

# **Green Consumer Behavior**

Finnish consumers' view on sustainability



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The aim for the thesis was to study how well Finnish consumers understand the concept of sustainability and how aware they are of their sustainable buying habits.

The theoretical framework of the thesis contains two main topics: sustainability and consumer behavior. Furthermore, the theoretical frameworks tackles definitions such as ecological, social, and economic sustainability, the problems and challenges sustainability is facing, and the on-going trend of companies pushing towards sustainable actions. Consumer behavior was studied further by analyzing the consumer behavior decision process, and the difference between conventional consumer and green consumer as well as definition of sustainable products and services.

The research was conducted as a qualitative and quantitative study, and all data was collected from Finnish consumers through a questionnaire. The answers were organized in pie charts and column diagrams that showed the percentage distribution. The data was analyzed by comparing the results with the theoretical framework of the thesis. Moreover, the aim of the study was to ensure the uniformity of the responses to the theoretical base.

The study found that Finnish consumers understand the concept and importance of sustainability. Furthermore, Finnish consumers would like to demand that companies provide more sustainable products and services. The thesis also shows that Finnish consumers prefers sustainable products and services rather than conventional ones.

Keywords    sustainability, consumer behavior, green consumer, green products

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Aihe      Ekologinen ostokäyttäytyminen: Suomalaisen kuluttajien näkemys kestävästä kehityksestä

Ohjaaja    Ricardo Galiot

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Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli selvittää, kuinka hyvin suomalaiset kuluttajat ymmärtävät käsitteet kestävä kehitys, laajemmin ekologinen kestävyys, sosiaalinen kestävyys ja taloudellinen kestävyys. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli tutkia, kuinka ekologista suomalaisten ostokäyttäytyminen on ja kuinka he ymmärtävät kulutuskysynnän sekä markkinoiden tarjonnan yhteyden.

Opinnäytetyön teoreettisessa osuudessa määritellään työn kannalta keskeisimmät käsitteet. Opinnäytetyön tietopohja koostuu kahdesta pääkäsitteestä: Kestävästä kehityksestä ja kuluttajakäyttäytymisestä. Teoreettisessa osuudessa on selitetty tutkielman kannalta oleelliset aiheet, kuten ekologinen, sosiaalinen ja taloudellinen kestävyys, kestävä kehityksen kasvu ja ongelmat sekä yritysten kestävä kehityksen mukaiset toimet ja hyöty tulevaisuudessa. Opinnäytetyön teoriaosuudessa käsiteltiin myös kuluttajien eri ostovaiheet, kestävä kehityksen kuluttajien kasvu ja haasteet sekä määritelmät kestävä kehityksen mukaisille tavaroille ja palveluille.

Tutkimus toteutettiin laadullisena- ja määrällisenä tutkimuksena, jossa tutkimusaineisto kerättiin kyselylomakkeella. Vastaukset esitettiin ympyräkaaviona ja pylväsdiagrammeina, joissa eri vastaukset jakautuivat prosentuaalisesti. Aineisto analysoitiin vertaamalla tuloksia opinnäytetyön teoreettiseen osuuteen. Tarkoituksena oli myös varmistaa vastauksien yhteys teoriapohjaan.

Tutkimuksessa havaittiin, että suomalaiset kuluttajat ymmärtävät kestävä kehityksen tärkeyden sekä toivoisivat omalla ostokäyttäytymisellään parantavansa yritysten kestävä kehityksen mukaista tarjontaa. Opinnäytetyöstä myöskin selviää, että suomalaiset kuluttajat suosivat erilaisia kestävä kehityksen mukaisia tuotteita ja palveluita.

Avainsanat    Kestävä kehitys, kuluttajakäyttäytyminen

Sivut      38 sivua ja liitteitä 4 sivua

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## **1 Introduction**

Sustainability is becoming the future norm. Ecological, social, and economic sustainability is one of the hot topics spoken about across the world. The rapidly growing globalization, capitalism, bad conditions in manufacturing and the increased number of products and services consumers need on the daily bases are just a few of the causes why our globe being destroyed little by little over the years. Furthermore, climate change is happening simply because of human activity. And human activity relies heavily on consumer behaviour.

The topic was born out of interest in sustainability and how consumers determine what companies offer in the market. In addition, personal experience as an employee in firms with sustainable strategies confirmed the interest on the topic.

### **1.1 Research questions and objectives**

The research question within this research study is “How well Finnish consumers understand the concept of sustainability and how aware they are of their sustainable buying habits?”

The thesis focuses on two main topics; sustainability and consumer behaviour. The thesis studies how aware the consumers are about sustainability and if they follow green consumerism. Moreover, the aim is to study the topics, and compare them with the results from the empirical study.

### **1.2 Research methods**

The thesis structure contains a theoretical background, a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire from Finnish consumers and a final analysis.

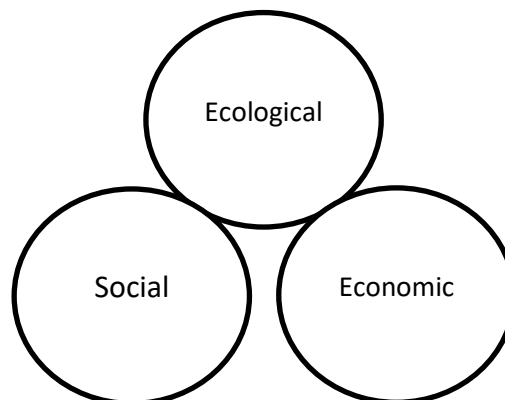
The theoretical background has been researched using various sources related to environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Also, news and articles have been used to research topics such as the history of sustainability, consumerism, and consumer

behaviour. Additionally, different studies will be used to add correct data to support the theory.

The second step is an empirical study which is a qualitative and quantitative questionnaire which asks various questions about sustainability and green consumerism. Moreover, the questions are related to the theoretical background. The target group for the questions are Finnish consumers, from ages 18-60 and from different educational backgrounds. The questionnaire shows the consumers' overall knowledge on sustainability, and their consumer behaviour.

## 2 Sustainability

Sustainability is meeting our needs by using only the resources needed such as environmental, social, and economic resources in a way which makes it possible for the future generations to meet their needs as well (Heizer et al., 2017, p.233.).



Environmental sustainability maintains natural systems so the human activity can be sustainable. Natural resources such as wood, water, soil, and minerals are important resources and building blocks for businesses and organizations. In addition, scarce resources such as oil and coal are non-renewable which makes them less reliable resources.

Sustainability evolves from thinking how to replace these resources or how to use them without diminishing them. Ecosystem services sustain life and renew resources. Moreover, when sustaining a healthy ecosystem, it is important for human life as its vital services include production of oxygen, purification of water, enrichment of soils and decomposition of waste but also renewing resources such as forests. Choosing sustainable alternatives or innovating new resources and building blocks helps the ecosystem to work without stress or other barriers. (Martin&Schouten p.4)

Economic sustainability is required for human life as the global economy has the biggest impact on society and natural environment. All materials such as products and services come from businesses so the economy should not focus on outgrowing material consumption and indebtedness. (Martin&Schouten p.4) Long-term economic policies create favourable conditions for increasing national prosperity. Economic sustainability will also make it easier to resolve new challenges such as rising social security and health expenditures due to aging population. (Ympäristöministeriö n.d.)

Social sustainability (and culture sustainability) is the third dimension of sustainability. Healthy communities provide welfare to its member. Necessities such as food and medicine and services like housing and education are a must for a fulfilling and productive lifestyle. People living in poverty and non-equal communities are less interested in the well-being of the other aspect of sustainability such as ecological one. (Martin&Schouten p.4) Social sustainability can be divided to five different dimensions according to Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen such as Equity, Diversity, Social Cohesion and Quality of Life (ADEC Innovations, 2021) Social sustainability is about identifying and managing positive and negative impacts on people the business may have but also about the relationships with stakeholders. What businesses decide to do affects the workers and customers, so it is important for companies to achieve social responsibility. Developing social responsibility may unlock new markets, innovate new products, or create relationships. Many companies contribute in different ways to improve lives they affect such as by creating jobs, products, and services. Furthermore, socially responsible companies tackle issues like human rights, child labour, gender equality and equal education. (United Nations, n.d.)

## **2.1 Sustainable problems the world is facing**

The Earth's capacity to provide the resources we need for daily life has been exceeded. The size of the population and the level of consumption is increasing every day. Ecological footprint refers to the amount of resources required to support a specific lifestyle. Now, the world's population needs more than one planet of earth to sustain the lifestyle. Recent studies have shown that people have been exceeding of Earth's ability to support lifestyle for over 20 years now. The situation is expected to get worse if no actions are taken to slow



down our consumption of non-renewable resources and other factors affecting the footprint. As a result, people are currently using resources from the future generations because they are using more than Earth's capacity to renew its resources. According to WWF the ecological footprint which measures the pressure on Earth by human consumption of natural resources has increased to 125 % of global capacity and could rise to 170 % by 2040. As seen in the figure from WWF the human enterprise currently demands 1,56 times more than the amount that Earth can regenerate. (WWF 2020)

