



**The influence of milk packaging on consumer buying behavior:  
Oatly case**

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Bachelor of Business Administration

Thesis plan

2022

## Abstract

<b>Degree</b> Bachelor of Business Administration
<b>Report/Thesis Title</b> The influence of milk packaging on consumer buying behavior: Oatly case
<b>Number of pages and appendix pages</b> 40+8
<p>As competition in the markets is swiftly increasing, marketers are looking for new ways to differentiate their products from their competitors. One of the most significant marketing tools when it comes to physical products nowadays is the packaging design. The packaging of a product has the ability to influence consumer behavior since the brand can communicate its values and beliefs through it.</p> <p>How the packaging design of Oatly milk influences consumer behavior is investigated in this thesis. Though, it focuses mainly on the packaging elements such as graphics, colors, size, and shape and partially on its materials and sustainability. The study is limited to milk packaging, while also consumer behaviors of individuals aged between 16-40, restrictedly residing in Finland are examined.</p> <p>Oatly is the case company for this study. Oatly underwent a huge transformation, going from a monotonous, boring to a more professional packaging design. It profited off the fact that many people browse and shop with their eyes, by treating the packaging as a tool for brand advertising.</p> <p>To generate relevant theories and assumptions, the theoretical framework of this study is centered around packaging design, elements, materials, packaging in the marketing mix, and consumer behavior, while also consumer behavior itself, consumer decision-making, consumer-brand connection, and consumer experience.</p> <p>Quantitative research was conducted with the development of an online survey, to compile more accurate data on consumer behavior. 70 respondents in total answered the survey, the results of which were then analyzed with the Excel platform.</p> <p>The results of the research revealed what message the Oatly packaging design conveys, its significance overall, and how respondents perceive the different elements displayed in the cartons. The outcomes were relatively positive, pointing out that the packaging design plays an important role when purchasing, while elements such as graphics, colors, and imagery are portrayed to assist with decision-making.</p> <p>Further research could explore different products provided by Oatly, other geographical areas, and group ages. This thesis, altogether, is developed for Oatly, though, many companies can benefit from the findings and what could further be examined.</p>
<b>Keywords</b> Packaging, consumers, design, milk packaging, attitudes

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# 1 Introduction

This is a research type of a bachelor's thesis for the Degree Programme in International business in the major specialization of Marketing at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. In this chapter, the writer will present the background of the research question, as well as the research target and research questions that contribute to achieving that goal. In addition, key principles and demarcation criteria will be discussed. Finally, the case company that will profit from this study will be introduced.

## 1.1 Background to the topic

Firms' success or failure is largely determined by competition. The relevance of a firm's activities that can add to its performance, such as inventions, a cohesive culture, or good implementation, is determined by competition. The search for an advantageous competitive position in an industry, the fundamental area in which competition happens, is known as a competitive strategy. The goal of competitive strategy is to create a viable and long-term advantage against the dynamics that shape industry rivalry. (Porter 1985, 1.)

As competition amongst marketers increases swiftly, companies explore distinct ways to stay relevant, gain a competitive advantage, and stand out in the market. Specifically, the marketing of a product and how it is promoted to potential customers play a significant role in today's era. Marketing can be done in numerous endless ways, depending solely on the product or service offered.

One of the most valuable marketing tools used by businesses is product packaging and its design. Product display is responsible for the majority of impulse purchases, and appealing packaging plays an essential part in product display. The ability of product packaging to communicate information to consumers and affect product choice is enhanced by point-of-purchase decisions -decisions made at the time of purchase. (Wang 2013, 1).

Focusing on Oatly's packaging, even though the development of such a product was unique and new to the market, it was not proven successful sales-wise. How Oatly started receiving all this popularity and demand, is when the CEO –Toni Petersson, was elected in 2014, and made major changes in the packaging design of the products (Stieg 2021).



Figure 1. The original Oatly packaging design



Figure 2. New updated Oatly packaging design

The packaging design of Oatly milk products has drastically changed, as illustrated in figures 1 and 2. The packaging design went from boring, monotonous, and easily forgettable to professional and educational, while the packaging language was modified from Swedish to English to go after an international audience (Stieg 2021).

A thorough investigation revealed that there is a gap in how consumers perceive the brand's packaging to be, and whether such impressions are mirrored in their purchasing decisions.

## 1.2 Research question

This thesis aims to investigate and observe how customers perceive the packaging of the product to be. Specifically, to examine how consumer behavior is influenced by the packaging design; colors, text, fonts, and visual images. The outcomes of the thesis were to be used by the company itself, which will help them determine if there are any changes to be made to the product package.

The commissioning company itself is international and widely recognized worldwide. The company conducts business operations in many countries already, while it is also very popular in the U.S.

The research question of the thesis is stated as follows: How does Oatly milk packaging influence consumer buying behavior?

In order to strategize our research study, we will explore 3 investigative research questions:

IQ 1. What message does Oatly milk packaging convey?

IQ 2. How significant do respondents think the design of Oatly packaging is?

IQ 3. How do respondents perceive different elements of Oatly packaging design?

Table 1 summarizes the theoretical frameworks, research methods, and results for every investigative question.

Table 1: Overlay matrix

Research questions	Theoretical Framework	Research Methods	Results
IQ 1. What message does Oatly milk packaging convey?	Consumer behavior, consumer-brand connection	survey	Customers' opinions on current product design
IQ 2. How significant do respondents think the design of Oatly packaging is?	Packaging, packaging design, packaging elements, packaging materials	survey	Customers' opinions on current product design
IQ 3. How do respondents perceive different elements of Oatly packaging design?	Packaging elements in relation with consumer behavior	survey	Customers' opinions on current product design

### **1.3 Delimitation**

The company's offerings vary from dairy products such as milk, yogurt, and ice cream to merchandise, namely, t-shirts. This thesis focuses mainly on milk product packaging to bring in more accurate data and conclusions. As a big fan of oat milk and the product itself being in high demand compared to other products, they are excluded from this research. This is, also, due to differentiations and dissimilarities in the design and sizes.

Additionally, the research concentrates mainly on the visual aspects of the packaging design, while partially on the materials and sustainability of it. That said, the package's visual features such as the text displayed, colors, pictures, and labels are investigated. The theoretical framework provides clear and general insights into the packaging elements and design.

Furthermore, a survey was conducted to receive more precise data on consumer behavior towards Oatly milk packaging design. Consequently, the number of participants was limited to a specific age group (16-40), and the study's geographical coverage was restricted to only Finland.

Lastly, this research is conducted completely for the commissioning company itself, excluding other companies. Conclusions and suggestions are mainly outlined for the selected company and cannot be utilized by other businesses, due to differences in the product variety and packaging designs. Other similar companies, though, can benefit from the theories presented and analyzed in chapter 2.

### **1.4 Benefits**

It goes without saying that this research benefits mainly the commissioning company itself. The research evaluates consumer behavior in relation to milk product packaging, which can be utilized by the company in its marketing efforts. The company will get a better understanding of how patterns and labels in the packaging affect consumer decisions, and consequently, it is on them if they desire to make possible changes in the future or keep the design as it is.

Secondly, the research brings in an overview of suggestions on how to increase brand awareness and competitiveness, thus, business value. There is detailed information on how customers perceive the product packaging to be, followed by conclusions and further recommendations for the future to be implemented -if approved.

This research is, also, centered around the emotional connection with the brand. How this thesis benefits B2C customers, is by bringing awareness of the evolution of the brand itself. Although the



company is globally well-known already, customers can make use of this thesis to gain a deeper understanding of how the company utilizes its packaging for many purposes than just storing milk.

Last but not least, this research thesis is of importance for both my personal and career development. I am able to apply all the theories learned during the past years of my studies, while also expanding my knowledge and acquiring new sets of ideas and terminology. As I am completing my internship at the same time, it also enhances my creativity and the way I think.

## 1.5 Key concepts

**Packaging** plays 'a key role in communicating product benefits to the customer.' The dynamic effects of the surrounding business environment have an impact on packaging design and the environment. These factors include changes in customer values such as improved convenience and usefulness, as well as environmental and food safety (Rundth 2009, 988-989.)

**Consumer behavior** is 'the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires.' Consumer behavior is a continuous process, not only what happens when a customer passes over cash money or a credit card in exchange for a product or service. (Solomon 2017, 28-29.)

The **four P's** -marketing mix, consist of the product (the good or service), the price (what the client pays), the place (where the product is sold), and the promotion (the advertising). The 4 Ps of marketing is a concept that describes the four fundamental pillars of any marketing plan. (Shapiro 1985.)

**Brand** describes the strategic methods used by managers to establish and maintain the associations that consumers have with certain goods, services, businesses, etc. (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg 2016, p. 42)

## 1.6 Commissioning company

It all began in the late 1980s in the Swedish south, but Oatly was officially founded in the 1990s. The idea behind Oatly is the development of plant-based milk as a replacement for cow milk, for those who are lactose intolerant. They wanted this new development to be the best balance of nutritional value and sustainability and a tasty enough flavor to pull consumers. Oats are the primary ingredient of their products, followed by rapeseed oil and they use mainly paper packaging (Oatly 2022).

They have offices in Landskrona, Helsinki, Amsterdam, New York, London, Berlin, Shanghai, and Hong Kong, in addition to their headquarters in Malmö, Sweden. As of 2019, the company has now 3 factories: one in Landskrona, Sweden, one in Millville, New Jersey, and one in Vlissingen, the Netherlands. Oatly's customers are based in 25 countries and consist of grocery shops, restaurants, and coffee shops Sweden, Germany, and the United Kingdom are Oatly's main markets, with its goods available in 60,000 retail outlets and 32,200 coffee cafes worldwide as of December 2020. Their expansion also continued in terms of personnel with a 74% increase in the number of employees (Oatly 2022).

The company has shown immensely its commitment to sustainability which can be also seen in its packaging. Oatly has looked at numerous choices for cup, seal, and lid packaging materials to identify the greatest potential combination for the Sustainable Cups project, which has been a cross-functional initiative. The material was assessed for climate impact, cost, and compatibility with existing machinery. In comparison to current figures, this novel packaging material based on paper instead of plastic has the potential to reduce climate effects by 50% (Oatly 2022).



Figure 3. Oatly packaging elements as an advertising tool

Due to a lack of finances for their media budget, the designers decided to include advertisements within the box. This was an interesting concept because it draws shoppers' attention and encourages them to interact with the design work. The images on the box are creative and colorful, providing a feeling of amusement to the customer, with a welcoming message. This helps visitors to learn about the company's values in an approachable manner (Walker 2019). (see figure 3)

## 2 Packaging and consumer buying behavior

This chapter focuses on the thesis research ideas, concepts, and assumptions.

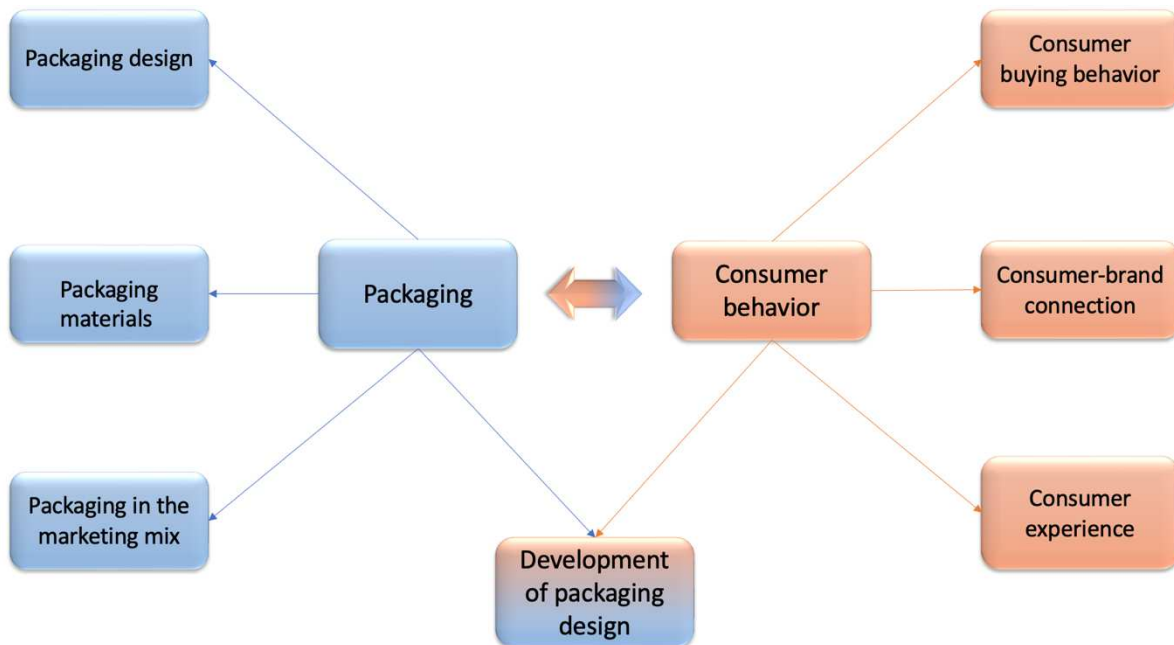


Figure 4. The relationship between packaging and consumers which results in suggestions for the development of packaging design

As shown in figure 4, the theoretical framework will present the concept of packaging which consists of the packaging design and materials. In addition, where packaging stands in the marketing mix will be discussed, while also where Oatly is placed between the so called 4PS. Next, how packaging is an important marketing tool in consumer behaviour will be showcased, all aspects of consumerism will then be introduced such as consumer behaviour itself, consumer decision-making (purchasing), consumer and brand connection, and finally, consumer experience -moments of truth. All these concepts aim to develop suggestions for packaging design in relation to consumer buying behaviour.

