because they do a lot about green. That is certification of their efforts. (Yperen 2006, p.6.) At last, the biggest beneficiaries are the companies which are going green.

## 3.3 The survey of Chinese green clothing consumers

### 3.3.1 Survey introduction

China is the world's largest producer and exporter of textile and garment. Meanwhile, it gradually converts from a big clothing exporter to a clothing consumption power. With the improvement of living standards, more and more people look forward to better living environment. According to national bureau of statistics of China, urban



households on average spent 1444.3 Yuan on clothing and accounting for 10.7% of their total annual expenditure in 2010 (Li & Fung 2011, p. 5). As to green clothing consumption, how many percents does it occupy?

According to the survey which called consumption psychology and behaviors of green clothing consumers is mainly conducted by Zu et al (2007, pp.144-145,188), and this survey is a project of Hebei science and technology bureau. The main method adopted by this survey is questionnaire which investigates green clothing consumption awareness, consumption psychology and consumption behavior in China. The purpose of choosing this survey is to know psychological needs and features of green clothing consumer and what kind of factors can influence Chinese consumer green purchasing behavior when they decide to buy green clothes. Meanwhile, green clothing company can carry out effective measures.

There were 450 respondents from 12 cities who answered this questionnaire in this investigation and 412 questionnaires are collected. Among all these respondents, the number of male is 140 and the female take up more than 2/3 of the total respondents. The age of respondents is between 18 to 30. Figure 7 shows that this survey took place in 12 Chinese large cities (Shanghai, Beijing, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, Changsha, Wuhan, Shijiazhuang, Xian, Chengdu, Changchun, Kunming and Taiyuan) in 2007. All the information collected in the survey analyzes consumption psychology and behaviors of green clothing consumers which is sourced from Hebei journal of industrial science and technology.



Figure 7: Twelve cities in this survey (Zu et al 2007, p.144)

The specific contents of the questionnaire includes: 1) Green clothing consumption consciousness, like whether to know green clothing or not. 2) Green clothing consumption psychology, such as destination of green clothing choice and dress attitude. 3) Green clothing purchasing behaviors includes the price and place of green clothing preference, green clothing information source and someone else's opinion when they buy green clothing. 4) Personal information: gender, age, education level and salary. (Zu et al 2007, p.144.)

### 3.3.2 Survey analysis

Green clothing consumption consciousness is the first step to green clothing consumption. As you can see from figure 8, more respondents know the green clothing. According to the report, the south and north respondents have a big gap in the cognizance of green clothing which south respondents are higher than north respondents. From the education level perspective, educated respondents know green

clothing more than the respondents in low education level. (Zu et al 2007, p.145.) So the green clothing consumers will become a group that can't be ignored in Chinese clothing market

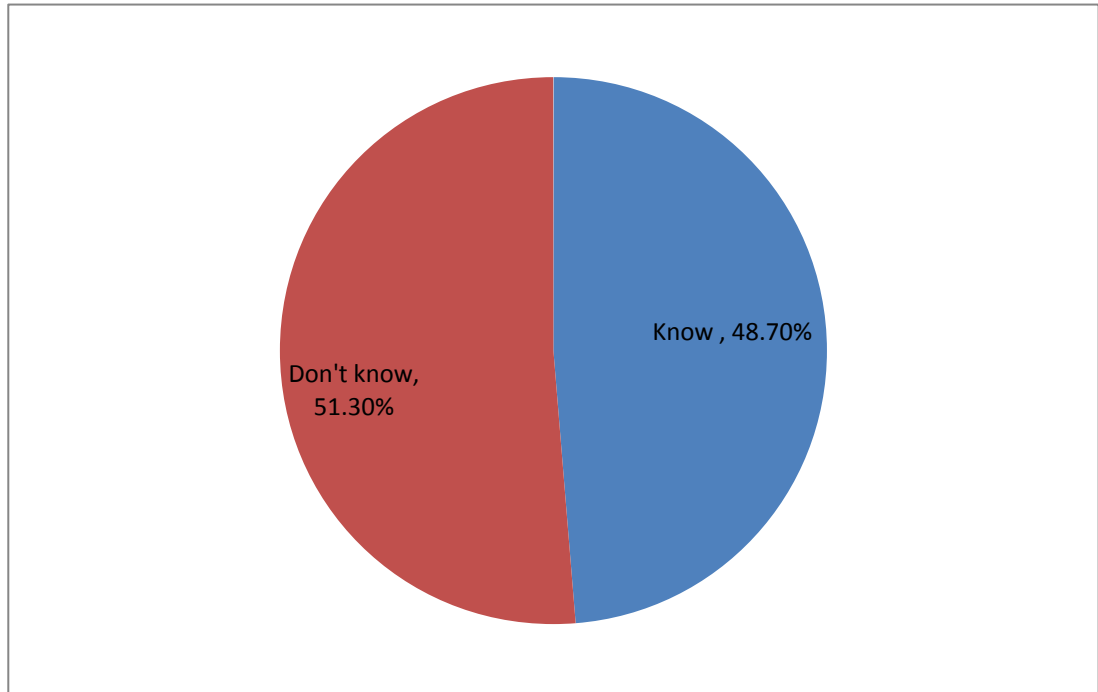


Figure 8: Whether to know green clothing (Zu et al 2007, p.145)