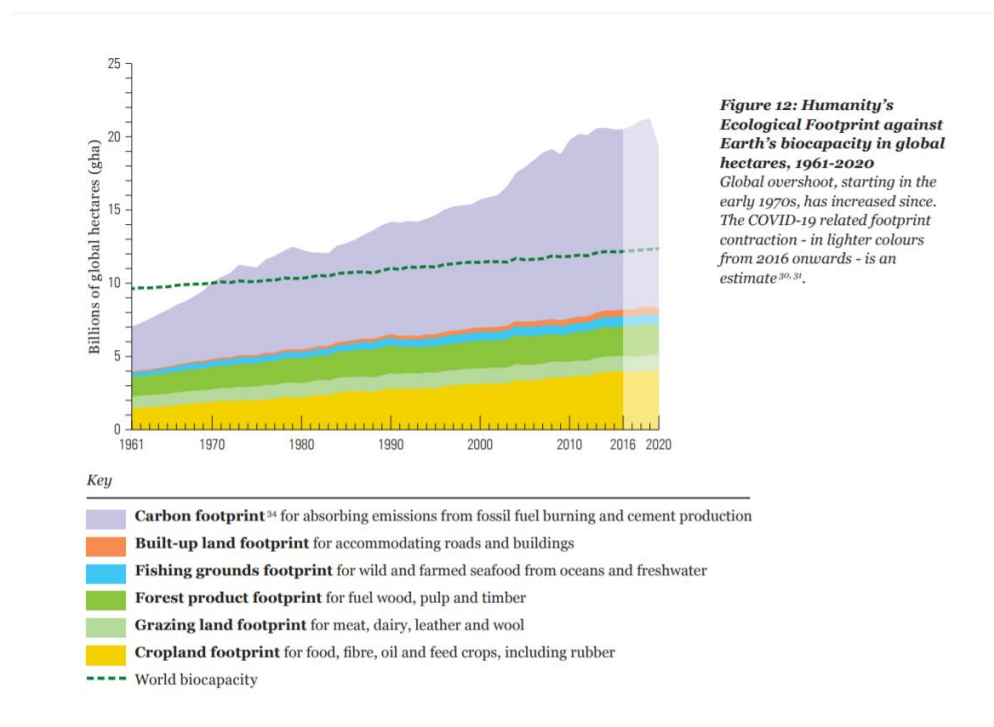


Figure 1. Humanity's Ecological Footprint against Earth's biocapacity in global hectares 1961-2020 (WWF 2020)

## 2.2 Growth of environmental consciousness

Green consumers started as a trend but has now become a norm. The increased knowledge of environmental, social and economic problems such as the climate change, child labour and capitalism have affected the study of consumerism. Creating a more sustainable environment has become an agenda amongst consumers and businesses. Green consumers believe that solving long-term sustainable challenges should not only be left solely to the government and businesses to handle. Green consumers think that consumerism controls

what products and services businesses are offering, and it is their responsibility to encourage businesses to pursue more sustainable practices. (Boztepe 2012)

Furthermore, sustainability has grown from a trend to the norm these past years while globalization continues to result in an increase in the growth of environmental, social and economic problems. This causes a rise in public concern which is the reason for companies to develop innovative tactics to decrease the harmful impact they have on the environment, social and economic aspect when creating products and services. (Boztepe 2012)

Because of present concerns, businesses are unable to remain unresponsive to changes. This applies especially to the marketing managers as they are mainly taking care of the products image but also the product and service developers. The old perception of businesses focusing on making profit has become less important as a factor affecting economy. The new goal of enterprises and organizations is to develop ways to be more long-term sustainable. Companies are becoming more efficient and competitive in offering green products and services in order to meet the growing demand for green products and services from a segmented market of green consumers. (Boztepe 2012.)

According to the consumption report of the European Union, it has been found that approximately 10 % of consumers recognize the ecological product labels; however, given this was done in 2012 it is reasonable to infer that this number is substantially higher. (Boztepe 2012.)

Sustainability awareness is constantly growing to the point where it has become a political problem in recent years if government fails to deliver effective programs and regulation to protect the natural resources. Individuals are also constantly aware of the air they are breathing causing businesses to change the habits of creating products and services sustainably. The trend is not diminishing and will most likely continue until significant changes are physically visible and the definition of consumption starts to change. (Cohen 2015)

### 2.2.1 The Covid-19 pandemic

The pandemic and its lockdowns have resulted in consumers demanding more green products and services. 36 % of UK consumers are buying products from sustainable companies according to a research from E.ON. (Searle, F. 2020 Fresh Produce Journal) According to research, millennials which refers to people born between 1980 and the mid-1990s are the ones who noticeably choose green products over traditional ones in London. Furthermore, millennials are said to have changed their habits to greener mindset and support small sustainable companies over bigger retail chains. The reasoning for the increased demand for sustainable products and services during the pandemic can be explained by peoples concerns over problems such as climate crisis. People are getting more aware of the fragility of the human species during the Covid-19 pandemic. (Circular 2020)

### 2.2.2 Agenda 2030

Agenda 2030 is a global aim for sustainable development provided by the United Nations to erase extreme poverty from the world as well as ensuring well-being in an environmentally sustainable way. Furthermore Agenda 2030 applies to all countries in the world, and it attains participation from local governments, private sectors, civil societies, and all citizens. (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)

Agenda 2030 is targeted at sustainable development in all three dimensions; economic, social, and environmental. The Agenda 2030 has overall 17 goals which are:

17 sustainable development goals:

- 1) "End poverty in all its forms everywhere." (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)
- 2) "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture." (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)
- 3) "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages." (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)
- 4) "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)

- 5) "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)
- 6) "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all." (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)
- 7) "Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all." (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)
- 8) "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all". (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)
- 9) "Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation." (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)
- 10) "Reduce inequality within and among countries." (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)
- 11) "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable". (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)
- 12) "Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns". (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)
- 13) "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts." (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)
- 14) "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development." (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)
- 15) "Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss." (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)
- 16) "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)
- 17) "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development." (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)

These goals apply to all countries both rich and poor. Finland supports the poorest countries through development policy and development cooperation to achieve the common goals.

The United Nations has estimated that achieving Agenda 2030 will require estimated \$ 2,500 billion annually. Developing countries' own funding and development aid are not enough, so, for example, companies are needed to create jobs, improve tax collection in developing countries and have a fair-trade policy. (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)

The priority areas of Finland's development policy are sustainable development and promoting their realization. Key goals for Finland include improving the rights and status of women and girls and promoting democracy and good governance. In its climate policy, Finland promotes the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement and participates in international climate and environmental financing, which supports environmentally sustainable development and the adaptation of vulnerable countries to climate change. Finland supports research in this field and investments in clean energy solutions. (Ulkoministeriö, 2020)

### **2.3 Sustainability from the companies' point of view**

Sustainability can refer to thinking we can use environmental resources in our daily life more efficiently and in a way which is less damaging. It means taking into consideration the different the aspects of the employees, consumers, community, and the company's reputation. There are three different concepts in sustainability when looking at it from the company's point of view which are a system view, the commons, and the triple bottom line. (Heizer, Render, Munson., 2017, p.233.)

Managers in a company focus on the whole system view which means products life from design to disposal but also the connections between social, economic, and environmental systems. In addition, managers in the company or organization realize that a change in some department, for example in production will affect other departments, too. For example, if a business lays off employees, it affects the internal system in the organization. Overall, when understanding the connections, it is easier to stay sustainable within the company. (Heizer et al., 2017, p.233.)

Products and services have a market price. Anything intangible without a market price like polluted air or depletion of fish in the international waters, belong in the common. People might easily think that those problems do not matter, or it is someone else's problem. The solutions for these common are for example allocation of rights. When businesses understand what the commons are and how to care for them it helps to better understand sustainability. (Heizer et al., 2017, p.233.)

Another concept to understand when dealing with sustainability is the triple bottom line (TBL) which consists of people, planet, and profit. Organizations and companies can build competitive advantage through understanding and working with the three dimensions of sustainability; economic, environmental, and social. Companies that follow triple bottom line pay fair wages to their employees, provide safe workplace, and offer opportunities to further educate their employees. Companies also follow some common policies that guide them to choose sustainable suppliers that follow the same views as the company to create best value for customers. Besides suppliers using for example child labour and non-renewable sources may be against some companies' policies. The overall goal is to create a more transparent supply chain, choose best practices and drive product innovation. (Heizer et al., 2017, p.233.)

Businesses try to come up with different solutions to reduce their environmental impact of their operations from choosing the right raw materials to manufacturing and delivering and disposing the product at their end-of-life. Businesses must have strict policies about using scarce resources and they must choose alternatives for non-renewable energy as well as decrease the waste they are creating. To lower the environmental impact, businesses measure their carbon footprint which measures total greenhouse gases. (Heizer et al., 2017, p.234.)

When a company stays in business, it will gain economic sustainability. The measurements that need to be taken into consideration when gaining economic sustainability is not only profit but also risk profile, company valuation, employee morale and intellectual property. (Heizer et al., 2017, p.234.)

When creating a product or service, a company must think of the most sustainable way to design, produce and deliver and dispose the product. Life-cycle assessment determinates the environmental impact of the good in every step of the product cycle. (Heizer et al., 2017, p.236.)

- 1) Design – decisions about choosing the most sustainable and innovative materials, right suppliers and logistic system that create the less pollution and thinking about the waste problem. (Heizer et al., 2017, p.236.)

- 2) Production process- reduces the amount of resources used in the production process. For example, try to be more energy efficient which means using alternative sustainable resources and energy-efficient machines. (Heizer et al., 2017, p.238.)
- 3) Logistics – choosing suppliers and networks that reduces the number of miles travelled by container ships, airplanes, and trains for example. Also, choosing logistics that prefer using renewable energy rather than non-renewable such as petrol. (Heizer et al., 2017, p.238-239.)
- 4) End-of-life process – companies are practicing closed-loop-chains for example, recycling the products. (Heizer et al., 2017, p.241.)