### 2.1 Packaging

In-store shopping provides you with the opportunity to explore many alternatives in a world full of various options. When considering purchasing a product -specifically one that you have not come across before, numerous factors should be taken into consideration. While roaming around the supermarket aisles, though, the one and only thing that catches your eye is the packaging of the products available. When and why, though, was packaging initially invented for?

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the help of new technologies, producers and farmers gained the ability to provide and supply their products to shops and stores in packed patterns, which advantageously assisted them to, as well, using more eye-catching packages for traders to sell their products in. Packaging holds practical importance to this day, as it is required to protect the product itself during transportation to the stores' shelves. As marketing, though, is becoming more advanced and marketers are looking for new ways to market their products, they developed new roles for packaging. (Calver 2004, p.6)

The packaging of a product is currently used as a sales and product differentiation tool between different manufacturers selling the same product. It does nowadays represent the values and communicates the identity of the brand, while of course maintaining its primary function and generating sales. (Calver 2004, p.7) Because of the vast availability of options for consumers, there is increased product competition, which stimulates the demand for market distinction. Both products and their packaging unite to the point where they are no longer perceived as dissimilar, distinct items. Consequently, regardless of whether it is a rational or impulse purchase, the physical appearance of a product's packaging is in fact the only factor causing its sale. (Klimchuk & Krasovec 2012, p. 39)

## **2.2 Packaging design**

Packaging designs that tend to be appealing and eye-catching are not sufficient. The end goal when designing a package should be to meet the desired sales objectives and reach the highest potential when placing the product in the market. (Klimchuk & Krasovec 2012, p. 43)

Identifying what allows the packaging to communicate effectively -while another remains unclear, can be vastly achieved by applying design ideas to the packaging layout. To produce the proper harmony of balance, tension, and proportion inside a design layout, fonts, typography, and imagery are included. (Klimchuk & Krasovec 2012, p. 55-56) Essential design ideas will be presented in table 2, as follows.

Table 2. Packaging design layout (Klimchuk &amp; Krasovec 2012, p. 55-56)

<u>DESIGN CONCEPTS</u>	<u>DEFINITION</u>
<b>BALANCE</b>	When a design's elements are merged into a structured whole. Balance can be influenced by symmetry and asymmetry respectively.
<b>CONTRAST</b>	When elements are put together in a manner that highlights their variations. This can be achieved by using multiple loads, shapes, shades, colours etc.
<b>TENSION</b>	When elements are emphasized more than others resulting in harmony and an increase in visual interest.
<b>POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SPACE</b>	The positive is an item or element, while on the other hand, the negative is the place or setting in which the element appears.
<b>VALUE</b>	The colour's shade; lightness or darkness. Conflicting values can direct the audience's focus on specific layout's parts.
<b>WEIGHT</b>	The size, shape and colour of a visual component in comparison to the rest of the elements.
<b>POSITION</b>	Refers to how elements are placed in regard to one another which results in drawing the viewer's attention.
<b>ALIGNMENT</b>	The positioning of visual components in groupings which enhances the information flow and easiness of the layout to look at and read.
<b>TEXTURE</b>	Graphical patterns, illustration and imagery can all convey texture, which adds depth or replicates physical features such as smoothness etc.
<b>HIERARCHY</b>	As per their perceived importance, visual elements are placed in a hierarchical order. Such significance can be displayed and communicated through design concepts as follows: size, weight, value etc.

### **2.2.1 Packaging elements**

As proven, consumers' initial attention is drawn by physical design components. As long as the visual data matches the overall impression, the process proceeds quickly, and the lesser people have to spend grasping the meaning, the more effective it will be reviewed. (Al-Samarrie, Eldenfria, Doodoo, Alzahrani & Alalwan 2019, p.2) Customers take just a few seconds to settle on choices, and once they are time-pressured, they have a restricted time to go through all featured information which either limits the amount of data they can process or forces them to prioritize conceptual design features rather than brand-related ones. (Klimchuk & Krasovec 2012, p. 55)

Typography, symbols, colours, and structures are a few of the visual components of a packaging design that can contribute to a company's brand equity. The visual synthesis of such components establishes the brand, where then brand identity fosters an emotional bond with customers. This emphasizes the customers' ability to visually identify significant design concepts, which is essential for the success of the company's marketing efforts. (Klimchuk & Krasovec 2012, p. 47-48)

#### **Typography**

Typography serves as the main means of conveying a product's name, purpose, and other essential information to a large consumer audience, making it one of the most important aspects of the visual representation of the product (Ambrose & Harris 2011, p.159). It should be readable from a distance of a few feet, tailored to the size and shape of the three-dimensional (3D) structure, understandable to a broad audience, and provide a reliable description of the product (Klimchuk & Krasovec 2012, p. 70).

The typography is vital since the personality of the product leaves its first and strongest impression via the product name and brand logo. (Al-Samarrie, Eldenfria, Doodoo, Alzahrani & Alalwan 2019, p.3). Every step of the process should adjust stroke weights, letter heights, kerning, spacing, ligatures, outlines, colors, and symbols (Klimchuk & Krasovec 2012, p. 75). Ingredients must be written in a single, clear typeface and displayed in one color—either black or white—on a white or other neutral, contrasting background. All caps or upper- and lowercase letters may be used, but they must be spaced so that they do not touch (Klimchuk & Krasovec 2012, p. 79).

#### **Colours**

People's psychology, sentiments, and even decisions about their emotions and mental states can be influenced by color, which is why we might refer to this as the "changing of emotions" (Zhang 2016, p.688). It is possible to employ each color efficiently and get a result with the least amount of effort by just being aware of its psychological importance (Krishna, Cian & Aydinoglu 2016, p.7).

Color helps buyers recognize products by making it easier to tell one apart from another. Thus, it has been utilized to convey the quality and longevity of products (Al-Samarrie, Eldenfria, Dodoo, Alzahrani & Alalwan 2019, p.2).

Different colors can give consumers specific psychological clues and indications, such as feelings of warmth and cold, softness and hardness, taste and, imagination. Longer-wavelength colors (e.g., blue) are less effective at calming people and tend to arouse enthusiasm compared to shorter-wavelength colors (e.g., red). Further, black and white colors are proven to evoke memories, leading to nostalgia. (Krishna, Cian & Aydinoglu 2016, p.7)

### **Imagery**

Comparison between various product alternatives is made simpler by graphics, especially for less engaged consumers. High-quality imagery has the power to send customers a message of quality and triggers a significant number of impulse purchases. (Al-Samarrie, Eldenfria, Dodoo, Alzahrani & Alalwan 2019, p.3). As Joutsela (2010) reveals, images are powerful tools for speedy and lasting communication and engagement, as they are four times more memorable than words.

Photography performs a broad range of communication tasks, from displaying or demonstrating how a product can be utilized to being used for showing emotions that support the creation of a visual brand identity. On the other hand, in comparison to photography, illustration gives products a vital public face and has the tendency to both beautify the packaging and inform (Ambrose & Harris 2011, p.150-154)

### **Size and Shape**

Shape emphasizes the preventive and practical functions for holding, pouring, and storing while on the other hand, to allow product shelf space and give it its own distinct personality, the size of the package could be made in a different way. Overall, size and shape influence how consumers perceive the product to be, consequently, their purchase decisions. (Ahmad & Ahmad 2015, p.96)

## **2.3 Packaging materials**

The choice of material is vital to packaging design. The material to be used when packing a product is highly influenced by the product itself. As pre-mentioned, the primary focus of the packaging has been to prevent and preserve the product from damages, which dependent on the product, the most suitable material should be utilized accordingly.



However, the material to be used, influences consumers' perceptions of a product as well, by the way, it looks and feels when held while it also does transmit data about the product's quality. Most individuals automatically link particular qualities -such as excellence, elegance, and exclusivity, with unique features and feelings. (Calver 2004, p.112) The consumer can learn a lot about a product's attributes through touch as well. By using various different materials, textures or layers (varnishes etc), a flexible, smooth or gritty feeling is given to the packaging (Joutsela 2010, p.228)

### **Sustainability**

As the primary function of the packaging has been to preserve the product from damage, after thorough research, it is revealed that customers now lean to different packaging materials as they are becoming more environmentally conscious (Al-Samarrie, Eldenfria, Dodoo, Alzahrani & Alalwan 2019, p.4).

### **2.4 Packaging in the marketing mix**

McCarthy (1964) proposed the marketing mix, as a strategy for carrying out marketing planning. In microeconomic theory, the marketing mix begins with the single P (price), where additionally new Ps were added in order to compete in a highly competitive environment. (Gai 2009, p.2)

The **four P's** -marketing mix, now consists of the product (the good or service), the price (what the client pays), the place (where the product is sold), and the promotion (the advertising). The 4 Ps of marketing is a concept that describes the four fundamental pillars of any marketing plan. (Shapiro 1985)

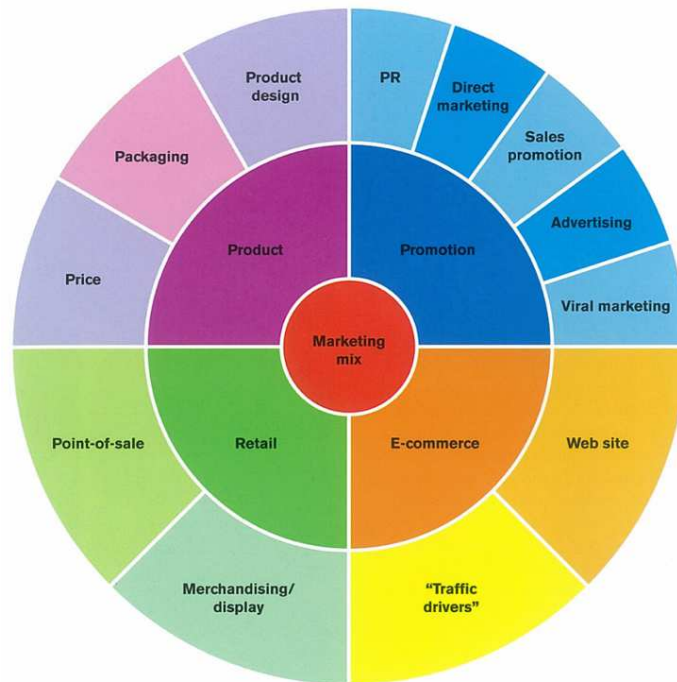


Figure 5. Packaging as part of the marketing mix (Calver 2004, p.15)

A product marketer might well have sufficient resources and the ability to create a marketing strategy and media plan that fully utilizes each of the many media. Calver (2004) emphasizes that in order to increase consumer awareness, companies run advertising, public-relation campaigns and sales-promotion strategies, which prompt customers to the presence of a product in-store and explain the product or offer in-depth, and **packaging designs**, which are utilized to sell the product at the point of sale. As seen in figure 5, packaging is part of the product, but where does Oatly packaging design stand in the marketing mix?

#### 2.4.1 Oatly packaging design in the marketing mix

Worth sharing is the following statement as mentioned by John Schoolcraft when interviewed about Oatly's packaging design:

The aim was to get customers to pick it up out of curiosity, so we intentionally made these look like we'd just made these in the basement at home. We thought that on every side of the packaging there should be something interesting to read. The legal side on the back we refer to as the boring side. We know that once we're in people's hands, they read the copy, try us, and tend, in great numbers, to like the taste. (The marketing society n.d.)



Figure 6. Oatly packaging design (Oatly 2022)

According to 'ccc' statement, the brand's purpose when developing the packaging design was to make customers curious about what's printed on the milk cartons and eventually, encourage them to experience the milk's flavor. Catchy headlines, visually appealing graphics, and the color scheme displayed, as seen in figure x, Oatly is utilizing its packaging as means of advertising and even communicating how sustainability is at the core of its values. (see figure 6)

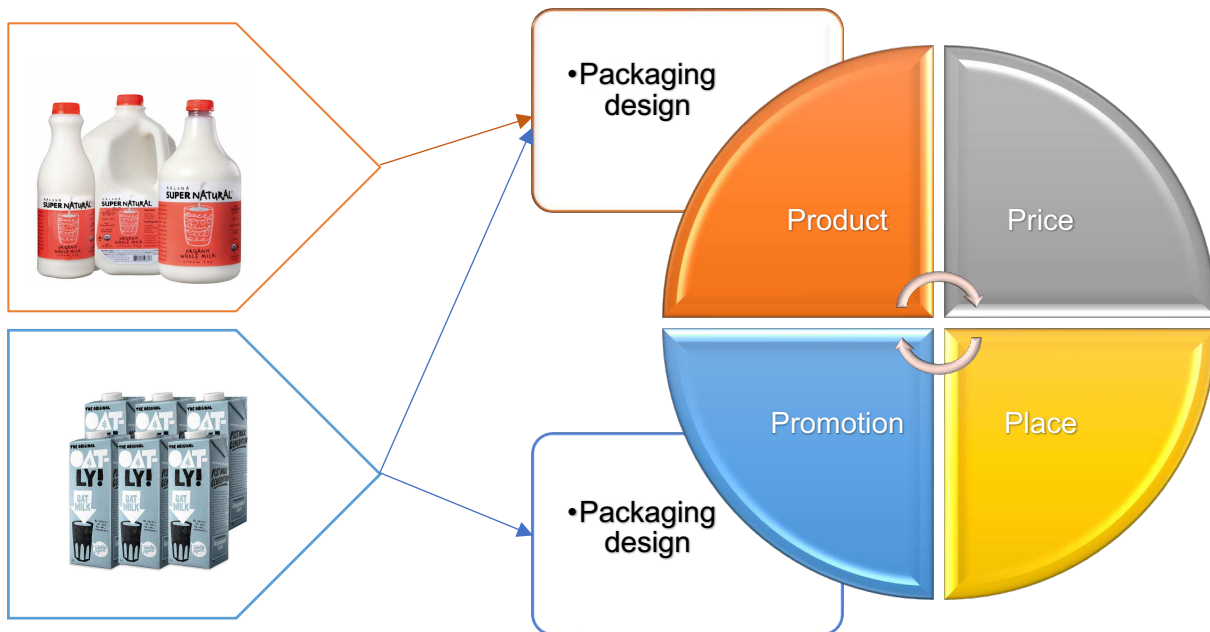


Figure 7. Oatly packaging design as means of promotion

As visualized in figure 7, while other brands utilize their packaging only for storing or protecting the content of a product, Oatly has taken it a further step, by incorporating its packaging design in its marketing efforts in a way to promote and highlight its values and beliefs.