Apparently, different people have different purposes of green clothing consumption. As can be seen from figure 9, majority of the respondents (68.9%) think it is healthy to wear green clothing. Certainly, health is one of the most important reasons for green consumers to buy the green clothing. But for the environmental protection, a small number of respondents (27.7%) show their social responsibilities. Strangely, some people (24.4%) regard the green clothing as the symbol of showing personality. And the rest of the respondents are chasing the fashion or without any purpose to buy green clothing. (Zu et al 2007, p.145.) For the most respondents, green clothing is not fashion for them but health to wear. At present, green clothing is far away from fashion. Thus putting more attention into design is a crucial direction for company which wants to go green. All in all, the result indicates that Chinese green clothing consumption consciousness is still at the starting stage, and customers care more about themselves instead of the environment.

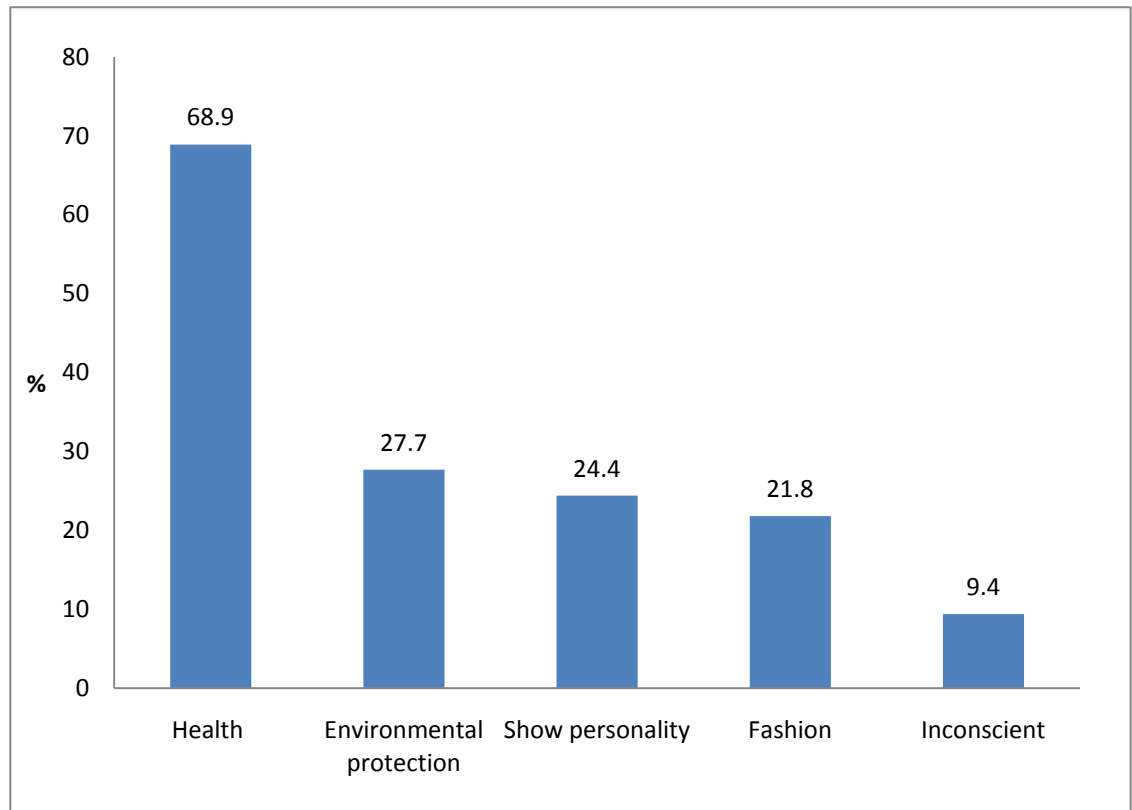


Figure 9: Purposes of green clothing choice (Zu et al 2007, p.145)

When people decide to buy green clothing, there must be some factors which influence them. No matter whether it is green clothing or not, the first factor considered by people is still the quality of clothes, and price is the second factors. It is evident from figure 10, 56.2% of respondents are willing to pay 100-300 Yuan more to buy green clothing (Zu et al 2007, p.145). That is to say, green clothing market has large profit. Generally speaking, brand is the combination of credibility and quality. Although there are a few famous green clothing brands in China, but more than half of the respondents still believe in the power of brand.