### 2.3.1 Circular economy

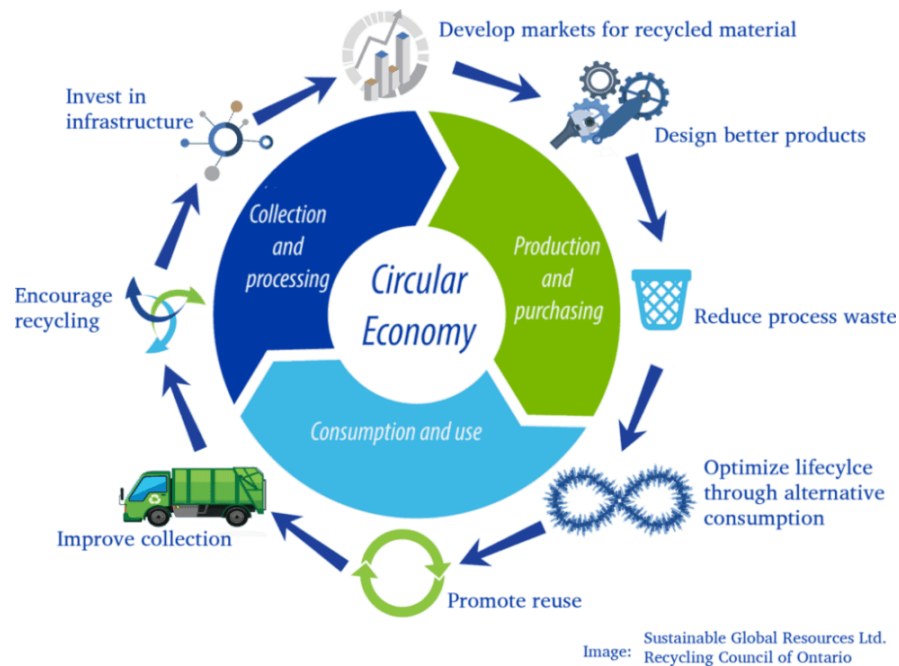


Figure 2. Circular economy (Aka, N. 2019)

The circular economy is a resource-based, production-based, and consumption-based approach. A closed loop economy, rather than a traditional linear economy, reduces waste. (European Parliament 2021). Circular economy promotes reduction, reuse, and recycling to minimize the impact on environment as well as on overall economy. There are various principles for the circular economy to work properly. The main principle is to turn waste to resources. Additionally, biodegradable materials can be returned to the nature without causing environmental harm at the end of the life cycle of the product. The product can have

a second use after the product will no longer meet the needs of the original consumer. Re-using and recycling will make new use of the material founded in waste. Circular economy benefits energy from re-newable sources as well as utilizes valorization which means harnessing energy from the waste. (Acciona 2019)

Circular economy has various benefits to companies. Moving forward to circular economy from the traditional linear economy decreases production prices because the waste is minimized and re-used again. When the sale price is lowered, it benefits the consumer not just financially, but also socially and environmentally. (Acciona 2019)

### **2.3.2 Corporate social responsibility**

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a decision-making tool that takes into consideration the environmental, societal, and financial impacts on a company. Nowadays consumers, communities and others are well informed about how companies perform in every aspect because of the advanced technology. Being an environmentally conscious firm and providing ethical products from design to disposal is the key to be a competitive organization in its own field. (Heizer et al., 2017, p.232.) Corporate social responsibility programs work as a risk-reduction strategy and a defence against problems such as consumer boycotts, public relation disasters, legal risks and increased government regulations (Martin&Schouten, 2012, p 30).

Using corporate social responsibility as a strategy has a lot of benefits for the company. CSR attracts more customers to the firm because many individual value products and services which are made by taking into consideration the environmental impact. Customers are willing to pay a premium price for goods knowing that they support a socially responsible company. Also, corporate social responsibility brings motivated employees to the company because they are eager to make a difference in the world. (Murphy, 2019)

One of the benefits of CSR is the improved public image of the company as well as increased brand awareness and recognition. Being committed to ethical practices brings more recognition to companies because nowadays customers tend to choose products from sustainable and responsible companies. (Collier, 2018)



Overall, companies that practice corporate social responsibility get positive brand recognition, more loyal customers, and motivated employees. (Murphy, 2019)

### **2.3.3 Companies' strategies and positioning using sustainability and methods above**

Consumers are becoming more aware on sustainable actions and how substantial role companies have on for example climate change, so they have started to value more ecological choices. Like mentioned earlier, companies benefit from sustainability image. Marketing sustainable products and services attract consumers, employees, and investors. People want to be part of changing the world to a better place in which linking themselves with companies and processes that support sustainability brings them joy. This creates a greater value gap when companies get the needed funds to invest in new strategies and products, recognition from marketing and acceptance from the consumers. (Michael Rogers 2016)

Packaging industry for instance is currently moving towards a sustainable model and a circular economy. Nowadays, companies market their sustainability strategy immediately to clients and consumers when introducing their company. Also, ecological benefits attract more investors and consumers.

Also, the perception of the brand becomes more positive amongst most employees when they have been told that they are a part of a community that changes the world to be more sustainable.

## **3 Consumer behavior**

Consumer behavior studies how individuals decide what they want or need to purchase. It shows how consumers choose and use the products or services they desire. (Nawal 2019)

The consumer decision process is the consumer's mental process in purchasing, using, and disposing of a product or a service. Consumers can follow the guidelines directly or skip some of the steps depending on their involvement with the product or decision.

(Martin&Schouten p.775) Consumer purchases can be based on selection made either by an

individual or by a group such as a household (Jobber&Ellis-Chadwick, 2020, p.776). The decision-making process starts by gathering information about the product and considering buying it. This step could be also called problem awareness or needing recognition in which the consumer's purchase could be initiated by more emotional or psychological needs. (Jobber&Ellis-Chadwick, 2020, p.79). Now up to 87 % of consumers begin to search online about products and services using different search engines such as Google (Keenfolks 2021). Consumers may need help or courage at the decision-making process at this point because of the competitive market. Information phase includes identifying the alternative ways to satisfy the needs or to solve the problem. This could include for example personal sources such as family, commercial sources such as social media, or third-party reports such as product-testing reports. The consumer may be influenced during the purchase decision process resulting in an alternative decision. During the step of evaluating the alternatives consumers debate between brands and companies and choose the right one based on the consumers' beliefs and attitudes. (Jobber&Ellis-Chadwick, 2020, p.80) Depending whether the products are high-involvement products such as a smartphone or low-involvement products such as milk, the alternative step may require more time to research information. (Jobber&Ellis-Chadwick, 2020, p.81) The final steps are buying the product and then using it. Companies aim to create customer satisfaction in which post-purchase evaluation of the decision step is important in case the consumer starts regretting purchasing the product or wondering if the product was worth it. Customers' satisfaction with the products and services creates long-term customers for the businesses. Also, companies that have a higher satisfaction rate for products and services benefit more profitably. Lastly, the consumer decision process includes a disposal step. Furthermore, consumers who favour ethical and sustainable companies tend to dispose the products accordingly for example by recycling. Also, companies that give back to society design their products and services in a way it is circular so that the product can be re-used, recycled, or turned into new resources. (Jobber&Ellis-Chadwick, 2020, p.83)

The buying process may be influenced by the consumers buying situation, personal influences, or social influences (Jobber&Ellis-Chadwick 2020 p.84). Consumers' behaviours are motivated by needs or wants which may be biological, social, or physiological. Needs or wants can be influenced by internal or external forces. For example, marketing, peer pressure or recommendations for certain products are external forces, internal forces are

more related to actual needs of the individual. (Martin&Schouten p.32) Personal influences on consumers buying habits include the information process in which the consumer gathers information and alternatives for the product. Motivator aspect lies in the relationship between needs, drives, and goals. This aspect is influenced by Maslow hierarchy of needs. (Jobber&Ellis-Chadwick, 2020, p.59)

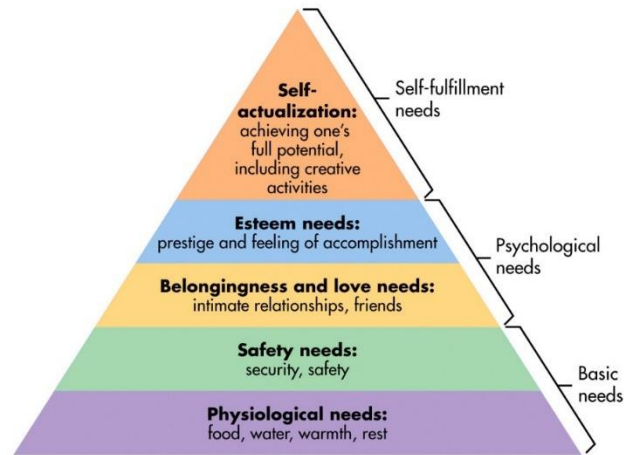


Figure 3. Maslow Needs (Dr. Saul McLeod 2020)

Beliefs and attitudes affect the way how consumer views the brand either positively or negatively. Personality is reflected in the way how the brands market their products because the same type of people tend to favour the same specific brands or items. Lifestyle group can be used targeting the same individuals depending on their activities, interests and opinions. Lifecycle is a relevant influence on consumer behaviours because of consumers of different ages favour different products due its price or convenience for example.

(Jobber&Ellis-Chadwick, 2020, p.76)

Social influences include the consumers culture which refers to values, traditions and basic attitudes. Consumers cultures affect on how the business and product are seen and consumed so the companies can adjust their marketing techniques to match the specific culture. Social class of a consumer can explain some consumption patterns. Moreover, companies can use the social classes of a specific area to segment and target consumers better. Geodemographics means identifying a consumer's location and information related to that location such as the type of accommodation, age, occupation, and ethnicity.

Reference groups refer to people who influence the consumers' buying process.

(Jobber&Ellis-Chadwick, 2020, p.95)

Social media has become a huge external influence on consumer behaviour. It works as the information step when people can share their opinions about certain businesses, services, and products in social media channels like Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. Global Web Index 2018 research shows that 54 % of social media users use social media as their research method before making the final buying decision. The high percentage can be explained by the rapid growth of businesses moving their marketing strategy solely to social media. Social media helps consumer to keep on track on companies, their products, sales, and discounts. Recently social media influences have become the celebrities' consumers look up to. Companies are starting to market their products using social influencers because they have bigger psychological impact on consumers' buying decisions than traditional marketing. (Clotrack 2021)

### **3.1 Green consumer**

A green consumer is a consumer whose personal or socio-cultural variables reflect environmental consciousness in their purchase behaviour. Although the term "green consumerism" has a broad definition, green consumers often avoid products and services that may be harmful to the environment during manufacturing or consumption. (Cherian, Jacob 2012.)