## 2.5 Packaging in consumer buying behaviour

Prior research has demonstrated that visual packaging features, notably for low-involvement products, have a significant effect on consumer purchasing decisions. Low-involvement products are those that are shopped regularly, with little thought, research, or buying time. Food products and beverages are seen as low-involvement products due to their low value and large volume. **(in-text reference)**

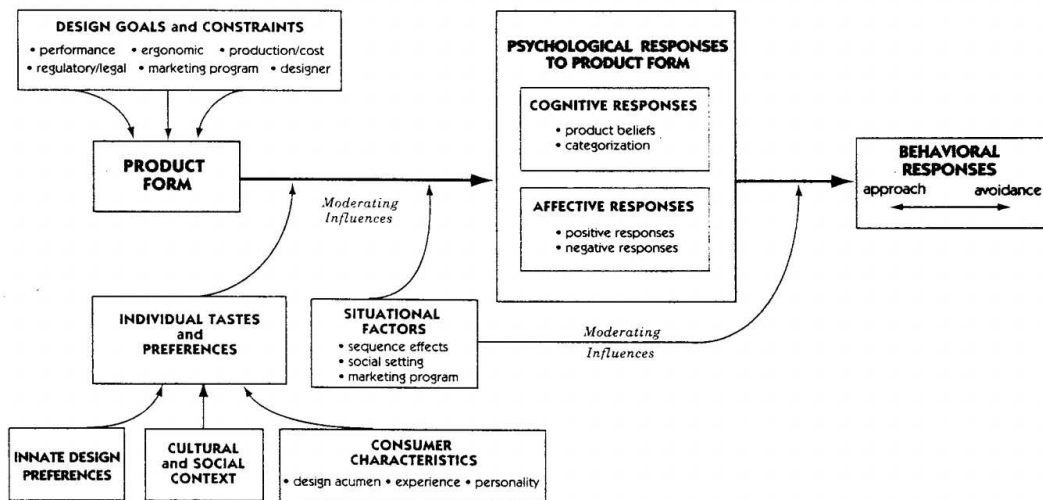


Figure 8. Bloch's model of Consumer Responses to Product Form (Bloch 1995)

It is necessary to discuss packaging design and its communication function in connection to Bloch's Model of Consumer Responses to Product Form (see figure 8). The idea explains how a product's shape affects consumers' psychological and behavioural responses. A product's physical shape or design, according to Bloch (1995), is an inarguable component in determining its commercial success. Bloch's approach addresses the problem of standing out in crowded markets by focusing on consumer response to product shape. He states that the ideal shape is one that performs better than alternatives in terms of its ability to cause members of the target markets to have favorable attitudes, feelings, and approach reactions; consumers' aesthetic preferences should be considered, and it should enhance the current product range.

To sum it up, packaging is without a doubt viewed as a crucial step in the marketing process. Its value is well acknowledged in the contexts of marketing and communications, branding, design, and **consumer behavior**.

## 2.6 Consumer behaviour

**Consumer behavior** is 'the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires.' Consumer behavior is a continuous process, not only what happens when a customer passes over cash money or a credit card in exchange for a product or service. (Solomon 2017, 28-29.)

All Western societies may share some basic assumptions about the psychological and sociological impact on consumer behavior. On the contrary, some hypotheses might be based on cultural differences. Consumer research in Europe reveals that some consumer segments do display behaviors that are identical across geographical borders and that knowledge of the consumption environment can be applied to identify the cultures of the countries one is visiting. However, European consumer behaviors vary even from one country to another based on components such as self-motivation, cultural background, family relationships and daily life cycles. (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg 2016, p. 3)

As Wänke (2008) states, people are rated based on the brands and items they use which yet is not shocking taking into consideration that they represent a form of social expression. In a market with thousands of brands and products, customers choose the ones that best describe their personality, and values, or associate themselves with people they admire.

### 2.6.1 Consumer decision-making

Figure 9 showcases the process a consumer goes through when making a decision. Starting off, the first stage in the process is **problem identification**. When there is a notable gap between a current situation and a desired one, an issue is recognized. No matter how small or big, easy, or complex the issue is, it must be addressed. The second stage, once the problem is identified, consists of an **information search**. The so-called information search is the process a consumer follows to look up relevant information that will help to make a profound, wise decision. When researching, a consumer is faced with many available options in the market. Given the plethora of **alternatives** in today's consumer world, the decision to be made is not simple. At the point of selecting a product, the decision rules that influence a consumer's choice might span from simple, drastic tactics to complex ones. The information available at the time of purchase, and perceptions about the brand embraced via advertising can all influence **the purchase** -4<sup>th</sup> stage. The last stage of the process concludes the satisfaction perceived post-purchase aka **outcomes**. Such behavior then is an important factor when considering future purchases. (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg 2016, p.331-352)



Figure 9. The process of consumer decision-making (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg 2016, p.331)

### **Ethical consumer**

An ethical consumer makes product choices based on the company's ethical practices, including the commitment to human rights, animal welfare, environmental responsibility, and contributions to philanthropic organizations. With that being said, this type of customer uses their purchasing behavior as a 'tool' to promote businesses that share the same values with and reject or undermine those who do not. (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg 2016, p. 53)

### **In-store consumer behavior**

The likelihood that consumers will select a product is increased by more visual attention. Clement, Aastrup, and Forsberg (2013), during their research, revealed that products of a national brand receive greater attention when placed together with those of a private label, by being positioned close to one another. Furthermore, when items are easier to rationalize, and information is easier to digest, consumers make decisions effortlessly.

#### **2.6.2 Consumer-brand connection**

One of the key principles of modern consumer behavior is that consumers frequently purchase goods not for what they really deliver or are, but rather for what they represent. This principle argues that the roles the products play in consumers' lives go past the tasks they carry out, yet their primary function is not deemed worthless. When all criteria are met, an individual will select the brand that best matches their fundamental needs in terms of having an image or personality. (Wänke 2008, p.10)

Figure 10 represents how to create a stronger brand and get closer to consumers' minds. Initially, there should be a mental association between the brand and a product category or benefit. Next, skilfully, by connecting a variety of concrete brand associations, a whole idea or image of the brand will be created in peoples' minds leading to getting the right reactions and gradually, transforming into a strong brand-customer relationship. (Keller 2013, p.107)



Figure 10. Keller's brand equity model (Keller 2013)

The core of brand equity is the product since it has the biggest impact on how consumers interact with brands, what they learn about brands from others, and what businesses may say about brands in their interactions. Strong brand marketing requires creating and providing a product that completely meets and satisfies customer needs and wants, regardless of what that product might be. In order to foster brand loyalty and resonance, as seen at the top of the pyramid, marketers must assure that consumers' experiences with the said product equal, or even exceed their expectations. (Keller 2013, p.111-112)

### **Brand commitment**

The willingness to uphold a valuable, vital relationship with a brand and a favorable attitude towards it is named brand commitment. What may emerge from commitment, is brand loyalty, which eventually results in increased benefits, such as strong word-of-mouth marketing, resisting competitors' marketing efforts, and lower marketing expenses. (Fetscherin & Hellmann 2015, p.18-19)



### 2.6.3 Consumer experience

Shopping may be a pleasant or unpleasant experience for people. They may enjoy the flexibility of simply selecting from a range of different options and alternatives, feel overloaded and rushed by the plethora of choices available, or even be dissatisfied by a limited selection that does not satisfy their needs. On the other hand, they might feel more confident when knowing they can afford a specific consumption lifestyle or 'grieve' the fact that they cannot. (Wänke 2008, p.10)

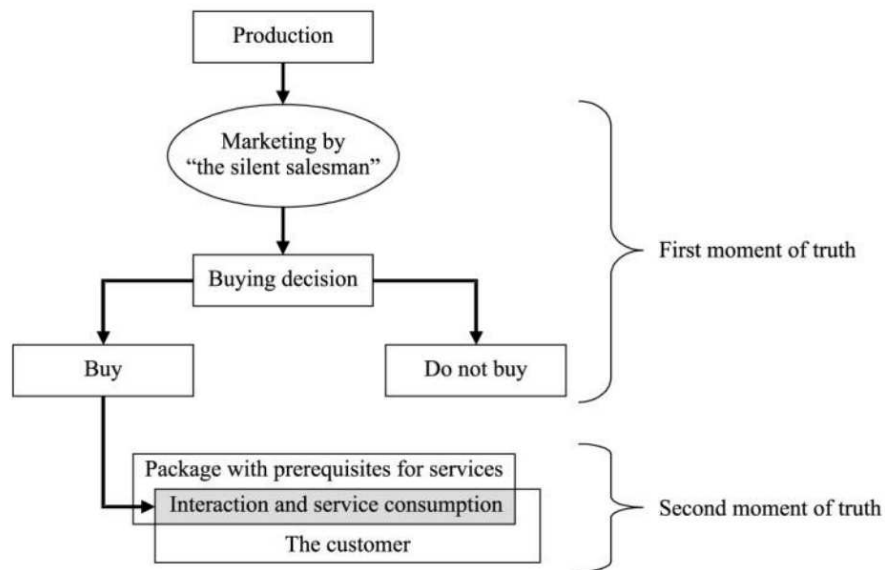


Figure 11. First and second moments of truth (Löfgren, Witell & Gustafsson 2016, p. 465)

The power of the package to attract customers' attention as they are for instance pushing their shopping trolleys in the market, constitutes the first moment of truth. It is an important consideration in the decision-making process since it actually interacts with the shopper in the store, while also other factors are taken into consideration such as price information, the brand, and the store itself. Though in comparison with other media tools, packaging design is of higher importance because of its easy accessibility. (Löfgren, Witell & Gustafsson 2016, p. 465)

Using and consuming the goods is part of the second moment of truth. The packaging must be simple to use, the information displayed must be accurate to prevent product misuse and it must fit in storage rooms. Since there is no personnel involved in the second moment of truth, it is essential that companies create packages with user-friendly service criteria. (see figure 11) (Löfgren, Witell & Gustafsson 2016, p. 465)

### 3 Research Methods

This chapter concentrates on the research methodology. The research design, data collection method, and data analysis method are parts and phases included in this study and explained in this chapter.

#### 3.1 Research design

Figure 12 illustrates the research design figure, which consists of the respondents, the research method used to collect data, the data analysis method and the relationship between the investigative questions.

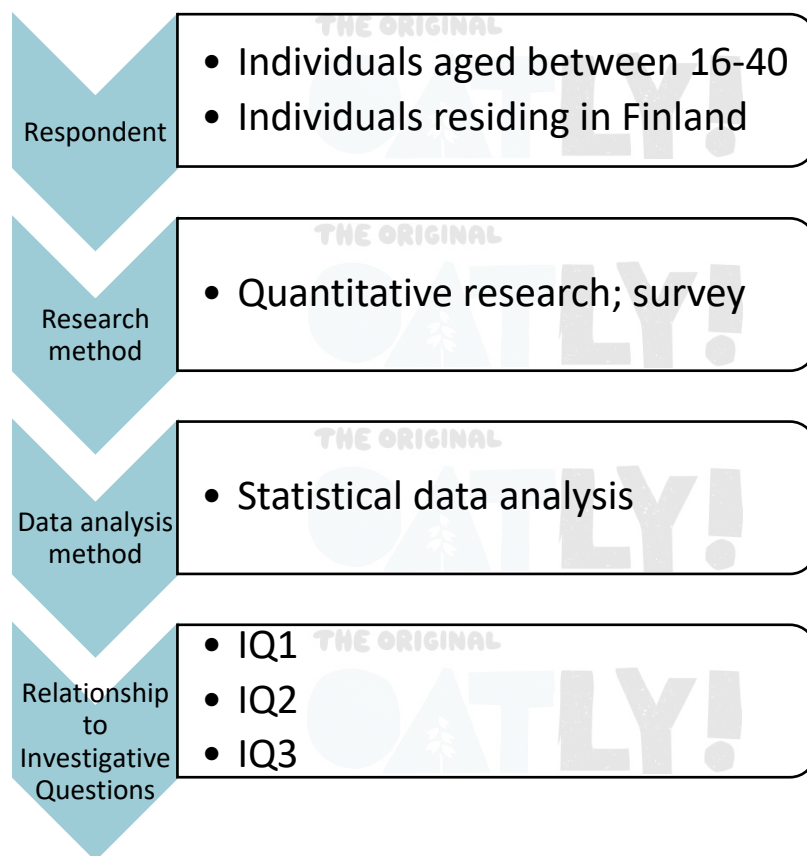


Figure 12. Research design figure

#### 3.2 Data collection

Quantitative research was designed to better understand how packaging design and its elements affect consumers and their decisions. Considering Burns and Veeck's (2020, p.181) approach, online surveys are relatively fast to create and conduct, and of a medium cost and data quality, and subsequently, the reason why the development of a survey was adopted.