Furthermore, green clothing is the emerging product, where to sell and how to promote them are significant for marketers. Regular stores and good promotions are required by some respondents. Based on the report, 59.2% of respondents prefer to buy green clothing in the specialty store, and then followed by supermarket and shopping mall. As to the green clothing counter, 81.5% of respondents think it is necessary to set up, because it is easier for customer to buy the green clothing. (Zu et

al 2007, p.188.) Moreover, the primary channels to know the green clothing are newspaper, magazine, television advertisement and poster in the mall. However, 23.5% of the respondents take others' opinions into consideration. (Zu et al 2007, p.145.) To Sum up, green clothing consumers have the same influencing factors as the general consumers, but some factors are considered specifically by green consumers.

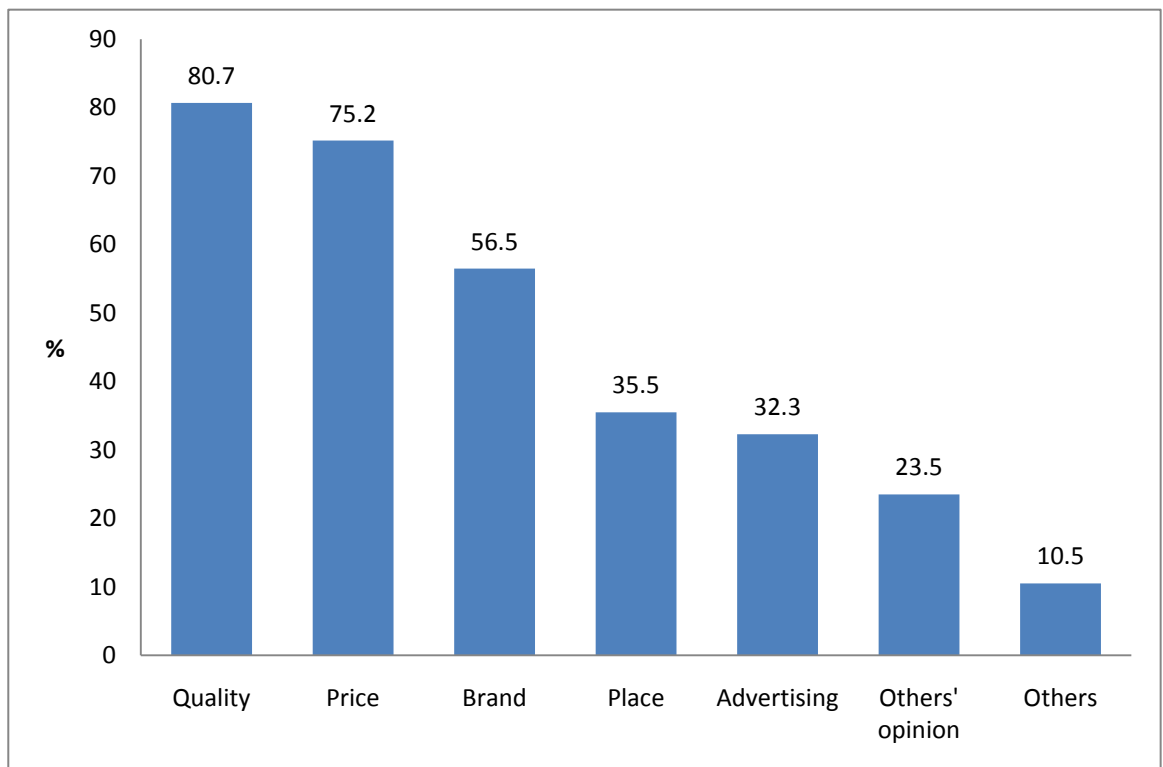


Figure 10: The influence factors of green clothing consumption (Zu et al 2007, p.145)

Green clothing is made of special material like organic cotton, hemp and bamboo pulp fiber. For the all respondents, different methods are adopted. And the main methods are showed from figure 11 to distinguish the green clothing are to analyze the ingredient (47.1%) and green label (41.2%). Watching the color (31.5%) and touching the clothes (30.5%) are also the ways for respondents to recognize the green clothing (Zu et al 2007, p.145). Among these methods, some of them are weird and can't be used to judge quality of green clothing correctly. Providing more knowledge related to green clothing to consumers and teaching them what is the right way to recognize green clothing are the two tasks for the marketers.