The physical environmental forces green consumers take into consideration are the climate change, pollution, energy and scarce resource conservation, environmentally friendly ingredients, and components as well as recycling and non-wasteful packages (Jobber&Ellis-Chadwick, 2020 p51-53). Many companies have ratified many agreements to stop the global temperature from increasing such as the Paris agreement the goal of which is to limit global warming. Countries that have signed the agreement plan to reach the global peak of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible to achieve a climate neutral world by mid-century. (United Nations Climate Change 2021) Pollution poses a huge threat to the world and the green consumers aim to choose products to limit pollution coming from manufacturing as well as using and disposing products. The harmful effects such as plastics and chemicals from the products are easily disposed to the ocean which is a major problem for the marine environment. A non-profit marine charity Sea Shepherd has estimated that

over 1 million marine animals are killed each year by plastic. To respond to that green consumers have started to demand alternatives to plastic and companies have replied by manufacturing new innovations. As a result, companies have responded to pollution problems by introducing anti-pollution measures. (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2020, p. 52)

Energy scarcity is a central discussion amongst sustainable shoppers. The finite nature of the world's resources, for example fossil fuels, is driving conservation. By utilizing renewable sources, such as wind and sunlight power, geothermal heat and waste energy companies and consumers help the consumers to realize that the globe is running out of fossil fuels such as oil. Green consumers drive companies to create innovative energy-efficient products. Another concern for green consumers is the usage of wood. Harvesting forests to their capacity of providing replacements has become an issue since the ecosystem relies heavily on forests, especially on tropical rain forest. Furthermore, the leaves of the trees absorb carbon dioxide which plays a part in global warming so replanting forest to maintain the long-term supply of trees may be one of the solutions. Companies such as IKEA have responded to the threat by starting to use world's wood supply out of which 23 % comes from responsibly managed forests. Green consumers prefer environmentally friendly ingredients and components such as biodegradable and natural ingredients on their products. Recycling and non-wasteful packages has become a global trend in which consumers demand companies to focus to reduce waste on the end-life of the product. In Finland, 35 % of packaging is being recycled and almost all plastic bottles, cans and glass bottles are being recycled and re-used. Also, manufacturers have developed resources and ingredients from industry waste to decrease the carbon dioxide impact. (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2020, p 53)

Protecting nature has become an agenda today in which green consumers play a role (Cherian, Jacob 2012.) Green consumers place a higher value on products and services that do not harm the environment in the whole supply chain by preferring eco-friendly products and packaging and those businesses that practice fair trade and overall reduce their environmental impact. (Rahman 2018)

Like mentioned above, green consumers favour companies that identify themselves as sustainable. Green consumers buy from companies whose strategy involves around sustainability. Companies who market their operations as so attracts more investors, employees, and consumers. (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2020, p. 52)

Green consumers avoid unethical animal testing or human experimentation. They favour smaller, local companies. Also, green consumers respect cultures and do not adapt elements from one culture to another, for example a Caucasian green consumer will not buy and use Native American traditional clothing. They would support a small native American shop by buying products there which is not cultural appropriation rather than buying from a chain store that does not know the meaning behind the products. Also, green consumers support companies that aim to help the society by providing extra work for locals by offering some benefits in order to help girls in their education. (Cherian. Jacob 2012)

### **3.1.1 Green consumer decision process**

The consumer's decision process for a green consumer has some differences from the "normal" one because of the sustainable thinking in it. The needing recognition phase differs the way that green consumer has the knowledge of thinking to buy a product or service in the most sustainable way or rethinking whether to buy it if it has a major impact on the planet. The conscious thinking is more transparent in the information search as green consumers may use specific sites that provide for example business listings for companies that are socially and environmentally sustainable. In addition, as to the external searches, green consumers may already have internal information such as knowledge about common ecolabels or sustainable practices. There may be some challenges in the information search as Google search engine may not always be accurate. Greenwashing which refers to the businesses' use of wrongful or misleading information on environmental claims to present a false image of sustainability suitable to the green consumers. At last, the growing market of sustainable goods and services is constantly evolving. A green consumer may conclude information true at one point which later in time is proven false. As the information and technology evolve consumers must re-evaluate what they think they know. Products' sustainability is one of the important attributes green consumers are considering when evaluating alternatives. Some firms will provide the information about their products' sustainability and some organizations may even target with their marketing strategies to green consumers to ensure that they will choose their product rather than that their competitors. Green consumers take an extra look at the purchase decision process as they will also include the method of delivery on top the transaction. They attach weight to delivery programs that do not have a heavy impact on the globe such as biodiesel-powered

delivery vans. Post-purchase behaviours green consumer takes seriously include both product usage but also the disposal behaviours. The sustainable disposal behaviour includes for example re-cycling, composting, or simply directing resources back to the supplies chain after usage. (Martin&Schouten 2012, p33)

### **3.2 Challenges of going green**

Green consumerism is encountering challenges as green consumer behaviour is not accepted by everyone. There are many obstacles within some of the consumers when it comes to choosing green products and services over standard ones.

According to a Stanford University study, consumers have five main challenges when it comes to trusting companies to go green. One of the significant problems on green consumerism is the lack of knowledge. Consumers are aware of the climate change and greenhouse gas emissions but are not aware how to act to reduce these risks. As a result, customers acquire items and services “blindly,” unaware of the damage they have caused. (Bonini&Oppenheim,2008.)

When it comes to green product performance, some consumers have negative impressions of the quality believing that green products cannot perform as well or at the same level as non-green ones can. Green items are typically more durable in use than non-green ones for example, tote bags are considered green which are significantly more resistant for breakage than normal shopping bags made from plastic. (Bonini & Oppenheim 2008)

Consumers may have reservations about companies and their marketing techniques that claim to be sustainable. As awareness on environmental issues and solutions grows amongst consumers, businesses take advantage of the change and use the opportunity to market their products as a green to environmental conscious consumers. As a result, there is a lot of disinformation about green products since companies’ market and sell their products incorrectly. In reality the products may not be as sustainable as they claim. To be. (Bonini&Oppenheim 2008.) An example of this is the Volkswagen emission scandal in 2015 when the company lied about their emissions. Furthermore, Volkswagen claimed to have lowered their emissions on diesel engines which increased the amount of Volkswagen, Audi

and Seat cars sold. However, Volkswagen had installed emission software's up to 11 million cars that lower their emissions when they are being tested, changing the performance to improve results. The carbon dioxide emission levels were up to 30 to 40 times higher in reality. This resulted in massive lawsuit in US but also in many countries in Europe. (Hotten 2015)

Consumers feel that sustainable products are more expensive than conventional products. While high prices may be true on some products, green ones are more resistant to damages as one of the key criteria for green product is long-term usability. As a result, it is less usual to replace a green product more often than a non-green one. (Bonin & Oppenheim 2008)

Many consumers are having difficulty finding sustainable products because the demand for sustainable and green products is still lower than for non-sustainable ones. Also, availability is different depending on the location since countries that have a higher education rate are more knowledgeable about issues such as global warming. It is more likely for a consumer to find a non-green product since it is more accessible, however green marketing is gradually expanding while new green products are released. (Bonini & Oppenheim 2008.)

### **3.3 Green products**

Green products and services have a lower impact on the environment and to the human health than their conventional alternatives (Marten&Schouten 2012 p.10). Products can be defined usually as a tangible object, moreover they are needs that fulfil the consumers wants. Services on the other hand are usually intangible, more of an interaction or a relationship the consumers buys. (CFI, Products and Services n.d.) Green products and services are defined in various ways, but generally businesses that develop these products try to lower their carbon footprint residue in their production, distribution, and consumption so that the next generation would have the same resources to use than the current one. Green products are created by the 3 dimensions of sustainability ecological, economic, and social sustainability in mind. Green products can be made by using these criteria:

- 1) Easily reused products: usage of an old cloth bag as a grocery bag (Rahman 2018)



- 2) Products that are made from waste materials, for example some Fords have seat upholstery made from recycled plastic bottles and old clothing (Heizer&Render&Munson 2017 p.236).
- 3) Replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with a renewable energy source such as using wind energy. (Rahman 2018)
- 4) Products that are not made off resources that pollute the environment such as toxic materials, fossil carbon or synthetic materials. Green consumers try to avoid materials like pesticides, plastics, coal and gasoline. (Martin&Schouten 2012 p. 125)
- 5) Easily recycled materials are sustainable enough to be considered as green products such as cardboard material used in straws rather than plastic. (Rahman 2018)
- 6) Biodegradable materials on products as they are easier to dispose (Rahman 2018).
- 7) Products with energy efficiency are considered greenm for example with distribution firms and logistics transport goods with ships rather than planes from one place to another as it is much more energy efficient and produce less carbon emissions (Heizer&Render&Munson 2017 p.239).
- 8) Products that support social and cultural sustainability. Green consumers avoid companies that support for example child labour, unethical and bad working conditions, and un-equal pay.
- 9) Use services that support leasing, renting, sharing, and pooling products (Martin&Schouten 2012 p.133).
- 10) Intangible services use substitutes for products such as technology enables online banking transfers instead of writing checks (Martin&Schouten 2020 p.133).
- 11) Results in services that decrease the use of material products altogether. Moreover, when a product is owned and run by a supplier who can optimize its use and offer it to the consumers such as public transportation. (Martin&Schouten 2020 p.133)
- 12) Product services that extend the life of a product by maintaining it, repairing, offering guarantees and product takebacks (Martin&Schouten 2020 p.132).
- 13) Sustainable consumer services such as ecotourism that provides financial benefits and empowerment for local people, respects their culture, supports human rights and democratic movements, and minimaxes the environmental impact on the destination (Martin&Schouten 2020 p.135).
- 14) Business to Business services in commercial and industrial sectors that try to lower the businesses usage of energy and water consumption, reduction of building waste

and increasing the usage of renewable and nontoxic material in the supply chain. Companies who support fair trade, human rights and democratic movements. (Martin&Schouten 2020 p.134-135)

Overall, green products and services aim to protect the environment preserving energy and/or reducing or eliminating pollution and waste as well as economically and socially benefit communities. (Rahman 2018)

### **3.3.1 Changes in demand for green products**

In 2018, the number of people who agree to pay more for eco-friendly products appears to be evenly distributed across all age groups according to research of Interned users aged 16-64. For instance, for household product, consumers have moved away from products that contain harsh chemicals that are linked to health problem as they believe eco-friendly products are better for health. (Young, 2018.)