### 3.2.1 Design of the data collection tool

The survey was developed in accordance with chapter 2. The author, in order to stay relevant to the theory obtained in chapter 2 and answer all 3 investigative questions set, created a survey respectively. Prospective respondents came across an introduction tab when entering the survey, which summed up the purpose of the research. The introduction window was specifically designed for individuals to get in first touch with the researcher and, of course, the significance of the research. In the meantime, demographic questions were included to gain background data on the respondents such as gender, occupation, monthly wage, etc.

Besides, to better understand how respondents feel about the packaging design, the Likert scale was adopted. What is meant by the Likert scale, is when respondents are asked to specify the level of agreement or disagreement with given statements. The Likert scale was used for both agreement/disagreement and the likelihood of responses. A basic slider scale was, also, included in the survey, which granted the respondent the chance to drag an indication on a bar (Burns & Veeck 2020, p.195-196) To better picture the survey composition, in appendix 1, the survey format is presented.

The survey was shared on the author's social media channels (Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp - own networks) and at the university's lobby with a printed QR code. The survey was activated on September 23<sup>rd</sup> and deactivated on October 11<sup>th</sup>, allowing prospective respondents to fill it out with more than a 2-week notice.

### 3.3 Sample size

**Nonprobability sampling** eliminates members of the population, so part of it does not stand a chance of being selected. **Purposive sampling** as a category of nonprobability sampling is when a population sample is chosen based on one's own judgment when identifying the most suitable sample. (Burns & Veeck 2020, p.243)

The target group of the research, as seen in figure 13, was individuals aged between 16-40, those well aware of the brand's identity and how they are trying to communicate their values through their packaging. Additionally, a second standard was individuals residing in Finland.

In order to ensure that respondents fulfilled the criteria, when entering the survey, they faced two screening questions. They were initially asked about their age group, which was divided into 4 sub-categories: 16-20, 21-30, 31-40, and 40+. When the last option (40+) was selected, it would lead them to the end of the survey -the so-called thank you page. A second question regarding their

residential area was included. The question itself contained two options: yes or no when asked if they reside in Finland. Again, respondents were eliminated from the survey when pressing 'other'. (see appendix 1)

### **3.4 Data analysis method**

Once the survey was deactivated, the author came across many similarities in the responses. To best analyze and interpret the results, they were exported to Excel sheets. Then graphs were created accordingly. The usage of SPSS was not possible since the answers did not differ much from each other, thus, there was nothing to be compared.

## 4 Results

This chapter will give an in-depth analysis of the quantitative research.

### 4.1 Introduction to Respondents

The survey form was opened by 345 individuals, where 139 started responding and only 106 fully submitted the survey form.

As mentioned previously, respondents faced two screening questions when initially entering the survey form, where then, they were eliminated based on their age and permanent residence location.

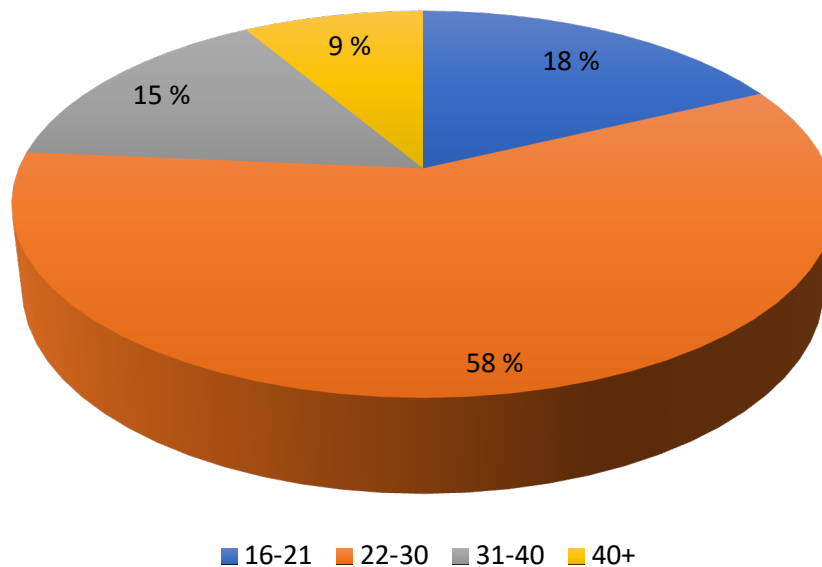


Figure 13. Age distribution of respondents (n=106)

One of the two screening questions when setting foot in the survey was regarding the respondents' age. Individuals over 40 years old with a total of 9% were eliminated from the survey, while the rest 91% with percentages 58%, 15% and 18% were 22-30, 31-40 and 16-21 respectively. (see figure 13)

The second screening question was residence-based since the research was mainly focused on individuals residing permanently in Finland. From a total number of 106 respondents, only 67% of them made it to answering the rest of the survey, which percentage is equivalent to a sum of 70 individuals. (see appendix 3)

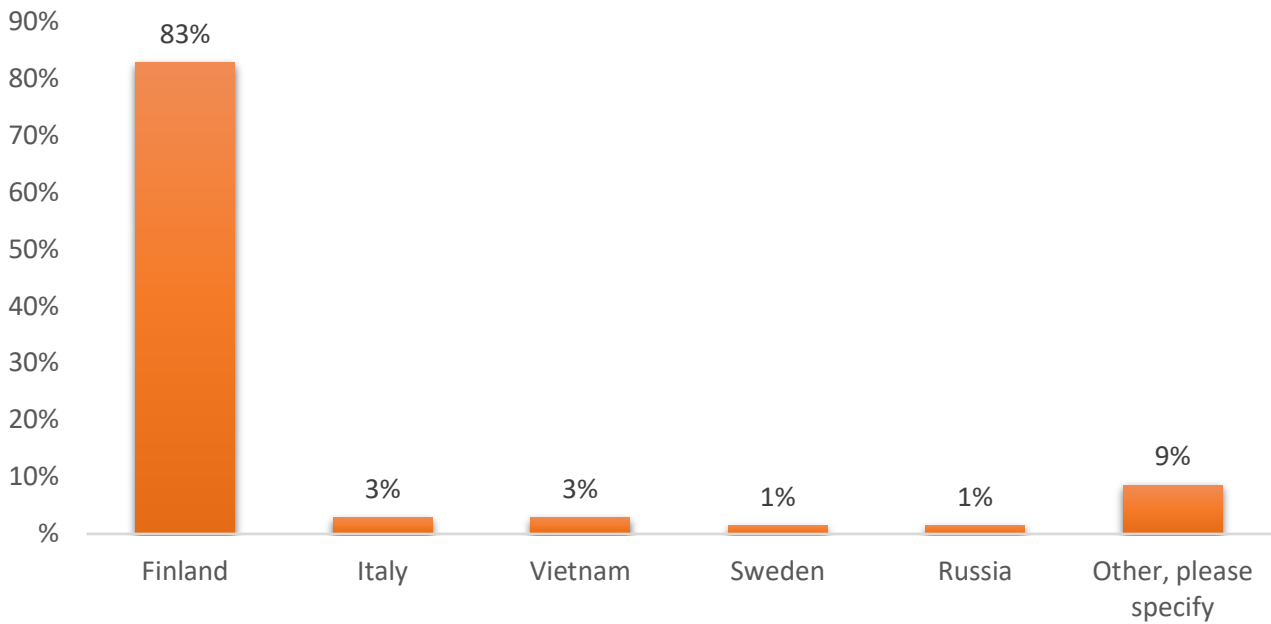


Figure 14. Origin of respondents (n=70)

With an outstanding percentage of 83%, Finland ranked first amongst other nationalities. With that being said, 58 out of 70 individuals were Finnish, while residents originated from Vietnam (2) and Italy (2) came second. Added to the mix were individuals from Sweden, Russia, UK, Greece, Albania, Latvia, Germany and Democratic Republic of Congo. (see figure 14)

Gender-wise, 62% of identified as females, while 31% were males. The rest 4% and 3%, preferred not to say or identified as non-binary respectively. (see appendix 4)

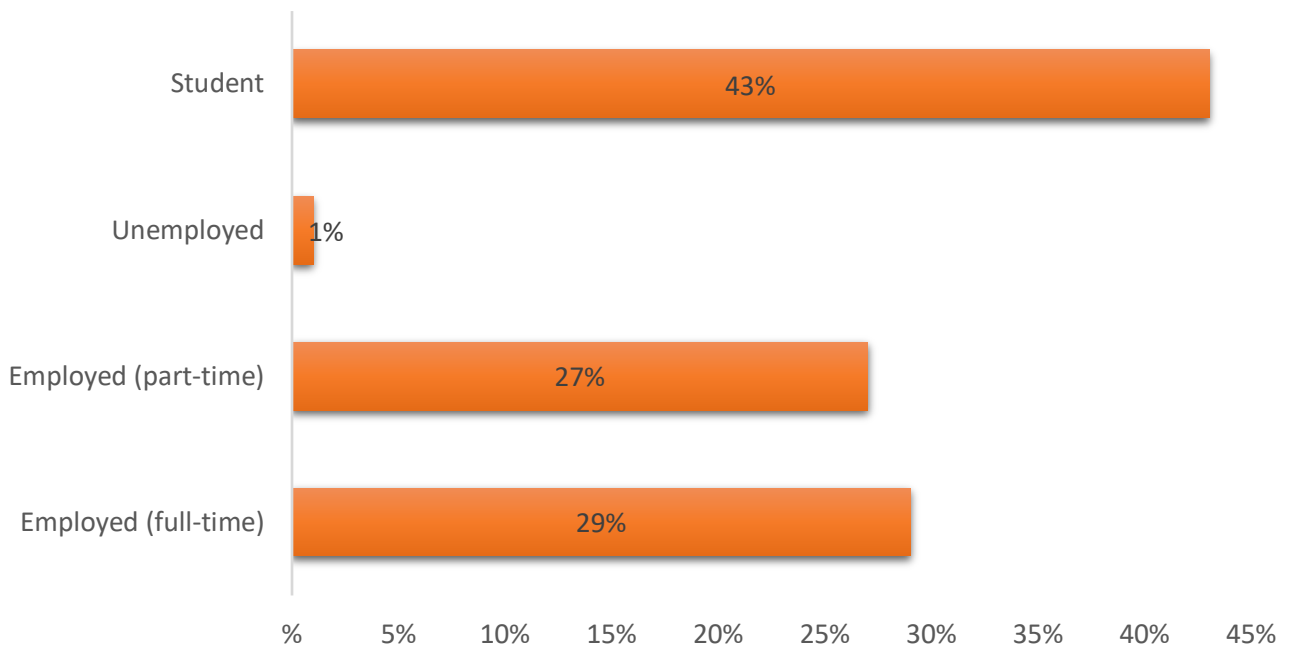


Figure 15. Employment status of respondents (n=70)

Since mainly the survey was distributed to the author's connections and networks, the highest percentage (43%) equivalent to 30 respondents identified as students. In second place with almost even percentages, were placed those employed full (29%) and part time (27%), while only 1% out of 70 individuals was spotted unemployed. (see figure 15)

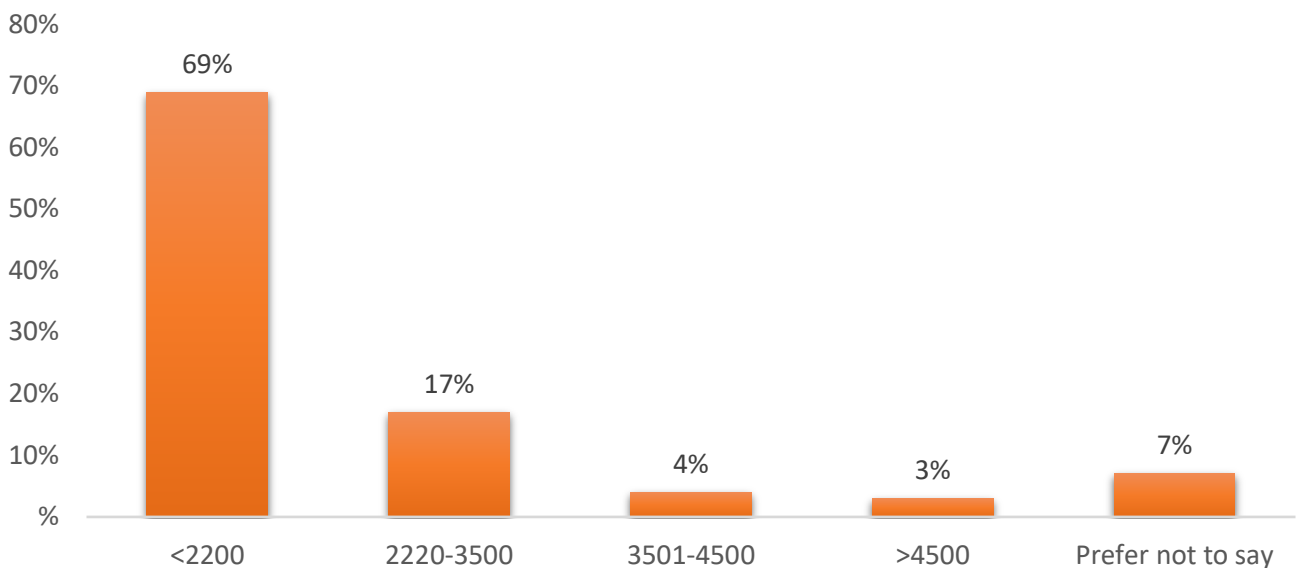


Figure 16. Monthly income of respondents (n=70)

