



Influence of Product Packaging on Students' Purchase Decision

Impact of household products' packaging on students' buying decision in Finland

Miska Sipponen

Ida Östring

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Sipponen, Miska & Östring, Ida

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Abstract

Green marketing is part of product development, and it can have a significant impact on the purchase decision of a consumer. Ecological values and supporting sustainability affect directly both companies and individuals and legal acts are being prepared to ensure the validity of sustainability claims in product packaging. The visuals and wording of a product package are used to influence the purchase decision of a consumer and not all claims are truthful and thus a company is practicing greenwashing.

A survey was conducted as quantitative research and the material was collected using a short Google Forms questionnaire, which targeted college students living in Finland. Eight statements were answered in an anonymous questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. The objective was to find out the impact of product packaging of household products on students' purchase decision and to find answers to three research questions.

Theoretical framework considered greenwashing, purchase behaviour, green marketing and what sustainable marketing includes. Knowledge base was formed from previous research as well as traditional and electronic literature sources.

Results were compared to previous corresponding research and the research hypothesis. Results showed that most of the respondents trust the sustainability claims made in product packaging, and that for the minority the product's sustainability was more important than the price. According to the respondents, price is the primary factor and known brands are preferred when making a purchase decision.

It could be gathered from the results that the average students' economical situation the visuals of a package have an impact when choosing a product.

Keywords/tags

Marketing, questionnaire study, buying behaviour, greenwashing, sustainability

Miscellaneous (Confidential information)

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Sipponen, Miska & Östring, Ida

Tuotepakkauksen vaikutus opiskelijoiden ostopäätökseen

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Tiivistelmä

Vihreä markkinointi on osa tuotepakkauksen kehitystä ja sillä voi olla merkittävä vaikutus kuluttajan ostopäätökseen. Ekologiset arvot ja kestävä kehitys tukeminen vaikuttaa suoranaisesti niin yrityksiin kuin yksityishenkilöihin, ja tuotepakkauksissa olevien ympäristöväittämien oikeellisuuden varmistamiseksi suunnitellaan laissa määrättäviä säädöksiä. Tuotepakkauksen visuaalisuudella ja sanavalinnoilla pyritään vaikuttamaan kuluttajan ostopäätökseen eikä kaikki väittämät ole todenperäisiä vaan yritys harjoittaa tällöin viherpesua.

Kyselytutkimus toteutettiin kvantitatiivisena tutkimuksena ja aineisto kerättiin Google Formsiin tehdystä lyhyestä kyselystä, jonka kohteena oli Suomessa asuvat korkeakouluopiskelijat. Anonyymissä kyselyssä vastattiin kahdeksaan väittämään viisiportaisen Likert-asteikon avulla. Tavoitteena oli selvittää kotitaloustuotteiden tuotepakkauksen vaikutus opiskelijoiden ostopäätökseen ja saada vastaus kolmeen tutkimuskysymykseen.

Teoreettisessa viitekehyksessä käsiteltiin viherpesua ja mitä ympäristöystävällinen markkinointi pitää sisällään, ostokäyttäytymistä sekä vihreää markkinointia. Tietoperustaa saatiin aiemmin tehdyistä tutkimuksista, kirjallisista lähteistä sekä sähköisistä lähteistä.

Tuloksia verrattiin aiempiin vastaaviin tutkimuksiin ja tutkimuksen hypoteesiin. Tuloksista nähtiin, että suurin osa tutkimukseen osallistuneista vastaajista luottaa tuotepakkauksissa oleviin vihreisiin väittämiin ja vähemmistölle tuotteen kestävyys oli hintaa tärkeämpää. Vastaajien mukaan hinta on ensisijainen tekijä ostopäätöstä tehdessä ja tunnetut tuotemerkit saivat eniten kannatusta.

Tuloksista voitiin päätellä, että keskiverto opiskelijan taloudellisella tilanteella ja pakkauksen visuaalisuudella on vaikutus tuotetta valittaessa.

Avainsanat

markkinointi, viherpesu, ostokäyttäytyminen, ympäristövastuu

Muut tiedot (salassa pidettävät liitteet)

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The study on the university students' consumption habits aims to find out the impact of product packaging and greenwashing when buying household items such as cleaning and laundry supplies, paper goods, and personal care. Greenwashing is known to affect psychologically on decision-making, and Hassim (2021) argues that being environmentally conscious is becoming more popular and trendier, especially amongst Gen Z and millennials, and it might be a result of being born in the digital age. They are keener to change their behaviors towards healthier and more sustainable lifestyle. Younger generations are more informed on the threats of climate change, and so they are more invested in doing their part to slow it down. Teenagers and young adults between 15 and 24 years old are more inclined to have concerns regarding global warming than those of age 55 and above (Milfont, T.L., Zubielevitch, E., Milojev, P. & Sibley, C.G., 2021).