Another study on consumer goods such as coffee, chocolate, and bath products found that products with sustainability seems to outperform the overall product growth rate. Based on Nielsen sales over a 52-week period, the average of the three product categories mentioned above shows a 3 % increase in growth for sustainable products. When compared to the total of their respective categories, sustainable coffee had an 11 % higher percentage, sustainable chocolate had a 2 % higher percentage, and sustainable bath products had a 13 % higher percentage. (Houlihan & Harvey 2018)

## **4 Empirical study**

The primary data has been collected by a quantitative and qualitative survey, a questionnaire. It is executed towards Finnish consumers and shared in different ways such as via social media, workplace, phone, and email. There were in total of 16 questions that gathered information about the respondents' view on sustainability and how sustainable their buying habits are. The aim of the qualitative and quantitative analysis is to support the theoretical framework done previously and to understand respondents' awareness on

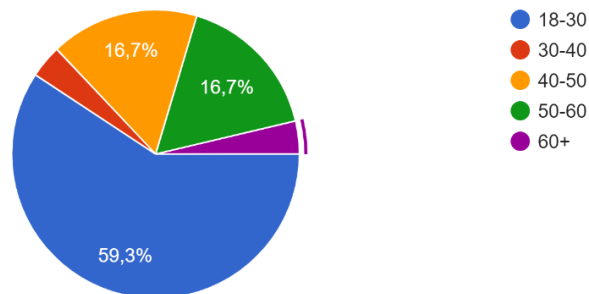
sustainable buying habits. Furthermore, the questionnaire is made to try to understand the subject to be studied on how consumers can shift the market to a more sustainable one by their demand for the products and services from the companies.

#### 4.1 Background information of the responders

There were in total of 54 respondents to the questionnaire. The questionnaire started by dividing respondents by their demographic background. As mentioned on the theoretical background, age can play a relevant role with regards to people's view on sustainability. The questionnaire had 59,3 % (32 people) of respondents the age of 18-30. 16,7 % (9 people) of answers came from the age group of 40-50 and 50-60. 3,5 % (2 people) belonged to the age groups of 30-40 and 60+.

**Table 1. Age of the respondents**

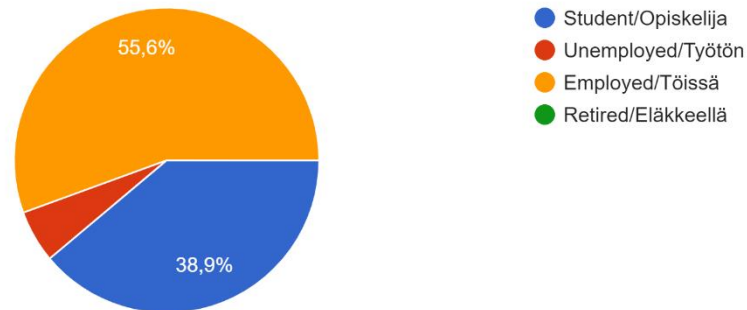
Age/Ikä  
54 vastausta



**Table 2 Work status**

Work status/ Työllisyys

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The second question divides the respondents' current employment status. It is a part of demographical background done to study the data later. The questionnaire was shared to school and workplace, so the answers were mainly divided by two different employment status; employed 55,6 % (30 people) and student 38,9 % (21 people). The percentage for unemployment was 5,6 %, in total of 3 people) None of the respondents were retired.

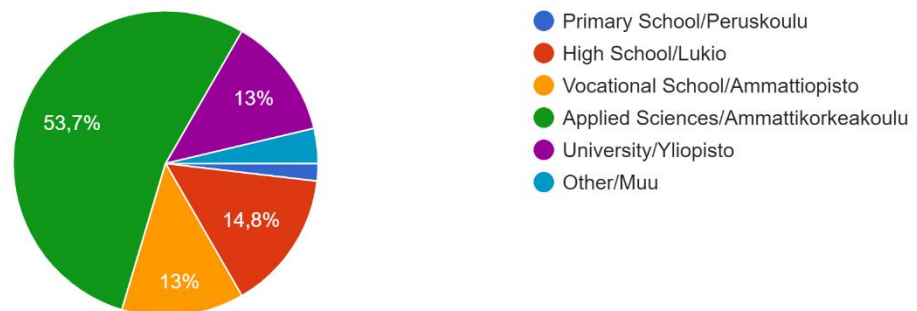
**Table 3. Highest level of education**

Latest education	Percentage	Number of responders
Primary School	1,9 %	1
High School	14,8 %	8
Vocational School	13 %	7

<b>Applied Science</b>	53,7 %	29
<b>University</b>	13 %	7
<b>Other</b>	3,7 %	2

**Table 4 Highest level of education**

Education/Koulutus  
54 vastausta



The last question to analyse the demographical information of the respondents is their educational background. The major proportion 53,7% of respondents went to Applied sciences, followed by high school. The educational level can be a factor on how consumers view sustainability as more educated people have better access to the knowledge on sustainability.

No ethical background division was used to map out different consumers since the questionnaire took place in an area where majority of Finns have the same ethical background. In this case, the questionnaire was shared amongst people living mostly in Valkeakoski, where for example immigration percentage is low. Moreover, there would not

be enough respondents in each different ethical background section to give accurate enough data to support the theory mentioned above.

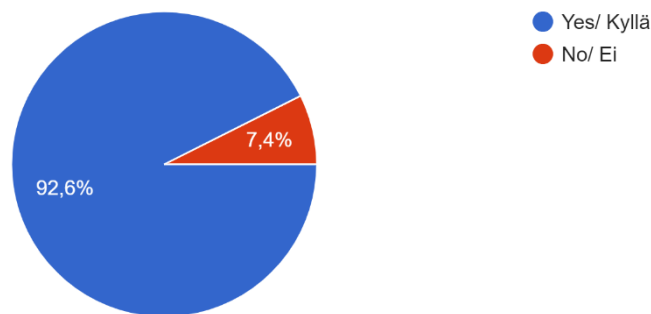
#### 4.1.1 Respondents' awareness of the term of sustainability

At the beginning it is important to map out the people who understand what sustainability means and how aware they are about green actions.

**Table 5: Do you know what sustainable practises are?**

Do you know what sustainable practices are? / Tiedätkö mitä kestävä kehitys tarkoittaa tai mitä ekoystäväälliset tavat merkitsevät?

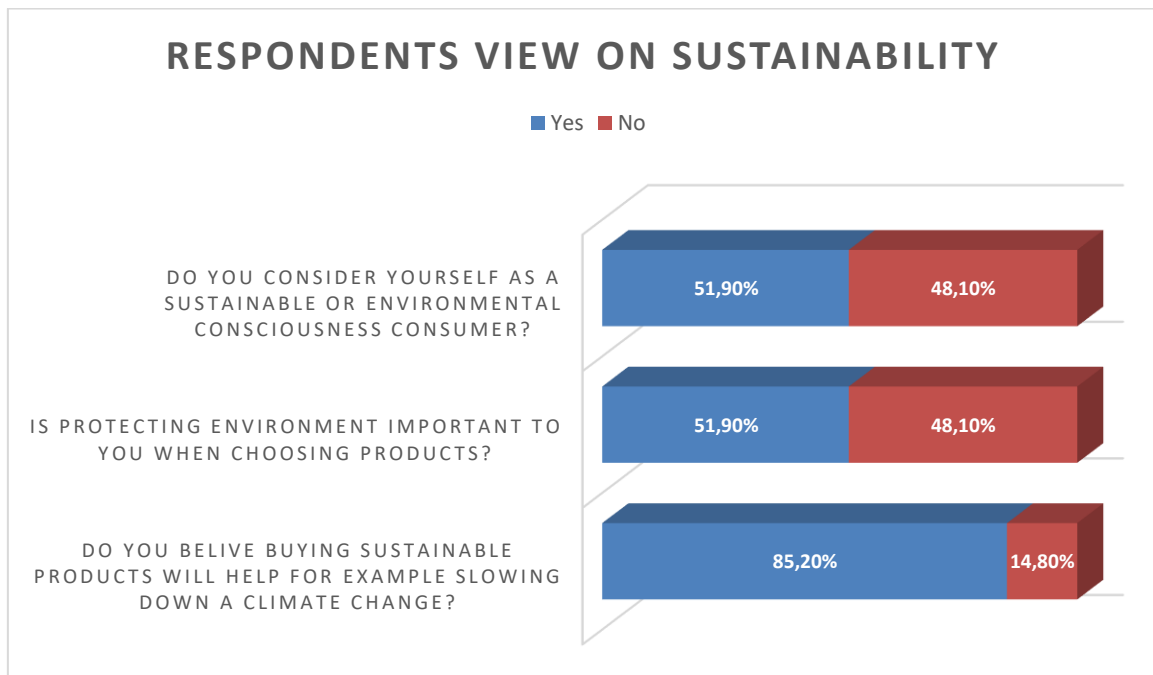
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The majority of respondents understands the concept of sustainability, being 92,6 % and total of 50 people. Only 7.4 % (9 people) of the respondents do not consider themselves familiar with sustainability. Understandably, for the remaining 9 people who are unaware what sustainability means it is hard to continue the questionnaire and analyse the data accordingly because the remaining questions are related to sustainability, green activities, and consumer behaviour. Moreover, the questionnaire was biased towards the expectation that all of them would have some understanding of what sustainability means. However, as a purpose of the research to support the findings from theoretical books it was crucial to see that not all consumers are aware of sustainability.