More than half of the respondents, with a total percentage of 69%, are getting paid less than 2200€ monthly. 17% are getting paid between 2220-3500, while those with a monthly income of 3501-4500 and more than 4500 were 4% and 3% respectively. The rest 7% chose not to disclose any income data. (see figure 16)

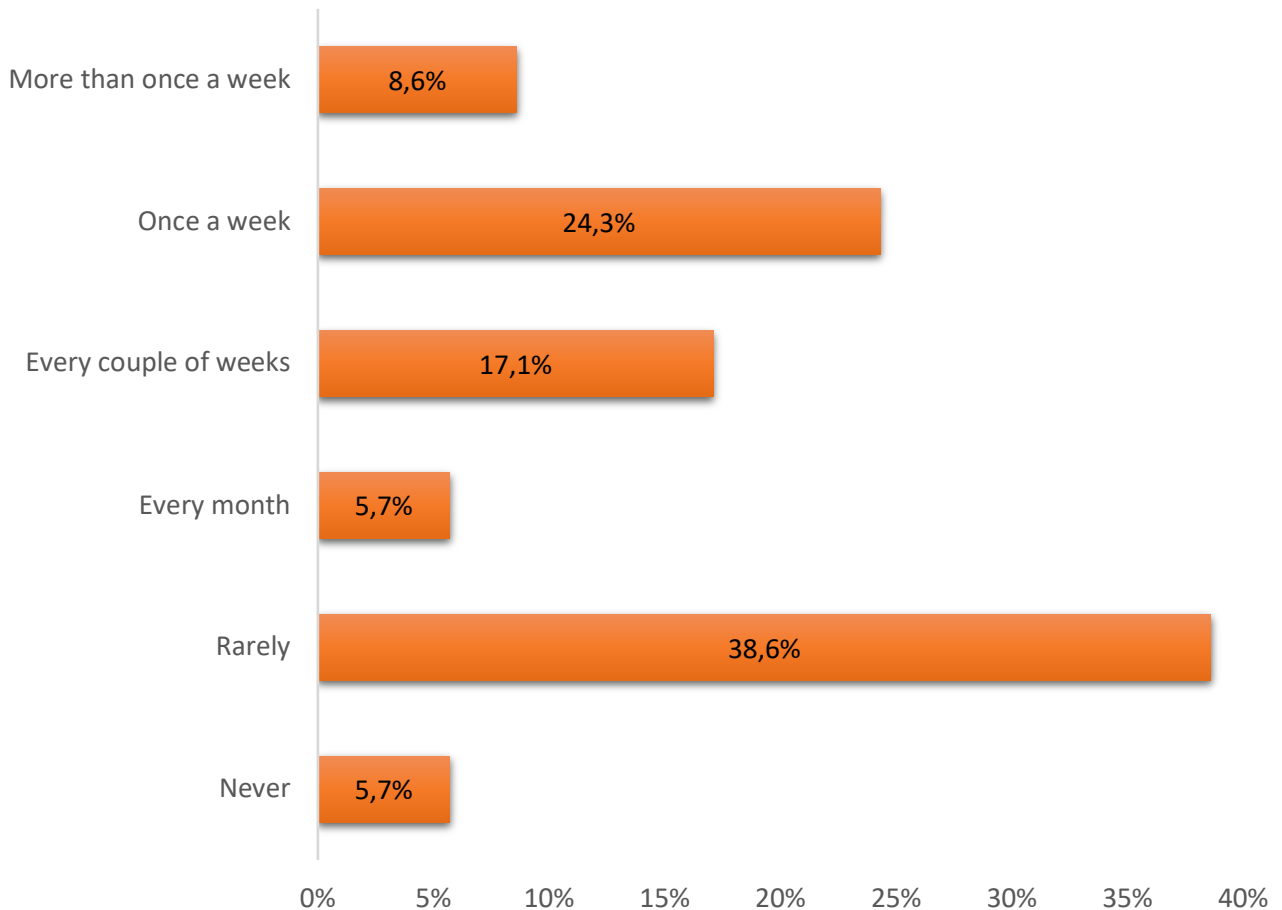


Figure 17. Frequency of purchasing oat milk (n=70)

One of the most important questions when answering the survey was how frequently respondents purchase oat milk on a basis. As illustrated in figure 17, 38,6% of respondents rarely purchase oat milk, while 24,3% and 17,1% do purchase once a week and every couple of weeks respectively. Surprisingly, 8% which is equal to only 6 respondents buy oat milk more than once a week, while those purchasing oat milk every month and never, came last, with evenly shared percentages of 5,7%.



## 4.2 The significance of packaging design

Respondents were asked to rank 5 different factors (quality, brand reputation, packaging design, popularity, and price) when purchasing oat milk from least (5) to most important (1). The quality of the oat drink was ranked as most important with over 42%, with brand reputation coming second with 40%. Least evaluated, popularity and price ranked last with percentages 30% and 28,6% respectively, while packaging design ranked third with a total of 34,3%. (see appendix 3)

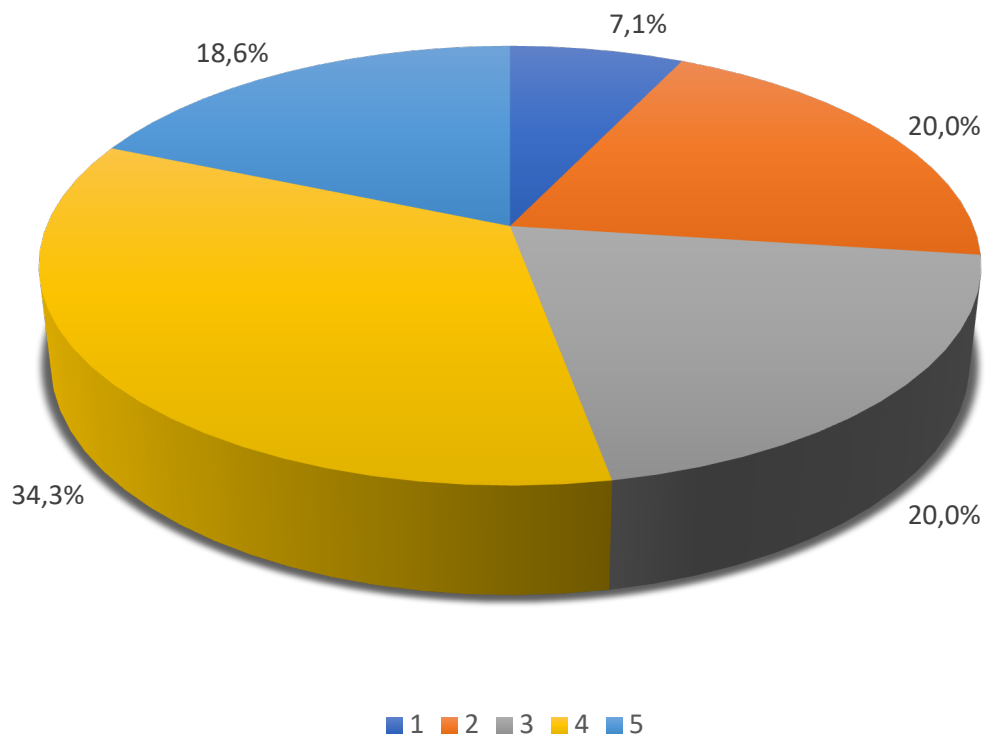


Figure 18. Packaging design as a purchasing factor (n=70)

Focusing, specifically, on the packaging design as a purchasing factor, figure 18 showcases analytically how it was ranked by respondents. Even though, it was placed 3<sup>rd</sup> overall, only 7,1% ranked it as the important factor when shopping for oat milk. With an even percentage of 20%, it was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, while the highest number of respondents positioned it 4<sup>th</sup> (34,3%). Those who don't acknowledge packaging design to be important were only 18,6%, which is equal to just 13 respondents.

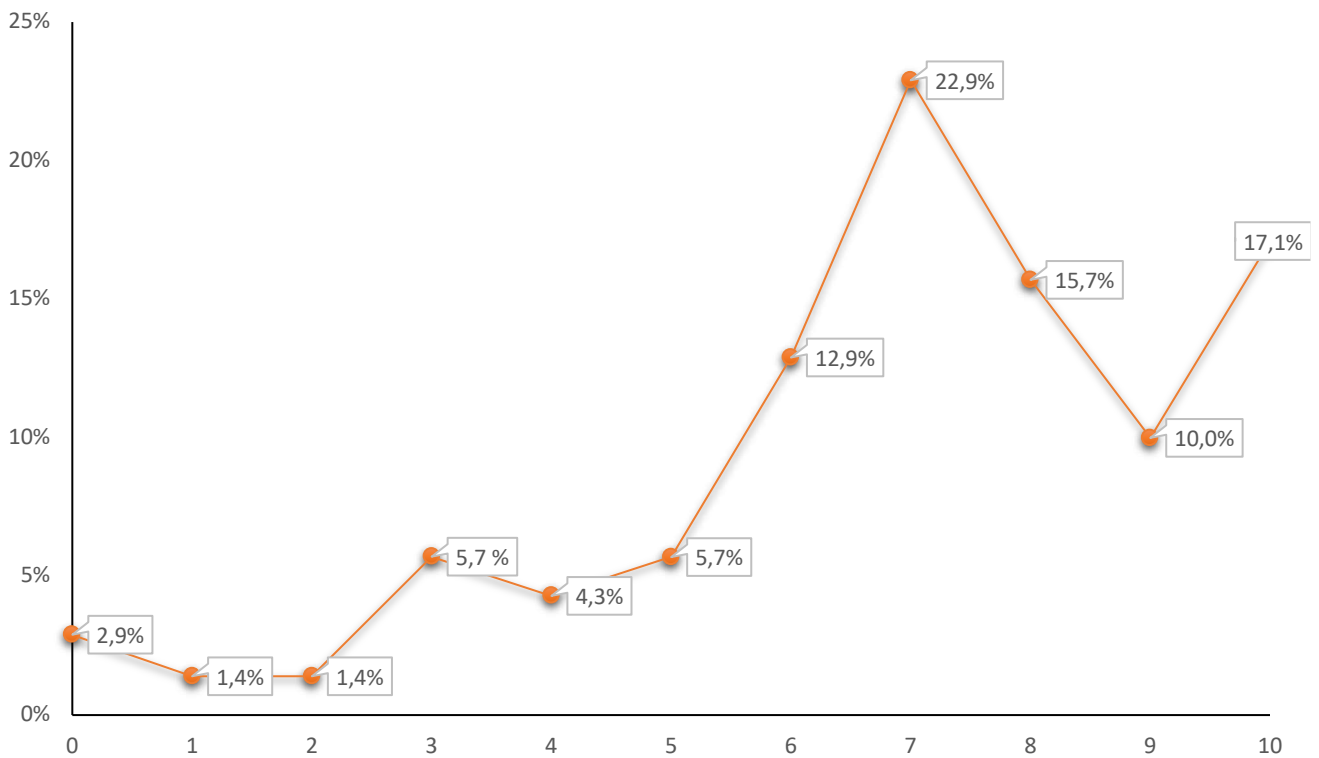


Figure 19. The likelihood of purchasing based on the current Oatly packaging design

Respondents were asked how likely they are to purchase Oatly milk, on a scale of 0 to 10, based on a current product picture given in the survey. (see appendix 1) As observed from figure 19, starting from point 6, higher percentages of respondents would purchase Oatly milk based on the current packaging design, while fewer people would not.