Awareness of the limited number of natural resources has risen tremendously across the globe, and it has changed the ecofriendly perspective of multiple organizations. The recent studies related to environmentally responsible purchase intentions show that consumers are likely to buy green products, and especially younger consumers want to support the environment. Landrum (citing Nielsen, 2015) reports that, across the world, 66% of customers would purchase a more expensive product, if the brand is eco-friendly. Consumers want companies to act in a sustainable and eco-friendly manner. Companies and brands can promote their sustainable operations especially by advertising, or by displaying this in their product packaging, for instance with green packaging. Green packaging is a combination of effective and safe packaging for both the environment and humans. There are also legislative initiatives on packaging waste management in addition to increasing consumers' requirements, but the concern is how consumers can recognize reliable information.

1.2 Motivation

Jakubczak and Gotowska (2020) have studied the topic from different perspectives, such as greenwashing, sustainability and eco-friendliness. The previous research information is compared with the survey data to compare the discrepancies and look for the possible development targets that could be implemented in marketing. The outcome should provide essential information that can

be utilized in both marketing management, and product development within the company. The product packaging is a notable part of marketing; hence ethical values of the society should be considered, and a strategy that violates the moral and ethical values of it, should be avoided.

Currently there is an abundance of brands in the household products' section in Finnish supermarkets and grocery stores. For example, popular brands such as Ajax or Omo have a wide selection of various products and options just for dishwashing tablets and liquids. Alongside these are the lesser-known brands with their variations of a product, and all of these are striving for the consumer's attention. Understanding the most influencing factors on students' buying decision of household products, and especially its packaging, companies can enhance their product development process and marketing strategies.

The research scope of the university students was chosen with an assumption that majority of respondents are younger people that are known to be relatively more aware of the ecological issues and green products although they can also be considered being more restrained when it comes to the pricing of the products. Greenwashing is an ethical challenge relating to the topic because it is a form of misleading marketing by using untrue factors and statements that can influence consumers' decision-making.

1.3 Research questions and hypothesis

RQ1: How much does the packaging material affect purchase decision?

RQ2: If a product package claims that the product is made with sustainable methods or from eco-friendly ingredients, do consumers believe it is verified and true information?

RQ3: Does a student pay more attention to the price than the product's sustainability?

The aim of the research was to figure out which are the factors students pay attention to the most when selecting which brand of product to buy. Is their purchase decision most affected by price, how the product package looks, or the amount of information it has? Could it be a combination of two or more? Answers to these questions will help brands achieve a competitive advantage, as

they will be able to amend the packaging based on this research, and consequently win the attention of the consumer. The hypothesis is that price will be the most crucial factor for students when making a purchase decision, with product packaging being a secondary consideration. Students tend to have a reduced budget when compared to the middle class, for example, so it can be assumed that the price influences decision making the most, and sustainability is a minor consideration.

2 Literature review

2.1 Greenwashing

Greenwashing happens when a company distributes false information about the product, and it deceives consumers into believing the products are eco-friendly or that their environmental impact is minimal. It is an attempt to utilize the growing demand for environmentally sound products through misleading labels, hidden tradeoffs, and the use of environmental imagery (Hayes 2022). In 2021 European Commission (EC) conducted a screening of websites ("sweep") to identify possible violations of EU consumer law in a specific sector, and according to its overall evaluation, up to 42% of environmental claims made by companies are extravagant, inaccurate, or deceptive (EC 2021). The number is higher than one would expect, yet it explains why consumers are often skeptical about products and brands that claim to be environmentally conscious and eco-friendly. Naderer, Schmuck & Matthes (2017), remind that green claims are not made only through written words but via visuals as well, and companies should critically evaluate them from the consumer's point of view. It is typical for greenwashing that products or services are enhanced by using catchphrases such as "eco-friendly," "sustainable" or "natural" in advertising but it has been speculated to have a positive impact on how global environmental crisis is perceived. (ibid., 107-108.)

The previous studies show that the topic has been discussed actively for over a decade now. It has been emphasized that environmental claims must be measurable and verified, as greenwashing is corrupting the credibility of any sustainable marketing. Often this not the case however, as many products and brands only present vague claims of how the company or their product is environmentally friendly. (Winston, 2010.) Transparency in revealing information in companies' sustainability reports and other environmental activities is demanded by society and stakeholders yet the communication should be distributed through several channels, raising awareness as the main

purpose (de Freitas Netto, S.V., Sobral, M.F.F., Ribeiro, A.R.B. & da Luz Soares, G.F., 2020). It has been stated that even environmentally conscious consumers are also struggling to separate false information and that they are reacting to it in a more negative manner compared to consumers with less knowledge (Naderer et al. 2017, 113-114).

2.1.1 Eco-friendly branding and environmental advertising

As consumers have started to steer towards more sustainable alternatives in their buying decisions, companies have been forced to find ways to appear more environmentally friendly. The Finnish Environmental Institute (SYKE) compiled a selection of internet advertisements with ecological promises during fall 2021. SYKE lists that the most common themes in eco-friendly advertising are carbon neutrality, sustainability, and the labels and graphics of the selling party. Carbon neutrality is reached via carbon footprint compensations; SYKE maintains however, that rarely the number of emissions compensated is specified or when that will happen. The four most common types of offsetting carbon emissions are afforestation and protection, green energy, community projects such as providing clean water for underdeveloped communities, and transforming waste to energy (Energy Intelligence Centre, 2020). Companies may list these projects on their websites and add a claim of it on the product package, but it is up to the customer to go look for more information. Whether or not this information is easily available can also affect the image that consumers form of the product or brand in question.