#### 4.1.2 Respondents' view on sustainability

**Table 6: Respondents' view on sustainability**



The next 3 questions define the respondents' view on sustainability and their thoughts on green consumerism. Respondents' answers on if they consider themselves as a sustainable person divide relatively equally. Slightly more people recognize themselves as sustainable. Even though sustainability has become a relevant topic in society, the percentage is relatively low, lower that was expected when studying the subject.

The same percentage applies with the question "Is protecting environment important to you when choosing products?".

According to the last questions of the table 6, a high percentage of respondents answered that they believe buying sustainable products will help for example slowing down a climate change. The example given in the question "for example help slowing down the climate change" was to give a simple idea what being more sustainable means for the respondents. A lot of people know about climate change and why it is one of the argued topics now. This question shows that the respondents are aware of the threats the globe is facing. Furthermore, they believe that consumer behaviour heavily reflects on how to solve those problems such as buying sustainable products like mentioned in the question.

### 4.1.3 Green actions

**Table 7: What “green actions” do you follow?**

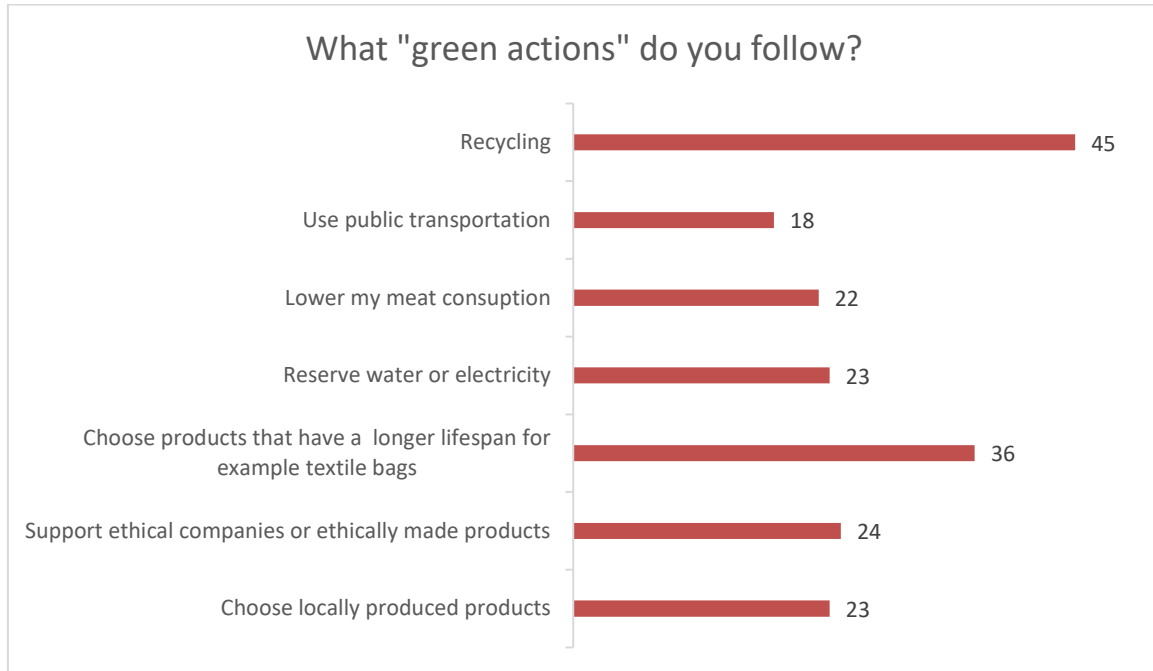
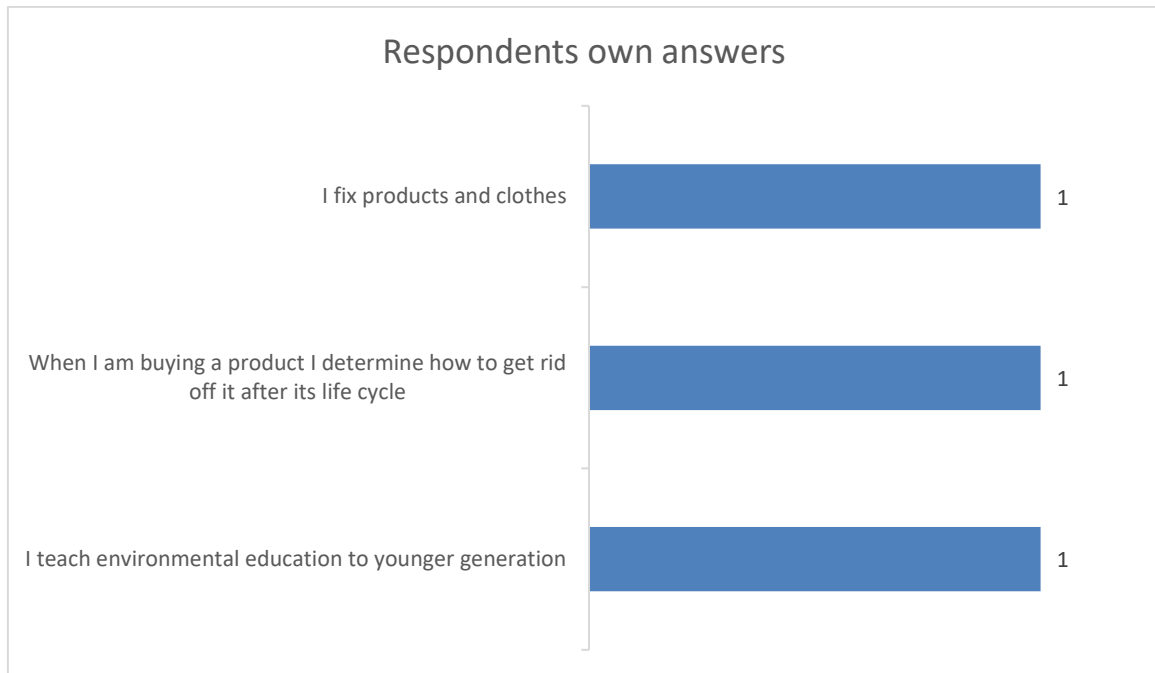


Table 7 shows multiple-choice questions where respondents could choose multiple answers. 45 respondents of the 53 confirm they recycle. Also, majority of the respondents choose products that have a longer lifespan as well as support ethical companies. Choosing locally produced products and preserving water was also a green act respondents' favour.

Recycling was the most followed green action by the respondents. This makes sense since Finland is big on recycling various products. The most common recycling way is bottle recycling where consumers take the bottles and cans back to the shop and earn few cents when recycling them. This recycling system has been working since 1950 and over 90 % of bottles and cans are being recycled (Suomen palautuspakkaus Oy 2014-2015).

Choosing a product with longer lifespan was also one of the favourite answers amongst the respondents. Like mentioned on the theoretical background, companies aim to create products with a circular product life cycle that has a longer lifespan. The answer supports the findings from the theoretical background that consumers do favour companies aiming to be more sustainable by creating more-lasting products rather than conventional products such as fast-fashion clothes that break easily for example.



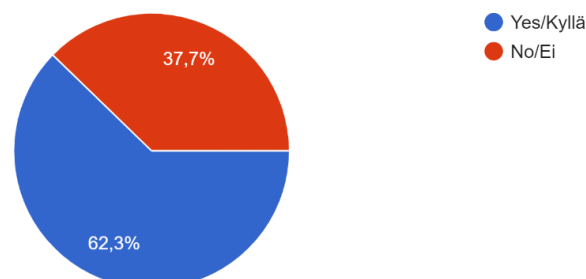
**Table 8: Respondents' own answers**

Respondents could also leave their own answer on the survey if they follow other green actions than what was listed on. Three respondents answered that they fix products especially clothes, think how to dispose the product properly when buying it and teach environmental education to younger generation.

#### 4.1.4 Respondents' sustainable habits and views

**Table 9 Have you changed your ecological habits recently for example by eating less animal products or avoiding plastic?**

Have you changed your ecological habits recently for example eating less animal products or avoiding plastic? / Oletko viime aikoina vaihtanut...tänyt eläintuotteiden syöntiä tai muovin käyttöä?  
53 vastausta



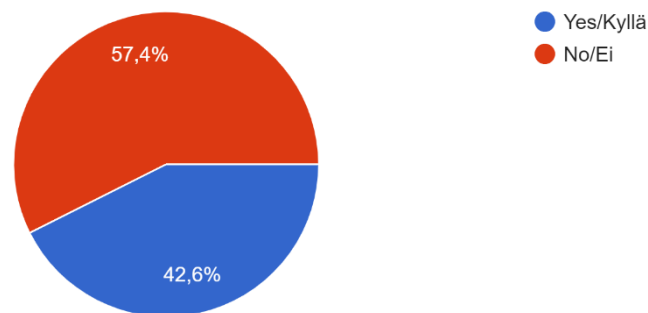
62,3 % of the respondents claim they have changed their habits to be more sustainable.

The findings from the questionnaire supports the research done in the United Kingdom where 36 % of the UK consumers are now buying products from sustainable companies. (Searle, F. 2020 Fresh Produce Journal) More and more consumers favour sustainable products and services

**Table 10: Do you specifically avoid certain harmful ingredients for example palm oil or microplastics?**

Do you specifically avoid certain harmful ingredients for example palm oil or microplastics? /  
Vältätkö joitakin tiettyjä haitallisia ainesosia, kuten palmuöljyä tai micromuovia?

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This question reveals whether respondents know the harmful effects of some ingredients and whether they avoid them or not. Most of the respondents do not specifically avoid some harmful ingredients.