### 4.3 Different elements of Oatly packaging design as perceived by respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agree (5-fully agree) or disagree (1-fully disagree) with the displayed statements. (see figures 20,21 & 22)

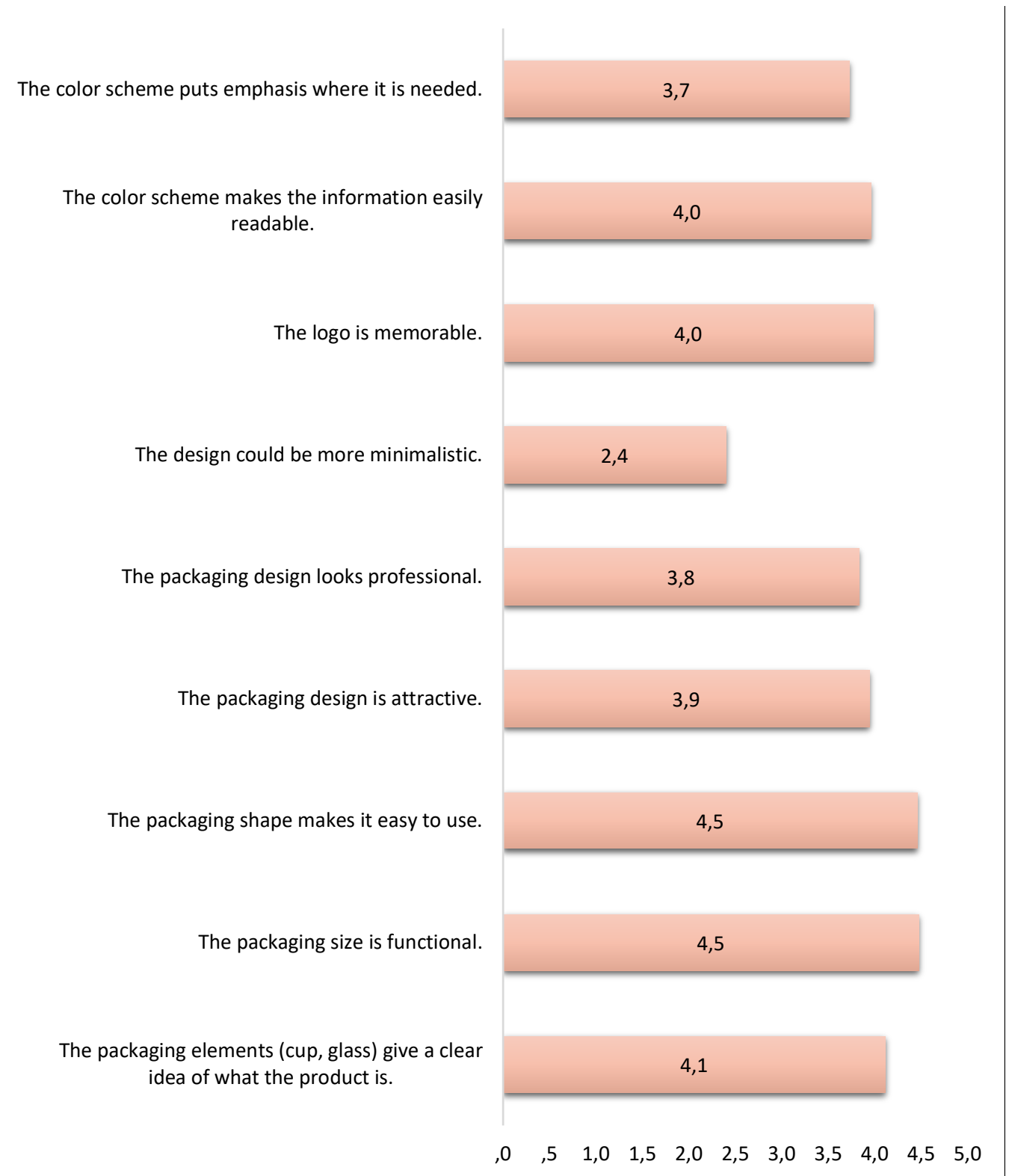


Figure 20. Respondent's evaluation of Oatly's packaging design/elements (n=70)

Respondents, with an average of 4,5 with percentages of approximately 60% fully agreed that packaging size and shape are functional and easy to use. The graphic designs illustrated in the

cartons such as a cup or a glass, with an average of 4,1 were proven to specify what the product is about. With almost even averages, the packaging design was proven to be both attractive and professional, where percentages of over 30% somewhat and fully agreed with the given statements. On the contract, respondents disagreed with the statement of the design being more minimalistic. Surprisingly, the logo -with an average of 4, was regarded memorable. The color scheme utilized by Oatly, according to over 70% of the answers, emphasizes all significant data and maes them easily readable. (see figure 20)

#### 4.3.1 Sustainability

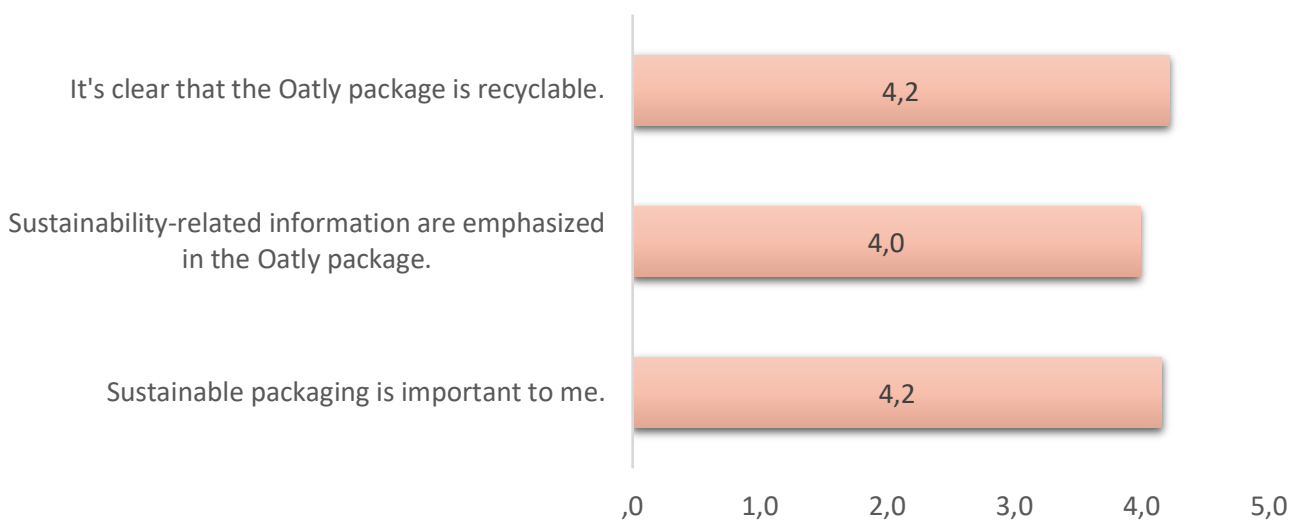


Figure 21. Respondents' evaluation of Oatly's sustainable packaging (n=70)

Sustainability-wise, respondents were deemed quite environment-conscious, as demonstrated in figure 21. With averages of 4,2, more than half of respondents claimed that sustainable packaging is important to them and that Oatly's recyclable packaging is clearly displayed in the brand's design. Regarding the sustainability information printed in the cartons, an average of 4 out of 5 respondents agreed they are highly emphasized.

### 4.3.2 Packaging displayed information

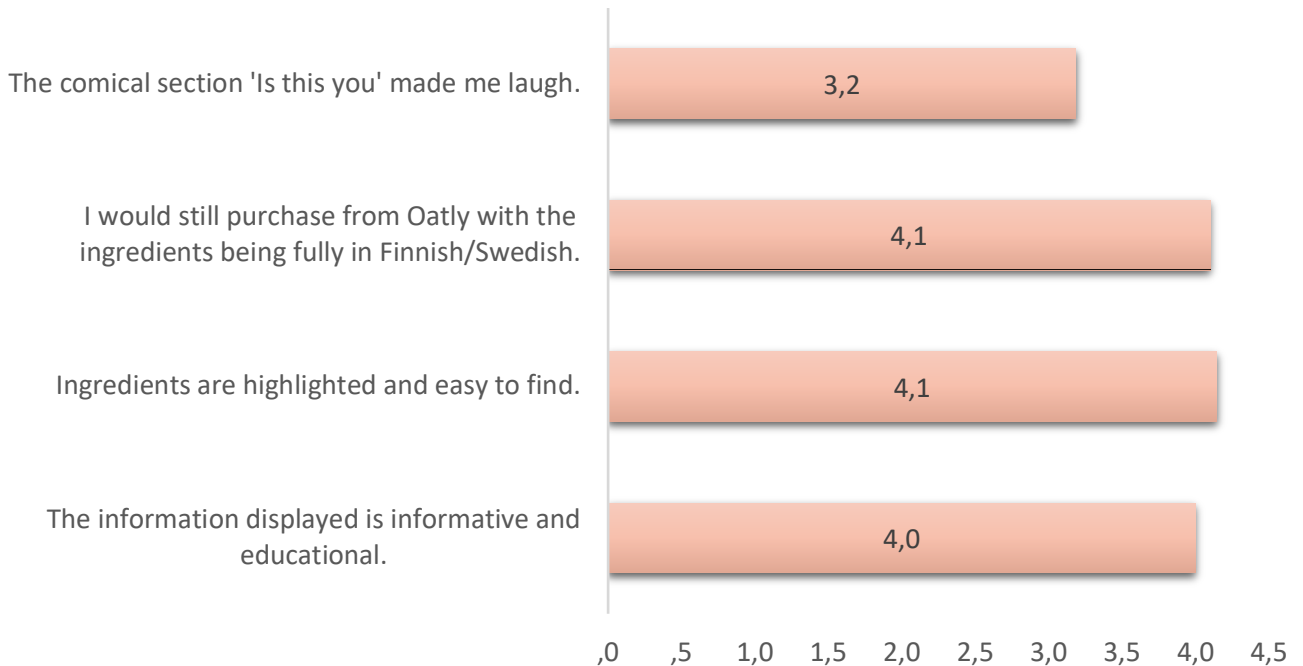


Figure 22. Respondents' evaluation of Oatly's packaging information (n=70)

Considering that the ingredients' carton side was fully in English in the picture displayed when taking the survey, respondents were asked if they would still purchase from Oatly with the ingredients being fully in either Finnish or Swedish. Surprisingly, with averages of 4,1 and 4, respondents somewhat agreed that they would still consider buying from Oatly, and that ingredients are highlighted, simple to locate and educational. However, the comical section of the carton was not perceived as playful. With an average of just 3,2, 17,1% either fully agreed or disagreed, while from 21,4%, a neutral answer was given. (see figure 22)

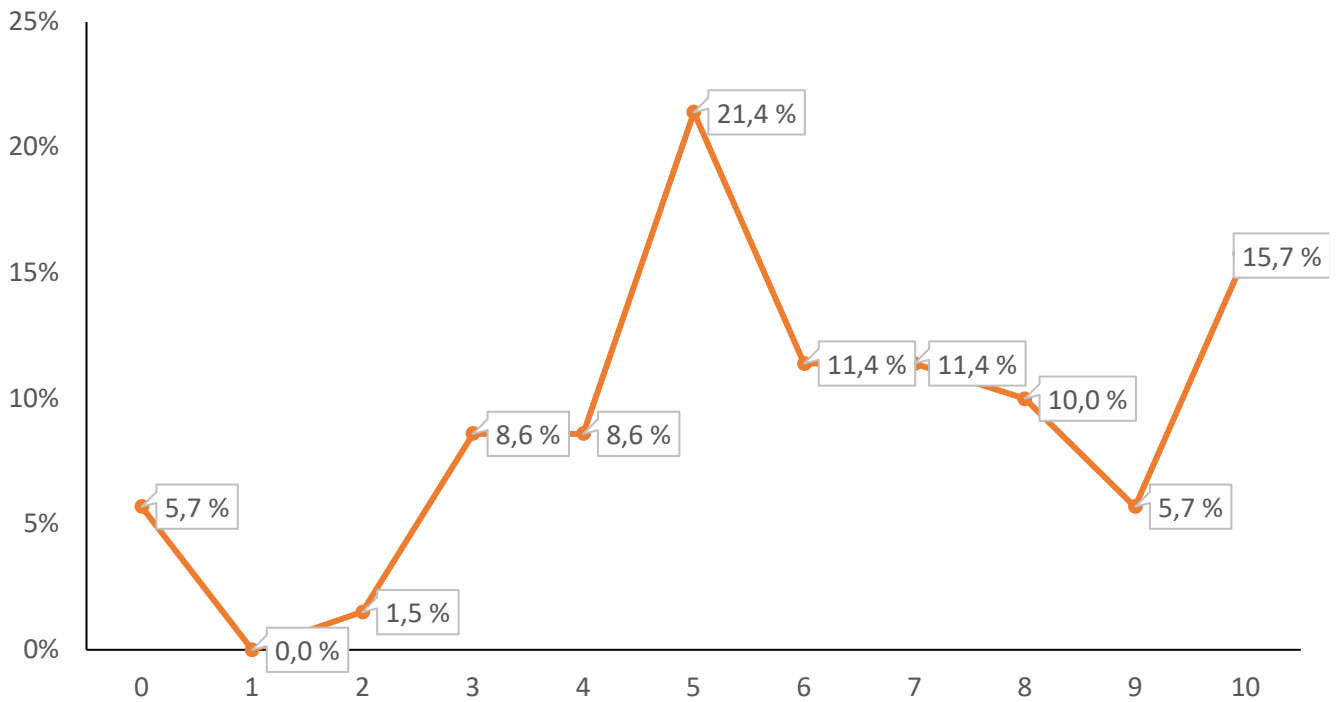


Figure 23. Likeliness of an eco-friendlier, more expensive Oatly packaging purchase (n=70)

Respondents were lastly asked whether they would make a more expensive Oatly purchase, in case the packaging became eco-friendlier. On a scale of 0-10, 21,4% of respondents gave a neutral answer, while impressively, with a percentage of 15,7% - 1 out of 7, declared that they would still make such a purchase decision. (see figure 23)

## 5 Discussion

This final chapter will discuss the main findings of the research, the reliability and validity of the data acquired, reflection on the author's learning, and most importantly, suggestions for both Oatly and further research to be conducted.

### 5.1 Key findings

Overall, looking back at the survey's results and percentages, Oatly has utilized its packaging design as a marketing tool quite effectively. Even with an increased price with eco-friendlier packaging, fewer respondents agreed on staying loyal which undoubtedly exhibits brand commitment. The answers were given mainly by Finnish natives, which partially helps identify Finnish norms and attitudes, as in being an environmentally friendly culture.

#### **IQ1: What message does Oatly milk packaging convey?**

Altogether, Oatly milk packaging design conveys a message of professionalism. It has incorporated important messages into its design work, which are judged as educational and informative. As proven by the high percentages in the survey, the message Oatly has passed on is of importance since consumers would be at ease in case the brand decides to modify the language of information in the cartons.