Obviously, green marketers have to pay attention to raw material as well as gain the green label. With acquiring of some authoritative green label, companies can be trusted by consumers also build a green image in the domestic and international market.

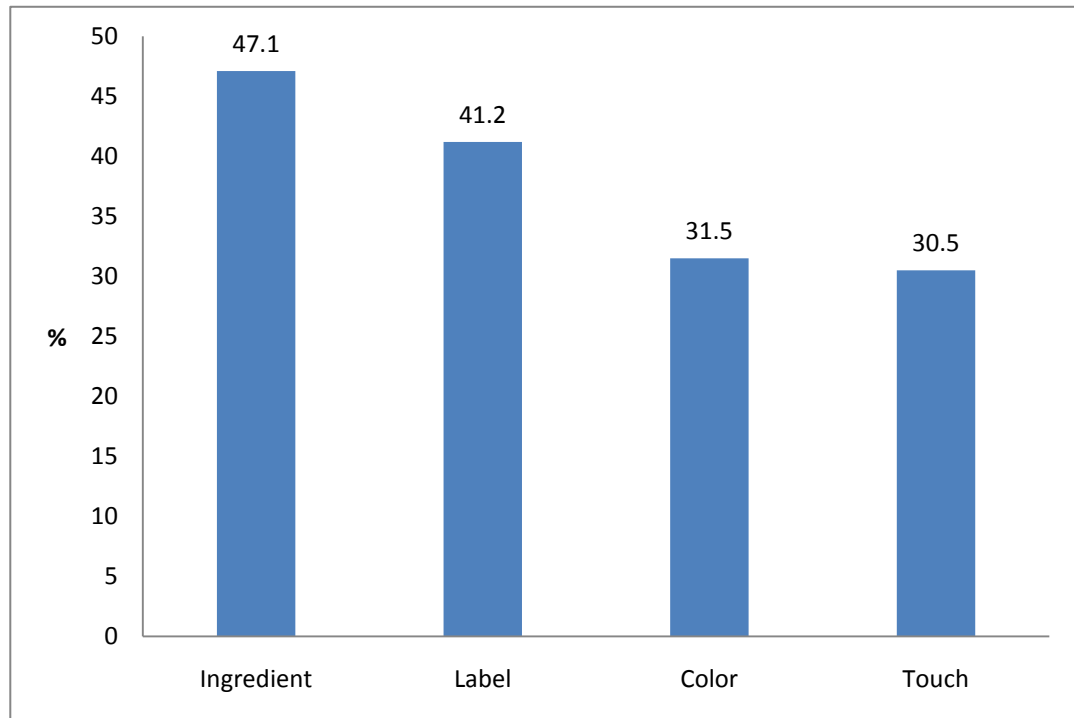


Figure 11: How to recognize the green clothing (Zu et al 2007, p.188)

### 3.3.3 Summary of findings in survey

From this survey, the green clothing consumption consciousness, psychology and behavior are still in the primary phase. For the objective factors, living condition, family influence and region lead to green clothing consumption are divided into different level. For the personal factors, gender, age, education level and salary influence the green clothing purchasing behavior deeply. As the core of consumption, quality, price, service, place, advertising, material and label of product are also the main influencing factors of green clothing purchasing behavior. From the analysis of the research results, it can be found out that:

- 1) Green clothing cognizance: South consumers know more about green clothing than north consumers, and better educated consumers have higher cognizance of green clothing. Companies should make sure the right target group.
- 2) Reasons of buying green clothing: Health is the main reason for consumers to buy green clothing and low level of social responsibility is showed among respondents. Companies must know your consumer more and satisfy them.
- 3) Influence factors of green clothing consumption: Quality and price have the deepest effects on the green clothing purchasing behaviors. Companies must make sure the quality of clothes, make a right price and offer good service.
- 4) Methods of recognize green clothing: Analyzing the ingredient and green label are the two major methods to distinguish the green clothing. Raw material and green label are two hard conditions for produce green clothing. Companies have to get green label and build a green image of company.

#### 4. CASE STUDY: ZHEJIANG RYB CLOTHING LIMITED COMPANY

##### 4.1 Company overview of Zhejiang RYB clothing Co., Ltd

RYB children's clothing company was founded in Wenzhou in 2000. The name RYB is consisted of the initial of Red, Yellow and Blue which means colorful childhood. Up to now, there are 500 specialty stores in China. Especially in Wenzhou, most of the parents know this brand and like this brand. Because RYB is a local brand and acquires lots of awards such as National Quality Exempt Product and China Top Brand. (Rybkids.com.) The most important certification gained by RYB is the ecological textile certification from CQC in 2008 (China quality authentication center) which means their products have no harm to the environment and children's health (Wenzhou Daily 2008). In 2007, RYB became the licensed manufacturers for Beijing Olympics Games. Furthermore, RYB sets a strict management system from design to production in order to protect children's health and environment. RYB also established the first children's clothing laboratory to research and develop the various green children's clothing (Wenzhou Daily 2007).