Another common tactic to appear more sustainable to customers is to add imagery, symbols and colors to packaging or advertisements which convey eco-friendliness. Household products often have green and light blue coloring which people associate with the Earth, grass, sky, and nature. Common symbols mentioned by SYKE are leaves and recycling triangles, which are not recognized labels, but simply symbols that are easy to add and most consumers see as eco-friendly. Andersson (2019) adds that countries have different natural sceneries that citizens of these countries recognize and relate to, and that when product packaging uses colours associated with said national sceneries, consumers are more likely to draw the conclusion that product is environmentally friendly and natural.

2.2 Green marketing

The four Ps for marketing mix were introduced in 1960 by Jerome McCarthy and these elements are typically used as part of an effective marketing strategy, often being dependent on one another (Kenton 2020). According to Hidayat, Yusiana, and Widodo (2020), society is increasingly aware of the significant impact of choosing environmentally friendly goods; hence more companies are keen to implement green marketing in their strategy. Dominant objectives are price, promotion, place, and product. Satisfying customer needs and achieve the company's economic goals while minimizing environmental damage are key objectives of green marketing. (105-106.)

Price has often a major influence on buying decision, yet customers are prepared to pay more for a certain product if it has other value adding benefits such as performance, design, function, or visuals. As credibility is a crucial factor towards a successful green marketing mix, using sustainable marketing and communication tools can strengthen environmental credibility if promotion is done right. The location must be in accordance with the company's brand image and green reputation, as this is where in-store promotions and engaging displays take place. Usage of recycled materials can support this strategy. Green products promote environmental impact reduction by saving energy to maintain natural resources and eliminate the use of toxic substances and pollution, for instance. (ibid., 106.)

Thus, it has been discussed that due to increasing awareness of eco-friendliness in society, the companies are put under a pressure to respond to this change as it is taking place also on a political and economic level. The rising trend of green marketing carries the risk of greenwashing, and it challenges companies that are seriously applying their sustainability strategy to earn the trust of consumers. (Schad, 2020.)

2.3 Buying behavior

Household products are necessities that are often purchased without much of previous comparison on the difference between equivalent products and brands. Buying these types of products falls under habitual buying behaviour. Habitual buying happens when consumers make repeated purchases of a commodity product without much consideration or research into alternatives. Aspara (2020) explains that habitual buying requires less work from the consumer, both physically and mentally, as they can get the products they need without need to rethink which products or

brands to buy. Occasional comparisons between brands might be effectuated in stores upon a purchase decision; however, consumers rarely look for reviews beforehand or ask for the opinion of friends or family. Customers with limiting factors such as allergies or sensitive skin, may be an exception when purchasing certain items such as laundry detergents or personal care and hygiene products due to ingredients, thus looking for more information between various products and how suitable they are.

According to Siddique (2020), often the most influencing factors are utility, price, and familiarity and a quantity-pricing approach affords lower prices if larger quantities are bought. (270-271.) Consumers choose the product with the greatest utility, whether the utility is, for example, the purpose the product is meant for (laundry detergent best suitable for white clothing, for example) or the package size (normal versus a bulk). Single households tend to choose the smaller-sized package, whereas a family of five consumes more significant quantities of a product faster, so the demand is higher. Price is a key factor, especially among students who oftentimes have little to no income and thus are stricter on spending than the middle class, for example. More well-known brands are higher in the price range, and even if their products were superior in terms of utility and quality, a cheaper alternative is often chosen when the buyer is a student or a person with a low income. As stated by Ruha (2022), university students spend more money on food than teenagers for example, as most students do not live with their parents. Ruha also mentions how students often spend more money on electronic devices and monthly payments for different services such as internet connection or streaming platforms. When these expenses add up, students are likely to look for ways to save money, and one way to do this is to look for cheaper alternatives when buying groceries and household items.

Brand familiarity is another significant factor for choosing between competing brands. Customers who have used a certain brand or a product are more likely to choose it again, provided that the experience with the product has been positive. Familiarity may come from using the product personally already, if it has been seen in an advertisement, or if the buyer has seen or heard positive reviews from friends, family, or even influencers.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research method

The study aimed to determine the unifying and distinguishing patterns based on the responses of the target group using descriptive research for results' validation. A total of 55 respondents was considered for the research to investigate the significant effect of product packaging on students' purchase decision. Survey included eight statements that were formed based on the assumptions that could influence on the students' purchase decision when buying household products that would also reflect to the research questions and hypothesis. Quantitative research was used to describe the phenomenon based on numerical data yet the narrow focus on the study may limit other relevant observations. This method allowed to focus testing hypotheses, and it supported to analyze the closed questions of the survey. The limited number of respondents was not ideal for this method, yet it was still suitable for the requirements. The concepts mentioned in the literature review form a general view of the topic, but for now there are no large-scale and specific studies which would indicate the factors affecting people's purchasing behavior, especially in green products and products advertised as such.