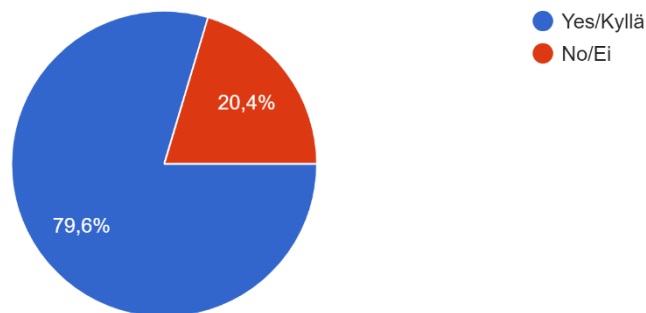
The question was to map out if the respondents are totally refusing some products or services because of their non-sustainable status. Nowadays microplastics has been a topic spoken widely. Moreover, it is problematic to the nature especially in oceans as plastic breaks down into harmful molecules. It takes up to thousands of years to decompose. Microplastics then is often consumes by marine animals. Microplastics can also be found in some cosmetic products where after every use it is flushed down the water system- may end up in the ocean. (National Geography, n.d) Moreover, another aim of the question was to find out whether the respondents would not use direct microplastics such as exfoliating lotions where there are microplastics in it. Also, the topic of harmful effects of microplastics

has recently been seen on the news. The question was to see if the respondents were aware enough to refuse to use some products or services that are considered highly unethical and non-sustainable.

**Table 11: Given the choice will you choose a green product over a conventional product?**

Given a choice will you choose a green product over conventional product? / Jos mahdollista, valitsetko kestävän kehityksen mukaisen tuotteen normaalin tuotteen sijaan?

54 vastausta



Over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the respondents would choose a green product over a conventional product.

Majority of the people would choose more sustainable products or services. Obviously, there may be different criteria for each respondent what they consider a green product because the criteria for them is wide and can be seen on different “sustainable levels” as researched in the theoretical part.

#### 4.1.5 Respondents’ view on green products

This part of the questionnaire determines how the responders also known as consumers view green products. Whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied on products and services that are made sustainability.

**Table 12: Satisfaction with green products**

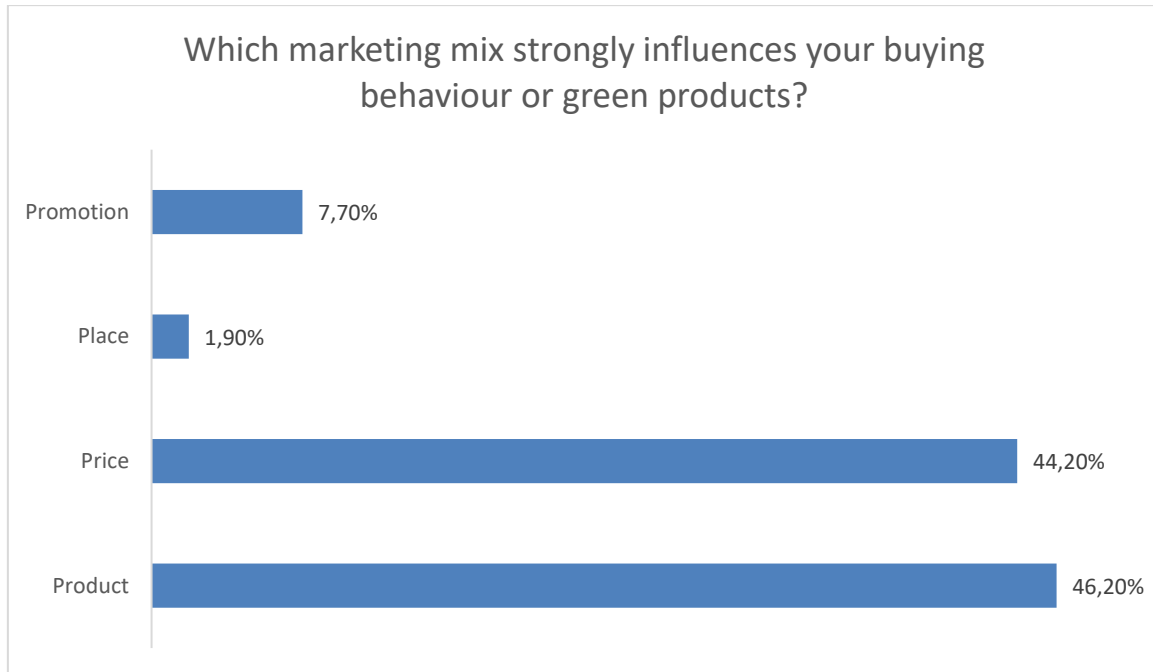
Mos of the responders are satisfied with their products. Only 1,6 % are dissatisfied with their products and 9,3 % have not bought any.

Majority of the respondents were satisfied with their products which advocates the findings previously about the qualities of green products as well as companies' strategies to satisfy consumers demands. Furthermore, companies are gaining economic sustainability by offering products that have been designed using Triple-bottom-line and CRS. Products are invented using newest technology and resources, making sure they have a long circular product lifecycle. Also, some laws and agreements have made sure companies take sustainability seriously and offer only acceptable and valuable products to the consumers.

Only a small percentage of the respondents were very much satisfied with green products which can indicate that sustainable products and services are still a new market which needs more development.

#### 4.1.6 Respondent's marketing mix influence when buying a product

**Table 13: Which marketing mix strongly influences your buying behaviour on green products?**

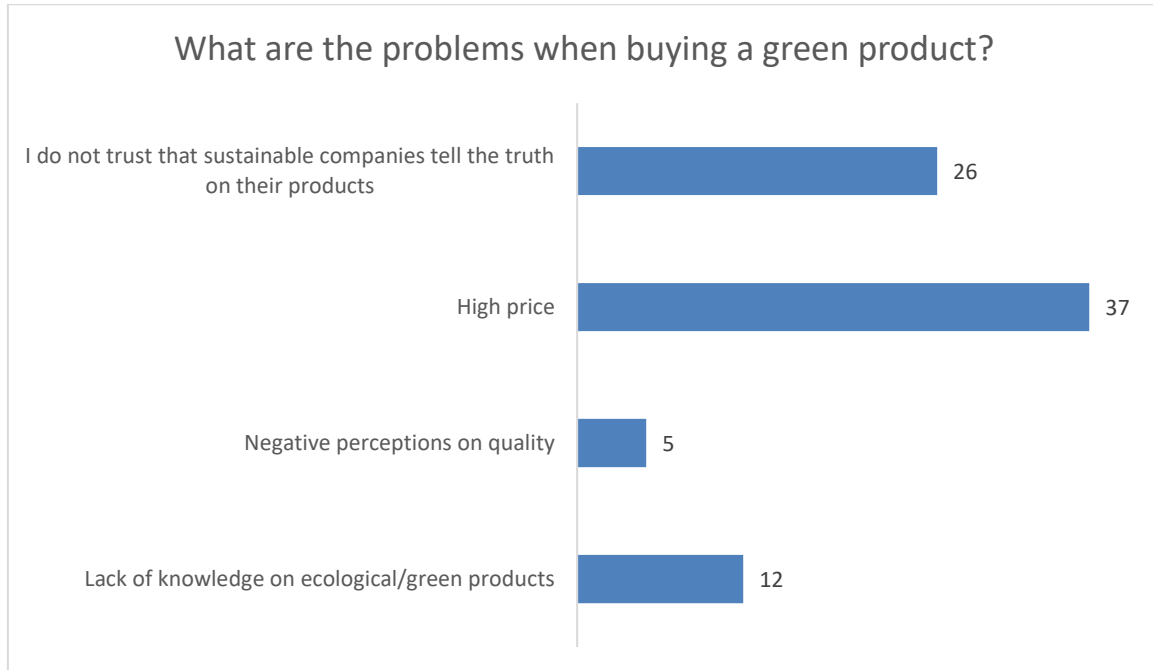


When choosing the product, most of the respondents think mostly about the price and the actual product. 7,7 % of the respondents also buy because of a certain marketing campaign and 1,9% buys from a certain shop or other platform like social media.

Surprisingly, promotion such as a marketing campaign was not a popular choice by the respondents. The low percentage of promotion does not correspond to the findings of the theoretical part according to which sustainable marketing tactics are the key to successful revenue for the company.

#### 4.1.7 What are the problems when buying a green product?

**Table 14: What are the problems when buying a green product?**



Respondents could give multiple answer on this question. 37 people find that the price of green products is too high. Also, thinking that sustainable companies do not tell the truth about their products to consumers is a worrying issue for the respondents.

The price of green products can be high because of various reasons such as the material used to make them. For instance, companies can prefer to use sustainable materials which are not mass-produced like non-sustainable materials. Also, sustainable companies are more ethical, paying fair wage to their employees which can increase the total sale price of a product. These are few of the reasons for higher prices for sustainable products.

Conventional products are often made the cheapest way, preferring mass-production, cheap and non-ecological materials, bad working places, and low wages. Cheaper products sell more than pricier ones, and for some companies the goal is to gain the most revenue than anything else such as sustainable responsibility.

Some respondents do not trust that companies tell the truth about their sustainability in the product's life-cycle process. The answer supports the findings and the research done with where companies can blindly market a product as eco-friendly because of the sustainable trend going on across the world. For example, companies can advertise t-shirts made from organic and sustainable cotton, but which is manufactured using unethical child-labour in low -income countries. Ecolabeling can help to identify sustainable companies because they meet the certain criteria for each product (European commission, n.d.). In addition, ecolabel products have been assed to reduce environmental impact form production to use and disposal so a customer by then can see the difference between "green washing" and a real sustainable product (European commission, n.d.).