Figure 12: RYB ecological textile certification (texnet.com 2008)

#### 4.2 Influences on green purchasing behavior from 4Ps perspective


Four consumers of RYB have been interviewed for the purpose of gaining information toward what the main factors influence them to buy RYB children's clothing from the perspectives of product, price, place and promotion. Also one retailer has been interviewed in order to know customers purchasing preference from different study points. In addition, the general information of four consumers and one retailer of RYB are listed in the Table 3 and Table 4 respectively.



Table 3: Background information of four consumers of RYB

Consumer	Profession	Situation of kids
Mrs. Li	Housewife	One 11-year-old son
Mrs. Liu	Businesswoman	One 9-year-old daughter
Mrs. Wang	Teacher	One 6-year-old son
Mrs. Wu	White collar	One 3-year-old daughter

Table 4: General information of one retailer of RYB (Pan 2012)

Retailer	Mrs. Pan
Location	Urban Wenzhou
Area	120 m <sup>2</sup>
Date of becoming franchisee of RYB	06/2007
Logo of RYB	 <p>The logo for RYB Kids features the letters 'r', 'y', and 'b' in a stylized, rounded font. The 'r' is red, the 'y' is yellow, and the 'b' is blue. Below the letters, the word 'KIDS' is written in white on a red rectangular background. Underneath the logo, the Chinese characters '红', '黄', and '蓝' (red, yellow, blue) are displayed in black.</p>

*The main reasons of choosing RYB children's clothing*

The four interviewees have their own reasons for choosing RYB children's clothing such as health and safety, brand, price, quality and environmental protection. Four interviewees all consider health and safety as the most important reason for them to choosing RYB children's clothing. Nowadays, most parents regard children's health and safety as priority consideration.

Mrs. Li (2012) who is a housewife thinks price and safety are two main factors which contribute to her selection of RYB clothing. The price is comparatively acceptable. But for Mrs. Liu (2012) who is a businesswoman, she regards brand as insurance of health, safe and good quality. She tells me that brand means quality assurance and let her not worry about the safe problem of clothing. What's more, Mrs. Wang (2012) who is a primary school teacher, she concerns about not only the health and safety of clothing, but also the environmental protection of clothing. She says that it is obliged to teach her kid and students to love our environment from dressing because environmental-friendship is regarded as the virtue in China. So she concerns about the attribution of clothing which brings health to environment and children. After she knows that RYB gained the ecological textile certification, she becomes a loyal customer of RYB. In addition, price is the main reason for salariat like Mrs. Wu (2012) who is a white collar, she hears RYB from her friend and the TV commercials. So she believes that RYB is a famous brand, also the price is affordable for middle class.

*The main factors influencing purchasing behavior*

The retailer Mrs. Pan (2012) has five years experiences in selling RYB children's clothing with a large number of loyal customers. She describes that most of customers consider the safety and health of children's clothing rather than price because of the substantial improvement of people's living standard. Moreover, their products get the ecological textile certification which means high quality and environmental protection. Some customers think their brand popularity is important, because brand means high

quality, good design and good reputation. They believe that one famous brand should go through many tests. Some white collars consider the price as the first element, because they want buy green clothing for their children with high cost performance. Few customers believe that buying green clothing can make an effort on improving the environment.

#### 4.2.1 Product

##### *The design of RYB children's clothing*

All interviewees think the design of RYB children's clothing is lovely and comfortable. The feedback from the son of Mrs. Li (2012) is that the cartoon characters on the clothing are popular among children nowadays. That is to say, RYB pays close attention to the children's world. Mrs. Liu (2012) is not worried about the printing and dyeing of those cartoons because of the good reputation. However, Mrs. Liu (2012) thinks that the design of RYB is similar to some larger foreign brands and it makes her daughter differ with the children who wear the clothing from other local brands. As to the baby series, Mrs. Wu (2012) describes that the design of RYB is simple on purpose of reducing the harmful to the baby, e.g. button free design, short tape with clothing and the color based on the light color.