It is necessary to note that the use of green products is largely based on the person's own morality. Personal ethical beliefs lead the choices of individuals who have participated in the study; hence it is important to be critical when examining the results. Possible biases cannot be fully excluded but are supported by consumer research conducted in 2022 by FIBS (Finnish Business & Society) which displays that persons with higher education (59%) consider themselves to be particularly responsible consumers, while only 42% of those who have attended a basic or professional degree share this opinion (FIBS 2022, 4).

3.2 Data collection and analysis

An online survey *Impact of household products' packaging on students' buying decision in Finland* was conducted by using Google Forms and the link was widely shared through different social media channels, and networks covering different geographical areas in Finland to reach participants through opportunity sampling, a technique that allows willing, and accessible individuals to participate (see *Appendix 1*). It took maximum 3 minutes for each respondent to answer to the survey.

Target group of the study was students in Finland, and it was defined as a person who is a resident of Finland and present in a higher education institution.

The respondents were asked first to choose their gender and age group from the given options, which were split into small divisions between 18 and 45+ years. Other personal information that could be used to identify respondents was not gathered. The target group for the research were students in Finland, yet the focus group was not restricted by age. Eight statements were divided into three categories: consumption habits i.e., the choices one makes when comparing two or more equivalent products, product information and product packaging. A 5-point agreement Likert scale was used to measure opinions and behaviors of the respondents:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Possible challenges with Likert scale are related to inadequate design choices as the statements were closed-ended, respondents sometimes need to choose the most relevant option even when the reality may differ, and agreement scale can be judged differently based on the respondent's own judgement (Bhandari & Nikolopoulou, 2022). The collected data was summarized in a visual form by using descriptive statistics to find the patterns for the research questions and measure averages and variability. Similar research conducted within the next few years may have radically different results considering the current global crisis and inflation.

4 Results

As visualized in Figure 1, out of total 55 respondents 48 were between age 18 and 30. Previous studies have discovered that Gen Z and millennials tend to be more environmentally conscious and are willing to choose eco-friendlier products, however the price leads the purchase decision more often.

Your age?

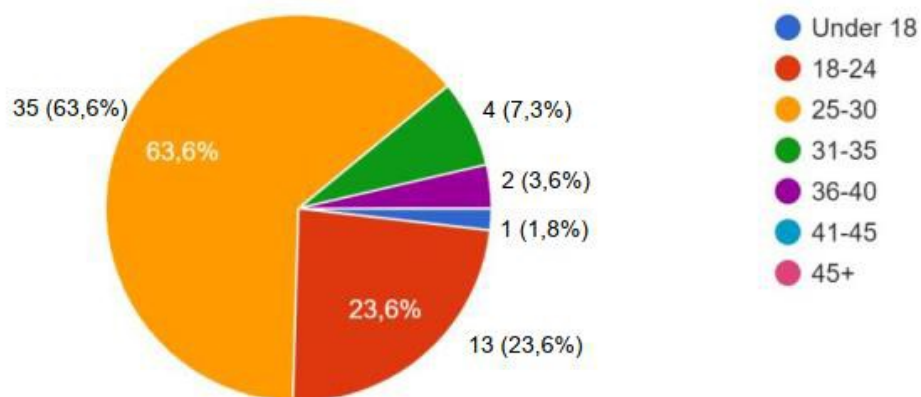


Figure 1 Respondent's age

Your gender?

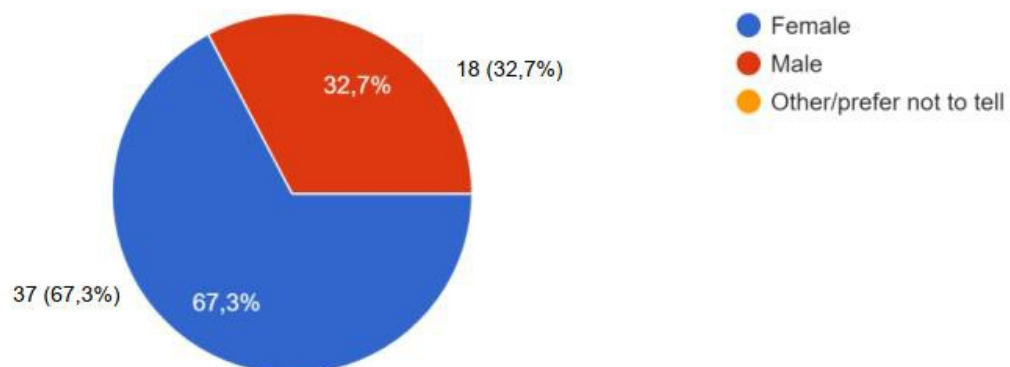


Figure 2 Respondent's gender

Gender was also collected although any reliable conclusion could not be draft from it. Majority of the respondents, 37 people (67,3%) were females and 18 people (32,7%) male.

I pay more attention to price than product sustainability.