Sustainability-related messages and missions are successfully showcased by the brand. Respondents could easily observe that the package is recyclable and agreed that data regarding sustainability are emphasized and well put together.

#### **IQ2: How significant do respondents think the design of Oatly packaging is?**

In general, packaging design was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> among factors influencing consumer behavior, which places its importance lower than expected. However, when Oatly milk was positioned next to other oat milk brands, it was easily distinguishable and eye-catching, meaning that the brand is easy to identify amongst competitors.

The majority of the respondents were highly likely to purchase from Oatly based on the current packaging design, which automatically draws the following conclusion: respondents were satisfied with how the packaging is designed; the packaging is attractive and a minimalistic version of it would not pull consumers.

### **IQ3: How do respondents perceive different elements of Oatly packaging design?**

Imagery in the packaging design such as the cup or glass displayed respectively has assisted respondents to effortlessly pick the right milk option, showcasing the importance of illustrations. In addition, the size and shape were perceived as functional and easy to make use of. The colors used are aligned accordingly, providing balance and harmony in the design. Tension is built between the logo and the rest of the graphics, as it was deemed memorable.

Generally speaking, different elements of the Oatly packaging design were positively perceived based on the results and importance is placed where deemed necessary.

#### **5.2 Reliability and validity**

The high reliability of the study was achieved by the survey utilized during the research period. The survey format was created as such to answer all hypotheses and assumptions from chapter 2 -the packaging and consumer behavior. The same survey was answered by all respondents in order to obtain reliable data and identify similar behaviors when purchasing oat milk. However, as the survey had a total of 70 responses, a higher percentage of respondents could have defined the study as more reliable, since the original number of respondents was 106.

The validity of the research was ensured by the two screening questions at the beginning of the survey, as instructed in the limitations. (see chapter 1.3) Individuals over 40 years old and those residing outside of Finland were eliminated from the study.

#### **5.3 Suggestions for Oatly**

According to survey results, this subchapter includes suggestions to be taken into account from the company itself in case they are deemed insightful and helpful.

#### **Sustainability-related data**

As discovered in the research, sustainability is an important factor when purchasing, specifically for Finnish natives and residents, and based on the background of the company, Oatly does also serve in the US markets. On the other hand, as Mulhern (2022) points out, the US as a continent is considered unsustainable as it has ranked 197<sup>th</sup> in the Global Sustainability Index.

Since individuals from Finland deemed sustainability matters to be quite important, it, subsequently, leads to the following suggestion: even though, the cartons do contain sustainability-related information, what would really make a difference would be the addition of a QR code in the packaging. Once scanned, that will point customers to either the sustainability report or any



sustainability matters that the brand might be encountering at the time. Gradually, this will enlighten not only US customers, but anyone worldwide, about sustainability and its significance.

### **Funny section**

As a result of the survey, the funny section incorporated in the design was not that funny after all. As a suggestion for further development, a more comical approach would be of advantage. For example, funny stories from inside Oatly or even inside jokes between colleagues, which could help with brand-consumer connection.

### **5.4 Suggestions for further research**

Limitations made the study more restricted, so further research would potentially put more focus as follows:

#### **Geographical areas**

As the study was limited to individuals residing in Finland, what could potentially be implemented in the future would be researching other geographical areas. As sustainability is at the core of the brand's values, Oatly could start by researching Nordic countries such as Denmark -which was ranked as the second most sustainable country- or Sweden, which is the country the brand originates from.

Secondly, since Oatly has expanded outside of Europe -in the US, what could also best serve the company is a comparison between the two continents.

#### **Product range**

Milk has been the most popular product purchased by individuals; thus, other products were uninvolved in the research. As the company is growing rapidly and expanding its product range, it could use the same survey format to investigate how other products from the offerings influence customers' behavior.

#### **Age groups**

The study was only open to those between the ages of 16 to 40. People within this age range tend to be more aware of Oatly and the efforts it puts towards marketing its products on the internet and outdoors (guerrilla marketing, billboards etc) and, subsequently, easy to access, so next, it would be worthwhile to study those over 40.

#### **Other packaging design aspects**

This study focused on packaging design elements such as graphics, colors, and overall, the visual aspect of it. What could next be analyzed and further investigated is the sustainability of the packaging as perceived by consumers, while also packaging materials such as paper, plastic packaging etc.

### **Social groups**

The survey distributed was mainly answered by students, females, and people getting paid less than 2200 euros/month, as seen from the results. (see chapter 4) For further development, other social groups could be further investigated for more accurate data.

### **5.5 Reflection on learning**

As this research-based thesis comes to an end and looking back at my journey, there have been many things I did benefit from. Over the course of my studies, I was able to acquire new knowledge and skills, which I unquestionably made use of during my research. With that being said, not only I was able to refresh my memory, but in the meantime, I obtained an interest in new ideologies and concepts, which I aim to utilize in my career path. Research and time-management skills were surely enhanced, as well.

Additionally, what mainly piqued my interest is consumerism and how consumers behave either impulsively or rationally. On a personal level, the highlight of this study is neither the research itself nor the results, but how I discovered my passion for consumer psychology. During my studies, I put my focus on a different marketing aspect, but little did I know what was waiting for me at the end of the tunnel.

Lastly, I was able to complete the study by myself, which demonstrated to me the value of independence and how thinking outside of the box really makes a difference. The process of selecting a company of interest, getting in touch with them, researching, conducting a survey and interviews, connecting with a packaging expert, and ultimately, preparing a report, shows how capable one is when pouring their heart and soul into something. In the end, it all pays off.

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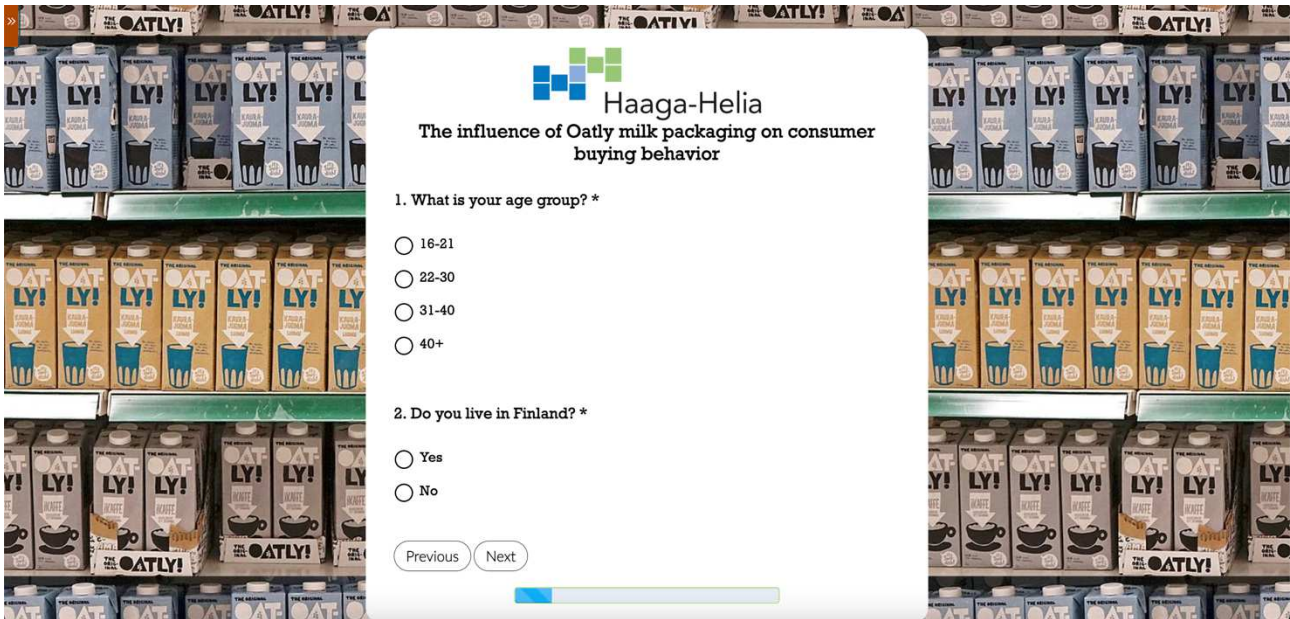
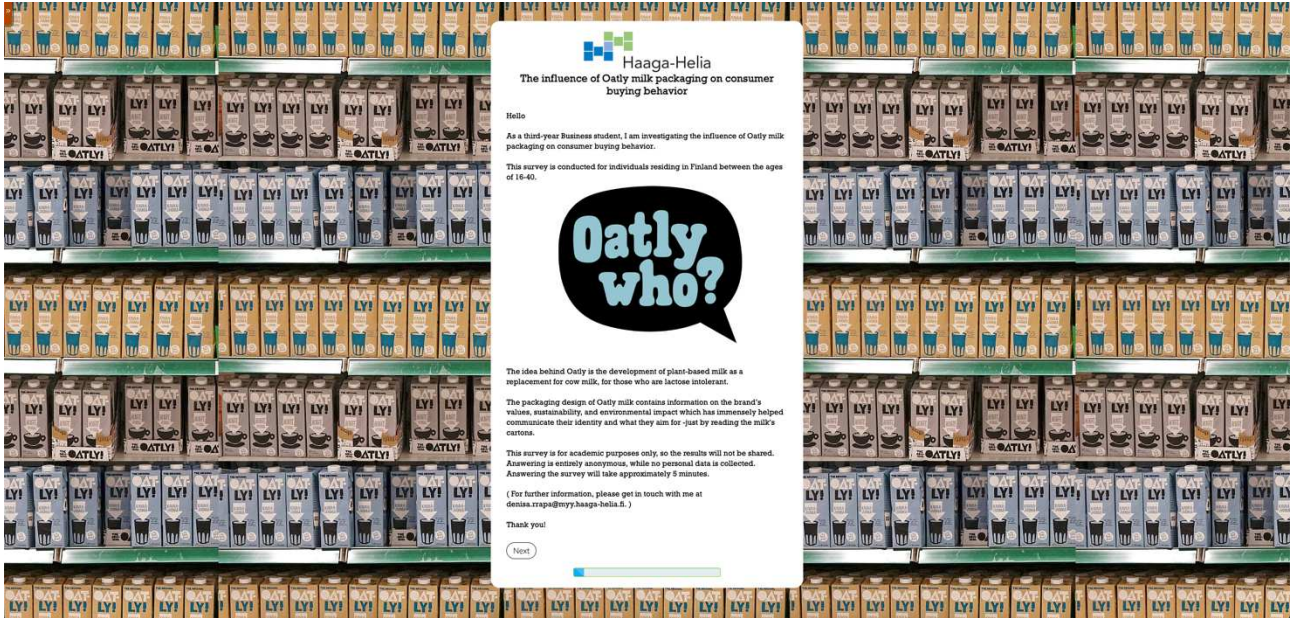
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# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Cover letter and survey











6. Oatly milk cartons are eye-catching and easily distinguished from other oat drinks. \*

(2=somewhat disagree, 3=neutral, 4=somewhat agree)

Fully disagree 1 Fully agree 5



7. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: \*

	Fully disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Fully agree
The packaging elements (cup, glass) give a clear idea of what the product is.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The packaging size is functional.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The packaging shape makes it easy to use.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The packaging design is attractive.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The packaging design looks professional.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The design could be more minimalistic.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The logo is memorable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The color scheme makes the information easily readable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The color scheme puts emphasis where it is needed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>







8. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: \*

	Fully disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Fully agree
Sustainable packaging is important to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sustainability-related information are emphasized in the Oatly package.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It's clear that the Oatly package is recyclable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>