Mrs. Pan (2012), the retailer, takes the most popular design in her store as an example to explain what kind of design is good for children. As can be seen from figure 13, this clothing is the best seller in this winter which made of polyester fiber and cotton. These two kinds of material looks very normal but it can be disposed in the green way and is checked carefully before used to make clothing. The design is very simple but it accords with children safety design. Children's clothing can't be designed with many decorations because children like grabbing and biting clothing. For the baby, dark color may influence the optic nerve so choose the light color for baby clothing is more suitable.



Figure 13: The most popular clothing of RYB in Mrs. Pan's store (Pan 2012)

#### *The fabric preference of children's clothing*

After all, they lack of knowledge related to fabric. But they still know several kinds of fabrics. Three of interviewees mention that cotton is their favorite fabric which is soft, comfortable and natural. Mrs. Li (2012) also mentions the organic cotton which has zero pollution to the environment. But Mrs. Wang is fond of wool because of warmth.

As to the RYB children's clothing, Mrs. Pan (2012) is sure that their products are green enough because their company has strict production lines and management, and it also has lots of inspections of materials and final products. In the winter, the main material of clothing is the polyester fiber which is kind of synthetic fiber and it can remove the solar radiation and it is suitable for making coat. And polyester is kind of regenerated fiber that can be disposed after clothing discarding. But the best green material is the cotton and hemp which are the natural fabric. Mrs. Pan (2012) says that cotton is the fabric which is being used frequently in their clothing.

#### *The package of RYB children's clothing*

Package is also the major part of green clothing. In fact, all the interviewees are fond of the functional package of RYB. It is evident from figure 15, the package of RYB clothing is made of non-woven fabric which is kind of recycled and degradable material. On the other side, this bag is so light that can be collected easily. Furthermore, they regard this package as a shopping bag as well. Mrs. Liu (2012) says that she can gain the contact information from the bag.

The same responses of the package from Mrs. Pan (2012), most of customers like this package than the former one. It can be used in different occasions such as shopping in the super market. Apparently, it is more stable than the paper bag.



Figure 14: Package of RYB children's clothing (Pan 2012)

*The attention of green label of RYB children's clothing*

Two of interviewees mention that green label is not essential for them. Mrs. Li (2012) says she doesn't know green label even the salesperson tells her. But she thinks green label can add more good credit for RYB. And Mrs. Liu (2012) still believes RYB's clothing even don't need green label because RYB has enough popularity. On the

contrary, for Mrs. Wang (2012), green label is the major method for her to distinguish whether it is green clothing or not. She trusts the organization which awards the certification to RYB. Mrs. Wu (2012) also regards green label is significant because only RYB reaches the green clothing standard.

Among the customers of RYB, a small number of customers ask the question related to the green label. Mrs. Pan (2012) thinks it has fewer opportunities for them to know this knowledge. But they always ask about the ecological textile certification which she puts it in the middle of the store. That means they concern about this kind of certification, which brings them trust about the products.

#### *The satisfaction of quality of RYB children's clothing*

Quality is decided by their material. Four interviewees all agree that the quality of RYB clothing is quite good. Mrs. Li (2012) states that her son grows up so quickly that the clothing can't wear for long time but the quality of clothing is still good. For Mrs. Liu (2012), the brand is still in the first place, she always says brand means quality guarantee. Moreover, Mrs. Wang (2012) puts forward idea which suggests company can design clothing by considering the behaviors of children to extend longevity of clothing. Now, the quality is acceptable for her. The quality is the reason for Mrs. Wu (2012) to choose RYB. She also tells RYB children's clothing is easy to wash and showing no sign of fading in use.

#### *The benefits toward the purchase of green clothing*

All interviewees agree that the biggest benefit in buying the green clothing is unnecessary to worry about the safety of clothing. Also it is easy to maintain and wash. Mrs. Li (2012) never met any problems related to clothing fading. Although the price is higher than any other normal brands but good quality makes the life of clothing become longer. In other word, it seems like saving money through reducing the speed of changing clothing. There is another benefit to Mrs. Wang (2012) which is

making contribution for the environment and the local brand development in her hometown.

#### 4.2.2 Price

##### *The acceptability of price of RYB children's clothing*

Three interviewees take the price into the consideration and they also think price is acceptable for them to buy RYB children's clothing. For Mrs. Liu (2012), she doesn't concern about the price. She thinks it is worth buying because of good brand, high quality and good design. The price of RYB children's clothing is not expensive for Mrs. Wang (2012) either, but she likes shopping on the internet. She figures out that it is much cheaper on the internet, and it has different styles of RYB. Actually, she has several shopping experiences on the internet and she finds the clothing has good quality as well as. Economically speaking, it is a good idea to save money because children grow up very quickly. A number of parents are afraid of counterfeit goods on the internet like Mrs. Wu (2012) who wants to go outside and check the product in person at the specialty store. Although the product on internet is quite cheap, she still can't buy the baby's clothing there. And she can accept the price of RYB children's clothing.