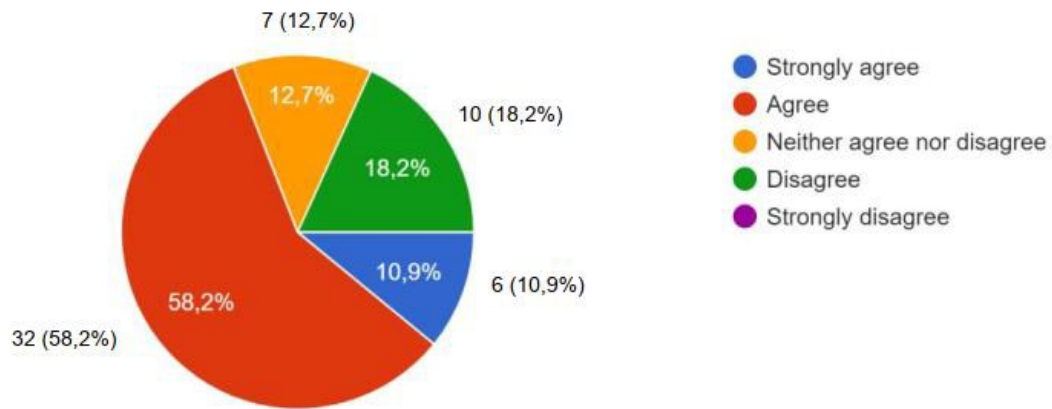


Figure 3 I pay more attention to price than product sustainability.

Majority of the respondents (58,2%) agreed that price is more influencing factor instead of product sustainability and 10,9% strongly agreed on this statement. It was assumed that price would be a crucial factor when making a purchase decision because of possibly restrained economic status. Nevertheless, for 18,2% sustainability was more important than price and 12,7%, were neutral (see Figure 3).

I choose bulk package rather than normal size if available. Example: I rather buy 24 rolls of toilet paper than 8 rolls.

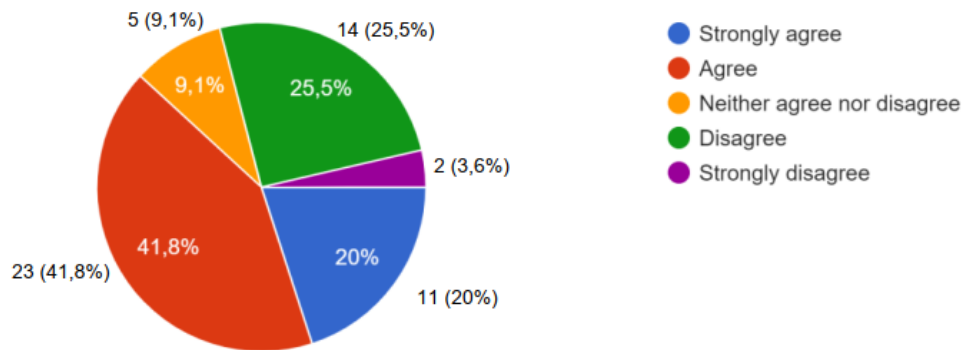


Figure 4 I choose bulk package rather than normal size if available.

Bulk packages offer larger amount of a product with reduced price therefore 20% of the respondents strongly agreed to choose a bulk if it was available and 41,8% agreed to it. 9,1% neither agreed nor disagreed. Yet still 14 people (25,5%) rather buy normal-sized package which can be correlated to a smaller requirement and 2 people (3,6%) strongly disagreed to bulk buy.

I am more likely to buy a product with a reduced carbon footprint, even if it is more expensive.

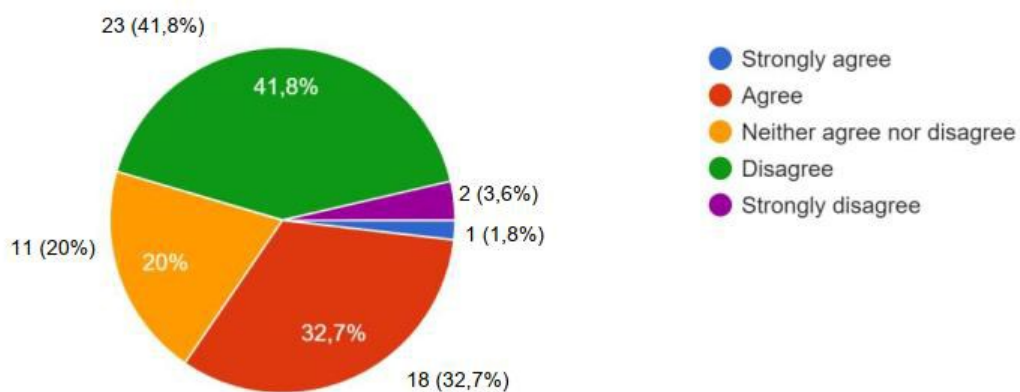


Figure 5 I am more likely to buy a product with a reduced carbon footprint, even if it is more expensive.