**Haaga-Helia**  
The influence of Oatly milk packaging on consumer buying behavior





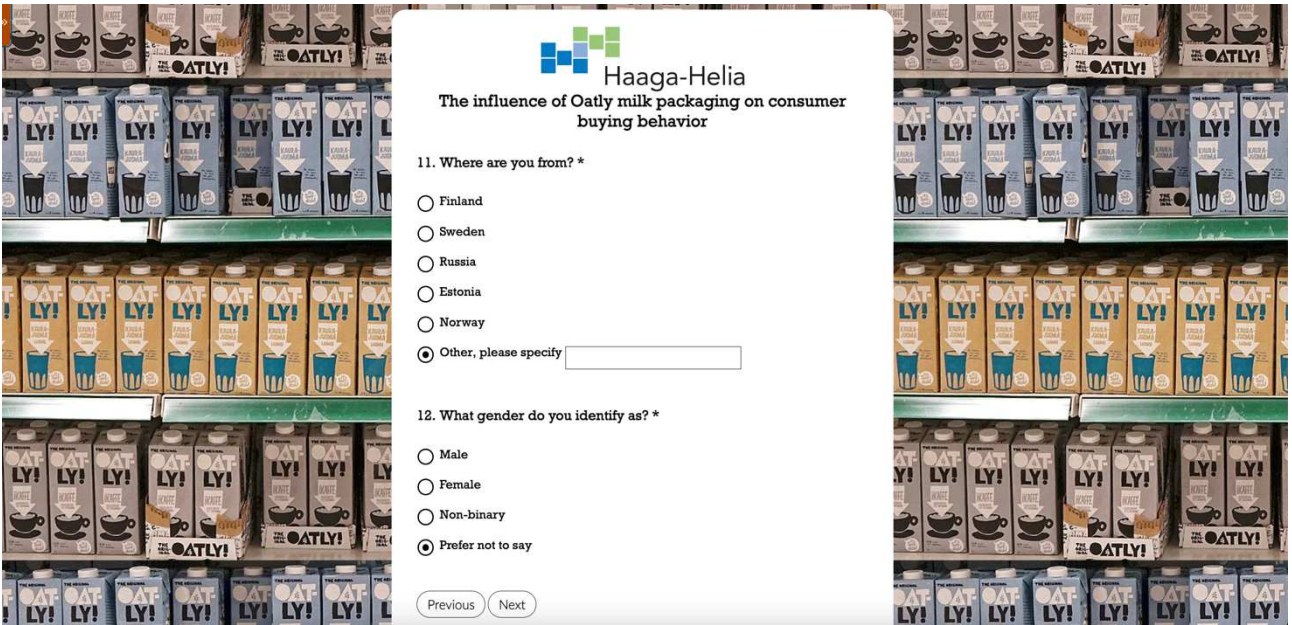
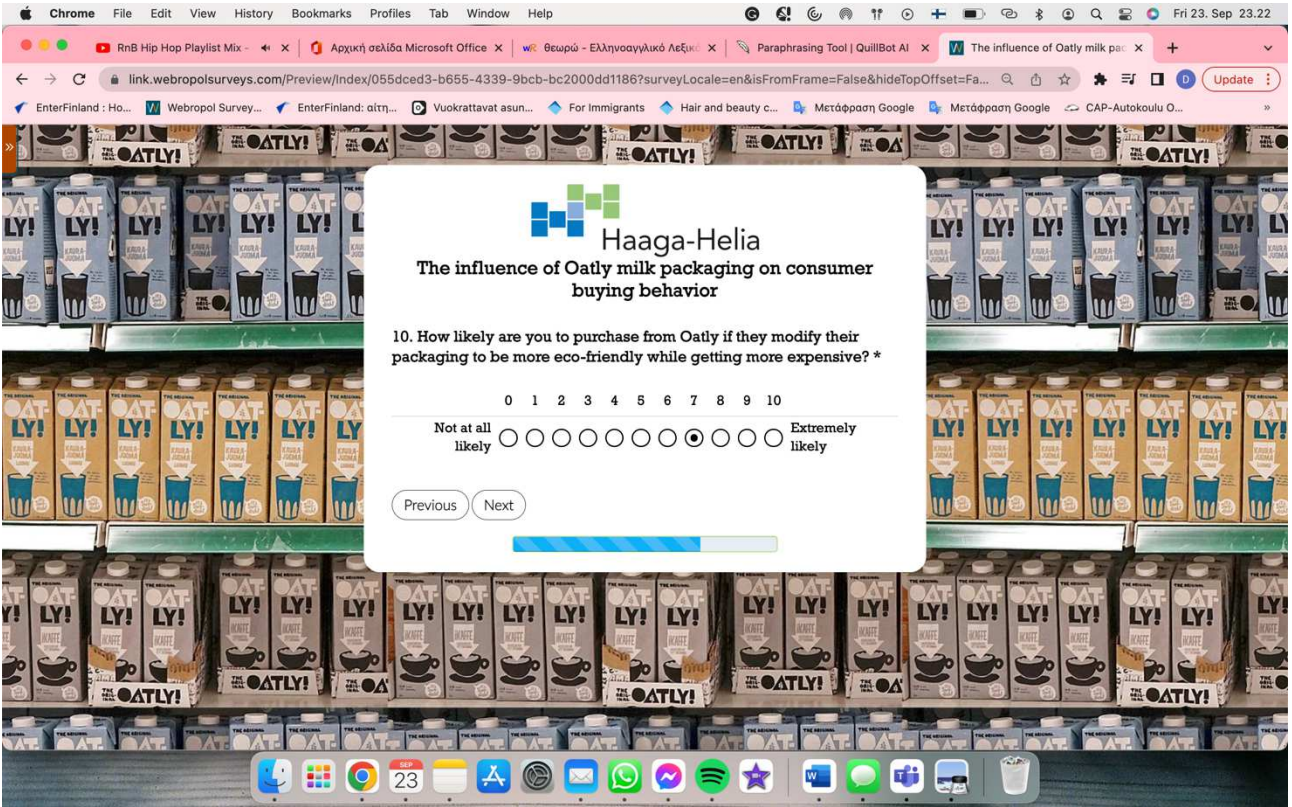

9. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: \*

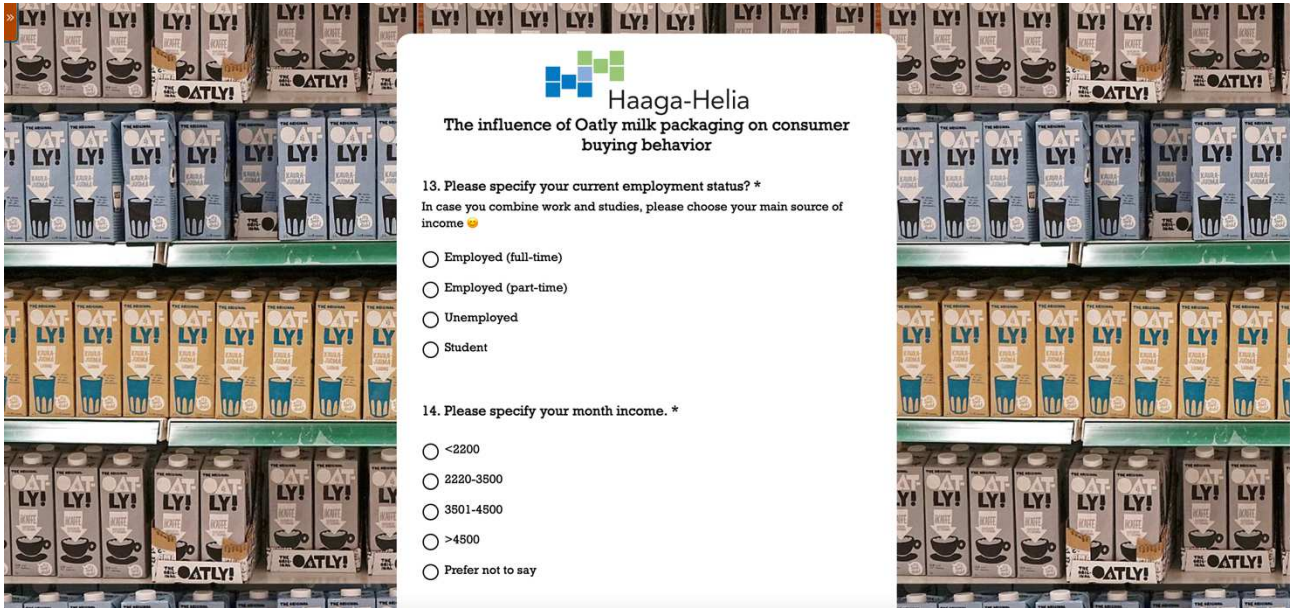
Based on the picture:

	Fully disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Fully agree
The information displayed is informative and educational.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ingredients are highlighted and easy to find.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would still purchase from Oatly with the ingredients being fully in Finnish/Swedish.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The comical section 'Is this you?' made me laugh.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>









**Haaga-Helia**  
The influence of Oatly milk packaging on consumer buying behavior

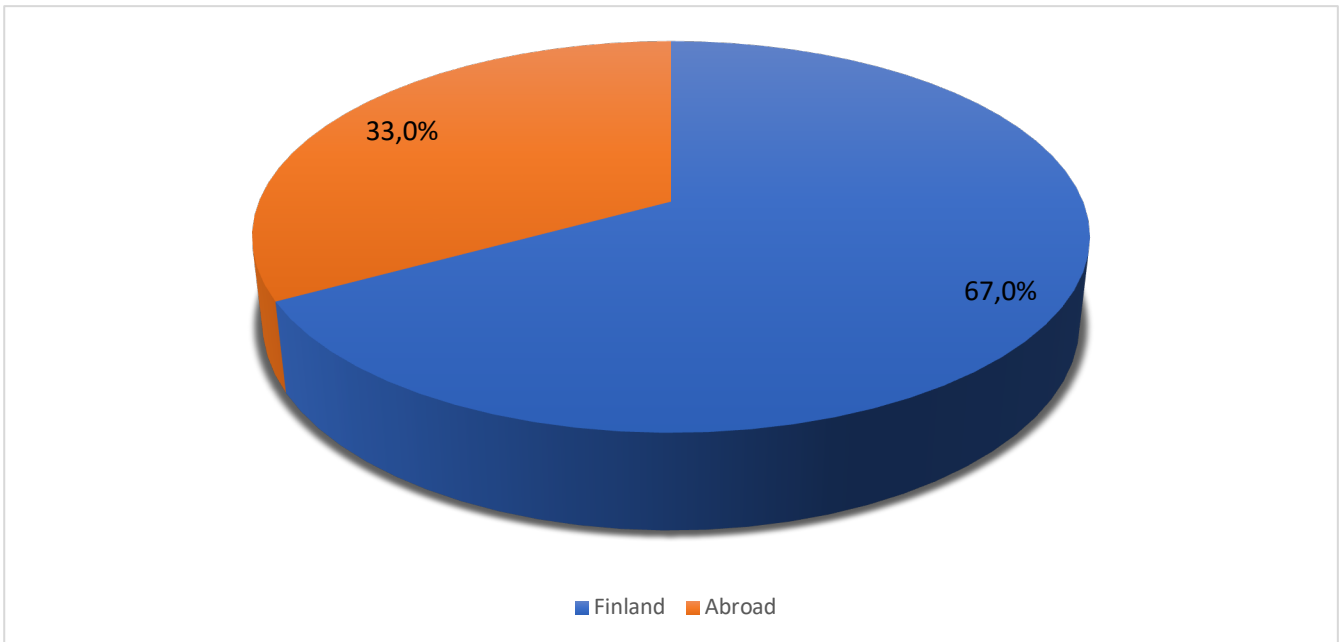
13. Please specify your current employment status? \*  
In case you combine work and studies, please choose your main source of income 🍌

- Employed (full-time)
- Employed (part-time)
- Unemployed
- Student

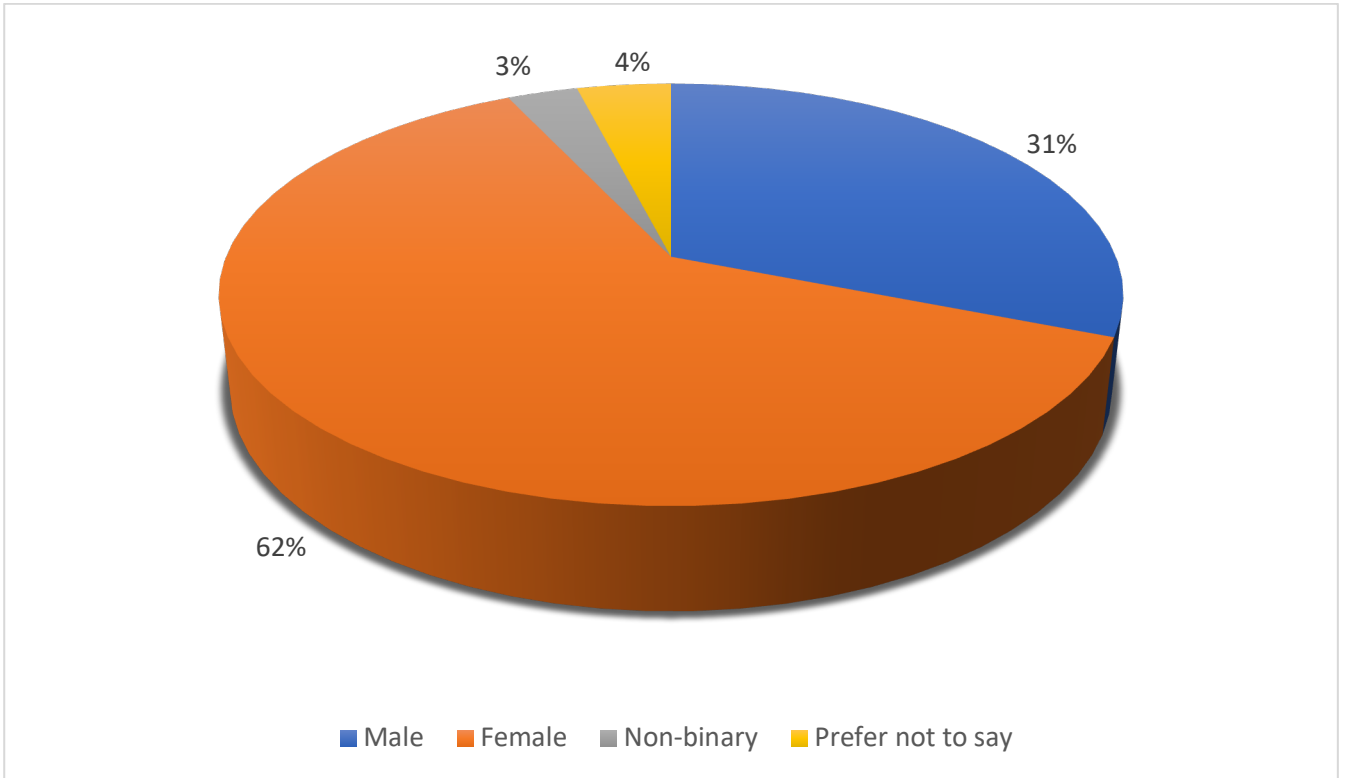
14. Please specify your month income. \*

- <2200
- 2220-3500
- 3501-4500
- >4500
- Prefer not to say

## Appendix 2. Residence of respondents



**Appendix 3. Gender distribution of respondents**



**Appendix 4. Factors when purchasing oat milk**