From the perspective of Mrs. Pan (2012), she mentions that most of customers can accept the price. And the price is not so high that has big gap compared to other brands. On the internet, our products are cheaper than in the specialty store. The reason is some styles of clothing are not the latest one. The website can save the cost and we should make the profit more reasonably. On the other hand, a number of customers don't know the green clothing that they can't accept the price of RYB.

#### 4.2.3 Place

##### *The shopping place preference of RYB children's clothing*

Specialty store is the main channel presented by RYB and it is the favorite shopping place for all the interviewees as well. All the interviewees state that they can check the clothing in person and their children can try it on. They only trust the clothing in the specialty store or counter in malls except Mrs. Wang (2012) who can also accept shopping online. She also mentions if she chooses the product carefully, it is the same products in the specialty store but some products are not the new style. At the same time, she can save time and money.

Actually, there are three ways which are specialty store, online flagship store and the counter on the mall you can buy the clothing from RYB. Mrs. Pan (2012) says that most of customers like to go specialty store to buy clothing for their children clothing. Some young parents like shopping online which is quite an economic way.



Figure 15: Mrs. Pan's RYB specialty store in Wenzhou (Pan 2012)

#### 4.2.4 Promotion

##### *Green information publicity of RYB children's clothing*

Put the ecological textile certification in the store is an effective way to promote the



green clothing. RYB requires every specialty store to put this certification in the most obvious position. Four interviews figure out that they can find the ecological textile certification easily. Also they get the green information of clothing not only from salesperson but also from the brochure. Mrs. Liu (2012), she tells that there is a special way of RYB to spread the green information. She and her child were invited by BYB to join one activity which named “Green with me”. The purpose of that activity is to educate children and parents become environmentally friendly. Mrs. Liu (2012) describes that there are a lot of competitions such as clothing design with environmental protection material, garbage classification and composition competition which are related to environmental protection. What’s more, a set of posters are to tell how RYB produce the green clothing in that activity. This is a special and meaningful pattern to promote green information. In addition, Mrs. Wu (2012) says that she found that RYB is a sponsor of green welfare advertisement and some children’s programs.



Figure 16: Green activity of RYB in 2010 (Pan 2012)

In fact, RYB holds the activity like figure 16 for VIPs in the world environment day (5<sup>th</sup> June) each year. To invite the children and their parents to take part in it is not only for green information publicity but also for maintaining the customer

relationships and building the green image of RYB. Mrs. Pan (2012) is fond of this kind of activity where she can contact her customer closely. Meanwhile, she can promote some new styles to her customers.

#### 4.3 Green strategy of RYB children's clothing

RYB has its own green strategy to implement thus they gain the ecological textile certification. Mrs. Pan (2012) is the franchisee of RYB who has opportunity to visit the factory of RYB for several times a year. She tells that their production line is very distinct and the environment of the workplace is very clean and tidy. The operator of RYB told her that all the materials should pass many routine tests before production and some special material should be sampled and sent to the clothing detection court. As to the disposal of waste, RYB has a set of machines to deal with the garbage from production. About the final clothing, the staffs check the clothing for each other, this is the first examination. Then there are several examinations in some special departments. Furthermore, RYB built the first children's clothing laboratory in 2005 in Wenzhou in order to develop the green product actively and put the consciousness of environmental protection into each step. Also the laboratory of RYB has various routine testing equipments which are related to ecological textiles.

### 5. CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Main results of the study

The green market expands rapidly in China due to the increasing number of green consumers particularly in the children market. Parents pay attention to the safety and health of children. So the marketers have to green the children market no matter in which industry. From the findings of the survey of consumption psychology and behaviors of green clothing consumers, almost half of respondents know the green clothing. That is to say, the concept of green clothing is deeply rooted among the people. For the green clothing market, children's clothing market is focused on by the

most marketers in China. Therefore, to analyze the green consumers purchasing behavior in the children's clothing market is the main objective in my thesis. In order to analyze the research objective completely, four interviewees with different backgrounds, including one retailer, are interviewed in this thesis.

From the interviews, the findings of the study are presented in the following: The safety of clothing is the most important factor considered by consumers rather than price, although the four interviewees have different evidences which are the factor to influence the purchasing behaviors to judge the safety of clothing. For example, these interviewees usually depend on high price, famous brand, green label, green material, green design and advertisement to judge the safety of clothing. And the green clothing stands for safety in their mind except who is better-educated. They think it is a way that they can make a contribution to the environment. In addition, functional package can add more value to the clothing; High price can be accepted by green consumers. All interviewees think it is worth buying green products which have long-term working efficiency. Equivalently, it saves total cost; Specialty store is the most credible place for consumers to buy green clothing. The location, layout and decoration of store may influence the purchasing behaviors as well; Innovated promotion may have a big effect on consumer purchasing behaviors and it also can attract more consumers to remember the brand. Consumers may build an image of company because of one public service advertising or one special green activity hold by the company.