Based on this research, purchase decision is generally led by a price even when the respondent would support environmentally friendly options. As stated in Figure 5, 32,7% agreed to pay more

to support their personal beliefs when it comes to a sustainability whereas 41,8% disagreed to select a product with less carbon footprint if it was more expensive. Only 1 person strongly agreed to buy such a product. 20% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

I tend to buy products from a well-known brand if there are multiple options available.

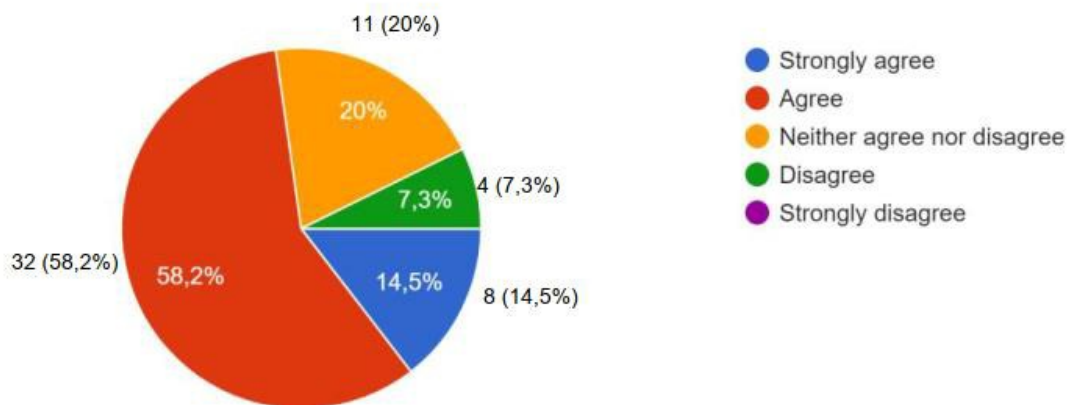


Figure 6 I tend to buy products from a well-known brand if there are multiple options available.

It has been acknowledged that familiarity of a certain brand is a significant factor in consumer's buying behaviour as consumer perceive them credible. This is supported in Figure 6, as 58,2% of the respondents agreed that amongst multiple options, a well-known brand is typically chosen. 14,5% strongly agreed, 20% neither agreed nor disagreed and minor 7,3% disagreed. Often more affordable products are not produced by well-known brand as they have gained their credibility and brand image through persistent development and can maintain relatively higher pricing.

If the product claims to have e.g., natural, environmentally friendly, cruelty free ingredients, I believe it is verified information.

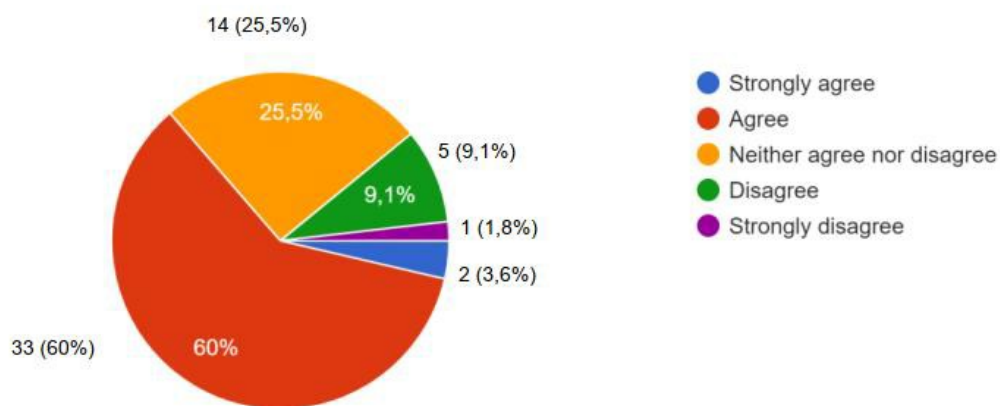


Figure 7 If the product claims to have e.g., natural, environmentally friendly, cruelty free ingredients, I believe it is verified information.

In figure 7, it can be seen that 33 respondents (60%) agreed that if a product claims to be sustainable or made ethically, the claims made are true, while 2 respondents (3,6%) strongly agreed. 14 respondents (25,5%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and 5 respondents (9,1%) disagreed. Only 1 respondent (1,8%) strongly disagreed with the statement. It was assumed, that to some extent there would have been more respondents who disagreed with the statement, considering how much greenwashing has been covered in media, and that environmental claims made by companies are often exaggerated. However, majority of respondents, at least among students in Finland, trust these claims.

I prefer the product to have descriptive labeling. Example: how to use the product such as features, handling, security, storage, and others.