**Table 15: Respondents' own answer about the problems when buying a green product.**

<p>The lack of information provided by companies who give certificates to different products such as MSC providing their certificate on seafood/fish and the fact that the certificate portraying sustainable fishing is something that cannot actually be measured since the number of fish is still decreasing and it is impossible in some cases to track if obtaining raw materials such as cocoa or food such as fish cannot actually be confirmed to be "sustainable". (Netflix documentary as a source about MSC, you should watch it.)</p>
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<p>I am not 100% sure if companies tell the truth when they claim that part of their profit from products goes to charity or to similar.</p>
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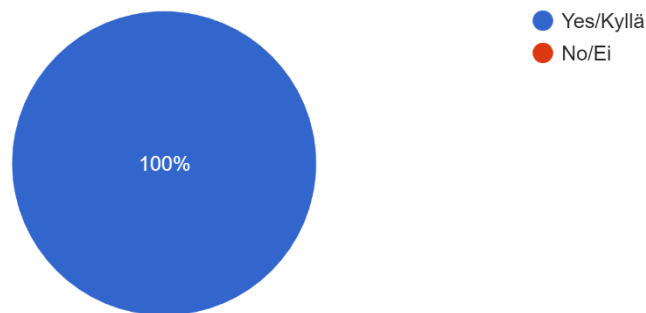
<p>Green products are hard to find/ not available</p>
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In the questionnaire, there was also a chance to write a comment on what kind of problems the responders see when buying a green product.

#### 4.1.8 The final thoughts about future

**Table 16: Do you hope companies would provide more products or come up with new ways of lowering ecological footprint?**

Do you hope companies would provide more green products or come up with new ways of lowering ecological footprint? / Toivotko yrityste...keksivän keinoja pienentää ekologista jalanjälkeä?  
54 vastausta



All the respondents hope that companies would provide more green products or come up with new ways of lowering ecological footprint.

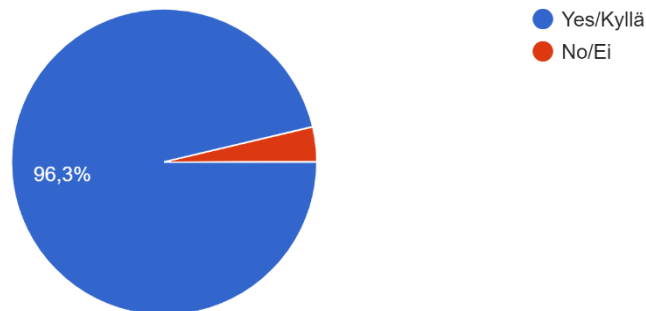
As mentioned in the theoretical framework, consumers buying process influences what companies provide in the markets. The positive outcome from the answers were that respondents are willing to support new sustainable inventions in the markets. Along with new eco-friendly products consumers are eager to come up with new regulations to make the markets more sustainable or giving support on the objectives companies may have in the future.



**Table 17: Do you believe sustainability will become a future norm?**

Do you believe sustainability will become a future norm? / Uskotko, että kestävä kehitys tulee olemaan tulevaisuuden normi markkinoilla?

54 vastausta



Nearly all the respondents believe sustainability will become a future norm and only 3,7 % (2 respondents) do not believe in that.

The aim of the question was to see if the ongoing trend is here to stay. Moreover, if new products and services are going to be invented using sustainable criteria as consumers are the ones who lead what the market gives.

The question sums up the whole questionnaire as it was focused on if the research had a meaningful outcome. Additionally, it concluded that consumers have a positive attitude on the increasing awareness in sustainability.

#### 4.2 Reliability of the research

The questionnaire had 54 respondent which was relatively low amount to make 100 % correct conclusion on Finnish consumers' view on sustainability. The questionnaire gave indicative answers on Finnish consumers' sustainable buying habits. Furthermore, the figures in the questionnaire were approximate and the conclusion from the results was based on that data.

The theoretical part can be considered true and accurate as they rely on more studied research. The data from the questionnaire was compared to the theoretical framework and as mentioned the accuracy of the questionnaire, the research can have a relatively high error margin.

## **5 Conclusion**

The aim of the study was to see if Finnish consumers understand what sustainability means, how they see it and how aware they are of their sustainable buying habits. The study included qualitative and quantitative research which was carried out in a questionnaire form. In addition to the questionnaire, theoretical background was studied which was supported by various research related to the topics.

Based on the results, Finnish consumers understand what sustainability means. Moreover, they are aware of the negative impacts consumerism and companies can have on the world if they are not practising sustainable habits. Consumers understand the connections between their needs and wants and what companies provide in the markets. The study shows that Finnish consumers favour various green actions such as recycling as well as understand negative assumptions regarding sustainability. Greenwashing was the major perception the consumers have as they worry that companies are not telling the truth on their sustainable products or services. In addition, consumers are willing to choose “green products” over conventional products to shift the markets to more sustainable even though they are concerned about the possible high price for them.

The quantitative and qualitative research confirms that sustainability as a trend is here to stay. Finnish consumers understand the negative impacts some companies have on the globe such as high emission gasses coming from their factories. They understand that using renewable sources in manufacturing can lower their ecological footprint by replacing fossil fuels to for example wind power or solar energy. Moreover, consumers hope that companies will start taking serious actions towards sustainable issues such as global warming.

The results of the research cannot be considered unambiguous as there were various factors influencing the respondents' answers. The assumption for the respondents were biased towards them understanding sustainability widely from ecological, social and economic aspect. In order to research Finnish consumers' view on sustainability and their green consumer behaviour more specifically and accurate the questionnaire should have had more wide range of specific questions that the respondents would clearly understand. The hypothesis of the thesis could still be the same but with more analytical data to analyse.

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## Appendix 1: Questionnaire: Green Consumer

Green Consumer: Kestävän kehityksen kysely

\*Answers will be anonymous

\*Vastaukset ovat nimettömiä

### 1. Age/Ikä

- 18-30
- 30-40
- 40-50
- 50-60
- 60+

### 2. Work status/ Työllisyys

- Student/Opiskelija
- Unemployed/Työtön
- Employed/Töissä
- Retired/Eläkkeellä

### 3. Education/Koulutus

- Primary School/Peruskoulu
- High School/Lukio
- Vocational School/Ammattiopisto
- Applied Sciences/Ammattikorkeakoulu
- University/Yliopisto
- Other/Muu

### 4. Do you know what sustainable practices are? / Tiedätkö mitä kestävä kehitys tarkoittaa tai mitä ekoystävälliset tavat merkitsevät?

- Yes/ Kyllä
- No/ Ei



5. Do you consider yourself as a sustainable (or environmental consciousness) consumer? /  
Pidätkö itseäsi ekologisesti, taloudellisesti tai sosiaalisesti kestäväenä kuluttajana?
- Yes/Kyllä
  - No/Ei
6. Is protecting environment important to you when choosing products? / Onko ympäristön suojeleminen tärkeä valintakriteeri, kun ostat tuotteen?
- Yes/Kyllä
  - No/Ei
7. Do you believe buying sustainable products will help for example slowing down a climate change? / Uskotko, että valitsemalla kestäväen kehityksen mukaisen (ympäristöystävällinen, ekologinen, eettinen) tuotteen, autat hidastamaan esimerkiksi ilmastonmuutosta?
- Yes/Kyllä
  - No/Ei
8. What "green actions" do you follow? / Mitä kestäväen kehityksen mukaisia toimitapoja noudatat?

*Select multiple choices*

- Recycling/ Kierrätys
- Use public transportation/ Julkinen liikenne
- Lower my meat consumption/ Vähennän lihansyöntiä
- Reserve water or electricity/ Säästän vettä tai sähköä
- Choose products that have a longer lifespan for example textile bags/ Valitsen tavaroita, joilla on pidempi elinikä esimerkiksi kestokassi
- Support ethical companies or ethically made products/ Tuen eettisiä yrityksiä tai tavaroita jotka ovat tehty eettisesti (ei lapsityövoimaa, tehotuontanto yms)
- Support locally produced products/ Suosin lähiruokaa tai -tavaroita
- Other/Muu:

9. Have you changed your ecological habits recently for example eating less animal products or avoiding plastic? / Oletko viime aikoina vaihtanut tapojasi ekologisempaan suuntaan esimerkiksi vähentänyt eläintuotteiden syöntiä tai muovin käyttöä?
- Yes/Kyllä
  - No/Ei
10. Do you specifically avoid certain harmful ingredients for example palm oil or microplastics? / Vältätkö joitakin tiettyjä haitallisia ainesosia, kuten palmuöljyä tai micromuovia?
- Yes/Kyllä
  - No/Ei
11. Given a choice will you choose a green product over conventional product? / Jos mahdollista, valitsetko kestävän kehityksen mukaisen tuotteen normaalin tuotteen sijaan?
- Yes/Kyllä
  - No/Ei
12. How will you describe your level of satisfaction regarding green products? / Kuinka tyytyväinen olet ollut kestävän kehityksen mukaiseen tuotteeseen?
- Very much satisfied/ Hyvin tyytyväinen
  - Satisfied/ Tyytyväinen
  - Neutral/ Neutraali
  - Dissatisfied/ En ole ollut tyytyväinen
  - I haven't bought any green products/En ole ostanut kestävän kehityksen mukaisia tuotteita
13. Which marketing mix strongly influences your buying behavior on green products? / Mikä markkinoinnissa vaikuttaa eniten kun ostat kestävän kehityksen mukaisen tuotteen?
- Product/Tuote
  - Price/Hinta
  - Place/Jakelu (esim. kauppa)
  - Promotion/Viestintä (esim. mainos)

14. What are the problems when buying a green product? / Mitä koet ongelmaksi, kun ostat kestävän kehityksen mukaisen tuotteen?

*Select multiple choices.*

- Lack of knowledge on ecological/green products / En tiedä tarpeeksi ekologisista tuotteista
- Negative perceptions on quality / En luota laatuun
- High price/ Korkea hinta
- I do not trust that sustainable companies tell the truth on their products / En luota, että kestävän kehityksen mukaiset yhtiöt ovat täysin rehellisiä tuotteistaan
- Other/Muu:

15. Do you hope companies would provide more green products or come up with new ways of lowering ecological footprint? / Toivotko yritysten kehittävän uusia ekologisimpia tuotteita tai keksivän keinoja pienentää ekologista jalanjälkeä?

- Yes/Kyllä
- No/Ei

16. Do you believe sustainability will become a future norm? / Uskotko, että kestävä kehitys tulee olemaan tulevaisuuden normi markkinoilla?

- Yes/Kyllä
- No/Ei