From the personal background perspective, the purchasing behaviors of consumers with different occupations, education levels, economic situations, values and social statuses probably are impacted by diverse factors. They have different purposes to buy the product except the reason of safety. For example, better-educated consumers may consider the problem of environment, wealthy consumers probably concern about the uniqueness of clothing and respect from others, housewives care more about the usability of clothing and the salaried consumers focus on the cost performance of clothing.

From the perspective of company, larger profits, social responsibility and governmental pressure are the primary reasons for them to go green. Specifically, in the meantime of establishing green image and obeying the governmental requirements, the company can gain large benefits in the long-term as well. As it is a new market, there are few competitors in Chinese green clothing market but some foreign companies. Anyway, it still has large profit for companies who develop green products.

RYP achieved the success due to the implementation of green strategy from production to promotion. Moreover, they established a close interactive relationship with their consumers to understand the demand from their consumers. However, here are several suggestions to RYP from the interviewees: 1. While designing the clothing takes the behavior of children into consideration to improve the quality of clothing. 2. Put more products to the online flagship stores.

## 5.2 Suggestions for further study

Green which is concerned by everyone involves diverse markets. The suggestions are given for people who want to study the similar topics in future. Three suggestions are provided.

First of all, the person can conduct the research in other industries or other markets of clothing to compare factors which influence consumer behavior in different green markets. Secondly, people also can conduct the research in most concerned markets to study what kind of reasons they care attentively in China. At the last, compare to the difference attitudes of Chinese consumers, treating goods made in China and imported goods in green market will be a popular topic in the future because of the frequent trading between China and developed countries. This research may help marketers to understand green consumers better and improve their products constantly.

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Appendix 1 Interview questions for the retailer of RYB Children's Clothing Limited Company

1. 你的顾客在购买童装时主要考虑哪些因素？

(What are the main factors may influence green purchasing behavior in your store?)

2. 你店里的哪种款式最受欢迎？

(What is the most popular style (design) of clothing in your store?)

3. 哪种服装面料是你的顾客最喜欢的？

(What kind of fabric of cloth is the favorite by your customers?)

4. 你的顾客对服装的包装是否喜欢？

(Do the customers like the package of clothing in your store?)

5. 你的顾客在购买童装时会问有相关于绿色标签的问题吗？

(Have your consumer ever asked questions related to green label?)

6. 你知道你们公司有实行哪种绿色战略吗（像管理，设计和生产方面）？

(Do you know what kind of green strategy (like management, design and produce) of your company implement in your company?)

7. 你的顾客能接受绿色服装价格偏高吗？

(Can your customer accept the higher price of green clothing?)

8. 你们公司举行过任何关于宣传绿色信息的活动吗？

(Is there any activity in connection with the spread of green awareness organized by your company?)

9. 在你进行绿色服装宣传时，有遇到什么挑战吗？

(What kind of challenge did you meet during the promotion of green clothing?)

10. 你们公司有那些销售渠道？

(How many channels do you have to sell your products?)

Appendix 2 Interview questions for four consumers of RYB Children's Clothing Limited Company

1. 让你选择红黄蓝童装的原因是什么?  
(What makes you choose RYB clothing for your children?)
2. 你觉得你之前买过的红黄蓝童装的设计怎么样?  
(How about the design of RYB clothing you bought before?)
3. 你比较喜欢哪种服装面料?  
(What kind of fabric do you prefer?)
4. 你觉得你之前买过的红黄蓝童装的包装怎么样?  
(How about the package of RYB clothing which you have bought before?)
5. 在你购买童装时, 你在乎绿色服装标签吗?  
(Do you concern green labels RYB have gained in your buying process?)
6. 对你之前买过的红黄蓝童装的质量满意吗?  
(Are you satisfied with the quality of RYB clothing you bought before?)
7. 你觉得红黄蓝童装的价格怎么样?  
(How about the price of RYB clothing?)
8. 在你购买红黄蓝童装时有获得一些关于服装的绿色信息吗?  
(Have you acquired some green information related RYB clothing in the store?)
9. 你一般都在哪里购买红黄蓝童装?  
(Where do you buy the RYB clothing usually?)

10. 在你购买绿色童装之后有得到什么好处吗?

(What are the benefits toward the purchase of green clothing for your children?)