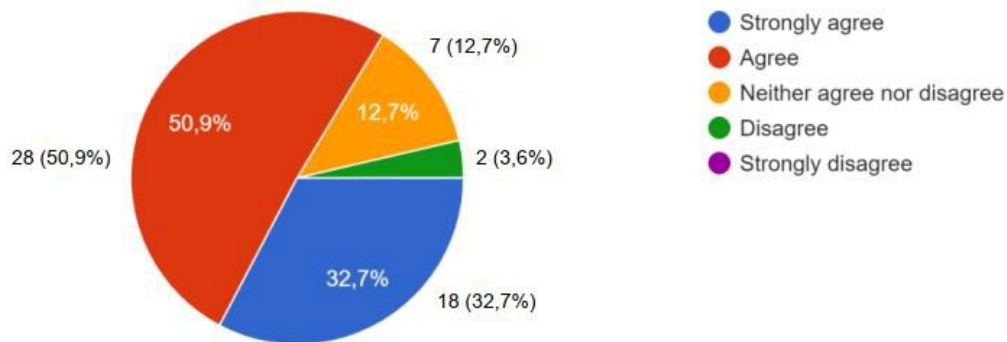


Figure 8 I prefer the product to have descriptive labeling.

28 of the respondents (50,9%) agreed when stated that they prefer products to have descriptive labeling such as how to handle or how to store the product. 18 respondents (32,7%) strongly agreed. 7 out of all respondents (12,7%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Only 2 respondents (3,6%) disagreed with the statement, and none of the respondents strongly disagreed. This suggests that students in Finland as consumers prefer products that provide them with clear instructions and information on the product and its usage. There is hardly any downside to having such information, so for many it is an easy choice to pick a product with said instructions and information.

It is important that the packaging has been made of recycled materials.

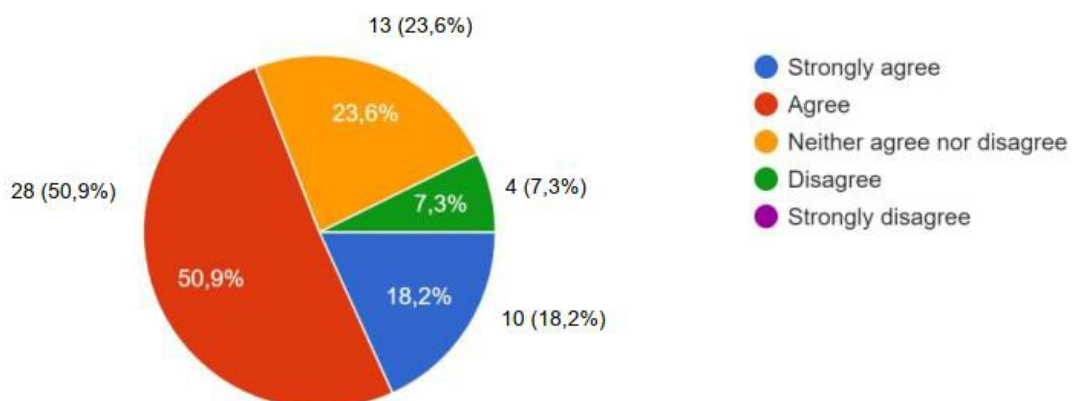


Figure 9 It is important that the packaging has been made of recycled materials.

The assumption was that since students are mostly of Generation Z or Millennials, majority of them would consider it important that product packaging on household products is made with recycled materials. This assumption was supported by the results, as 28 respondents (50,9%) agreed and 10 respondents (18,2%) strongly agreed with the statement. 13 respondents (23,6%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Only 4 respondents (7,3%) disagreed, and none of the respondents strongly disagreed.

I prefer to buy a product that is aesthetically pleasing.

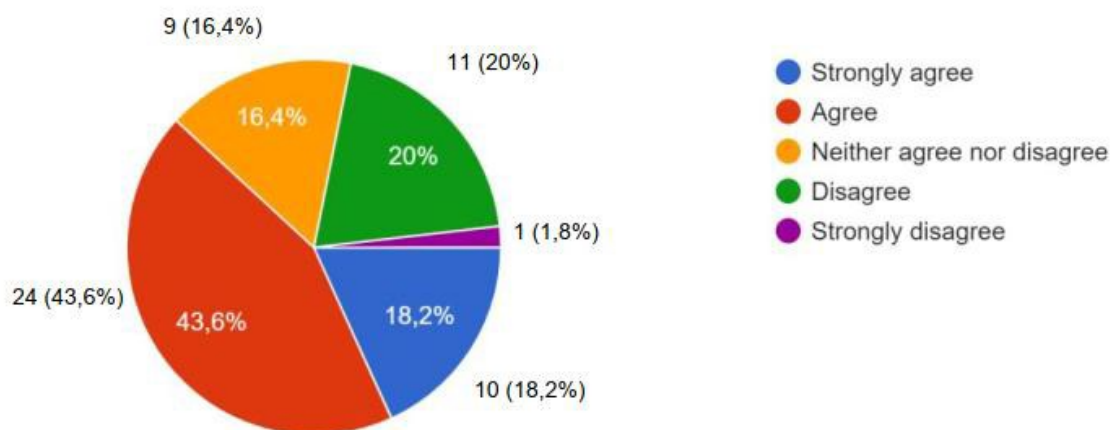


Figure 10 I prefer to buy a product that is aesthetically pleasing.

With the final statement the results were more divided between respondents. 24 respondents (43,6%) agreed when stated that they prefer to buy a product that is aesthetically pleasing. 10 respondents (18,2%) strongly agreed. 9 of all respondents (16,4%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and 11 respondents (20%) disagreed. Only 1 respondent (1,8%) strongly disagreed with the statement. As the study is regarding to household products, aesthetics of a product package is not as important.

5 Discussion

It has been argued that due to increasing awareness and consumer demand for sustainable products, the risk of green washing is spreading as companies strive to meet the requirements of changing business environments. European Parliament and the Council are currently considering a proposal which would limit the packaging and its waste by certain EU-wide regulations (EC, 2022). It is also important for marketers to understand and find ways how consumers who are less to choose eco-friendly products, would adopt greener products. Based on the responses to this survey, it was surprising that up to 60% of the respondents (see Figure 7) believe that green claims in the product are verified information as the assumption was that younger generation would be more aware of greenwashing and would be more wary of trusting the environmental claims made by brands.

The research findings support the hypothesis that price is a key factor on students' purchase decision but considering the current inflation and a global crisis, the results could be possibly affected by these reasons, too. On the other hand, the results also indicate that the more expensive product is not considered even when the product has reduced carbon footprint. Larger sample could provide wider perspective as the conducted study was limited both geographically and on an educational level, hence marketers should recognize the possible limitations when deciding the target audience. Household products seldom have small niche target group as many of the products are necessities that consumers habitually purchase. Differences in buying power between students from varying parts of the world could also provide

RQ1: How much does the packaging material affect purchase decision?

As seen in Figure 9, majority of respondents consider it important that product packages have been made from recycled materials. Assumption was, that students as consumers look for products like this or that these products at the very least stand out from the competition, and that using recycled materials may persuade students to choose a certain brand.

Different types of materials were not listed, but common ones that household products use in packaging are cardboard and certain types of plastic. Especially plastic is often used as it is very lightweight, malleable, and lasting, however being lasting also makes it more difficult to recycle. As

plastic is so harmful to the environment, consumers may react positively to products that use recycled plastic in their packaging.

RQ2: If a product package claims that the product is made with sustainable methods or from eco-friendly ingredients, do consumers believe it is verified and true information?

The survey does not determine the respondent's general knowledge about green marketing and as it has been earlier stated, the usage of green or environmentally friendly products is largely based on the person's own beliefs and values. However, possible social pressure should be considered when examining the results. Previous studies about greenwashing and younger generation being environmentally conscious reinforced the assumption that product package claims would not be fully trusted. Yet still 60% of respondents (see Figure 7) agreed to believe the claims stated in the product package, although the study does not reveal if participants validate the statements prior to purchasing. There are multiple websites advising not only consumers but also companies how to identify and question environmental claims as transparency and valid explanation for each claim will also benefit businesses to gain credibility.

RQ3: Does a student pay more attention to the price than the product's sustainability?

As can be seen in Figure 3, majority of respondents pay more attention to price than product sustainability, however as stated earlier, this could also be due to the current economic situation both in Finland as well as globally. A study conducted in times of less economic turbulence and uncertainty could produce contrasting results. As Figure 5 reveals, 41,8% of respondents were not prepared to pick a product with reduced carbon footprint, if it meant an increase in price. This deviates from the report by Landrum (2017) which showed that majority of consumers globally would be willing to pay a higher price for a product which is eco-friendly. This also indicates that while most students trust the environmental claims to be true and that it is important the product package has been made with recycled materials, many of them still consider price to be the more important factor instead of sustainability, when choosing between different, competing products.

It will be unavoidable for businesses not to participate in sustainable development in the future as natural resources and nature's resilience must be preserved. The research could be refined for a

wider sample to study the difference in the consumption habits and beliefs of different geographical areas and societies. Such an approach could provide information about areas with comparatively less knowledge of sustainable buying, and the results would help to recognize the further development needs. There are also differences in the buying power between students from around the world, which could provide varied results, and in future studies of the topic the economic background of respondents could also be taken into consideration. Students who have taken a loan or have a part-time or full-time employment have more money to spend and may be more inclined to choose a more expensive, sustainable product even if its price is higher than the alternatives.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Google Forms survey questions

Personal information

Respondents' age and gender.

Your age? *

☐ Under 18

☐ 18-24

☐ 25-30

☐ 31-35

☐ 36-40

☐ 41-45

☐ 45+

Your gender? *

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Other/prefer not to tell

Consumption habits

Choices you make when comparing 2 or more similar products.

I pay more attention to price than product sustainability. *

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

I choose bulk package rather than normal size if available. *

Example: I rather buy 24 rolls of toilet paper than 8 rolls.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

Product packaging

The physical characteristics of a product and its' packaging.

It is important that the packaging has been made of recycled materials. *

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

I prefer to buy a product that is aesthetically pleasing. *

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

I am more likely to buy a product with a reduced carbon footprint, even if it is more expensive. *

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

I tend to buy products from a well-known brand if there are multiple options available. *

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

Product information

If the product claims to have e.g., natural, environmentally friendly, cruelty free ingredients, I believe it is verified information. *

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

I prefer the product to have descriptive labeling. *

Example: how to use the product such as features, handling, security, storage, and others.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree