



Aalto University
School of Business

Mikkeli Campus

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
AND CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR OF FEMALE MILLENNIALS IN THE
CLOTHING INDUSTRY

Consumer willingness to pay for environmentally friendly apparel

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Author: Essi Hietanen

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Objectives

The main objective of this study was to explore the attitudes of millennial consumers towards sustainable fashion products, and especially explore the willingness of Finnish millennial girls to pay for sustainable apparel. Other objectives included finding out the opinion amongst existing literature about consumers' attitudes towards sustainable fashion. Additionally, the study set out to find ways in which companies can positively affect consumers' attitudes and buying behavior related to sustainable fashion products.

Summary

Companies in the fashion industry have many stakeholders, who are affected by the actions of these companies. These include customers, investors, and the environment. Therefore, many companies are pressured to produce clothing items in a sustainable way. Inversely, consumers and their willingness to pay for sustainable clothing items have a substantial effect on these companies. To explore the consumer attitudes and willingness to pay for sustainable apparel, existing literature on the subject was reviewed, and ten Finnish millennial girls were interviewed.

Conclusions

The findings indicate, that there is a gap between millennial consumers' attitudes and intentions, and their actual behavior. Additionally, it appears that at the moment, there is not a significant number of consumers that would be willing to pay a premium for sustainable apparel. The findings also show that environmental sustainability can be beneficial for companies when used in marketing, but that sustainable fashion companies need to increase their visibility, and possibly increase the amount of clothing items and brands that are sustainable but have a more conventional design.

Key words: *fashion industry, sustainability, buying behavior*

Language: English

Grade:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Background.....	1
1.2. Research Problem	2
1.3. Research Questions	3
1.4. Research Objectives.....	3
1.5. Definitions	4
1.5.1. Sustainable apparel.....	4
1.5.2. Consumer behavior	4
1.5.3. Intention-behavior gap.....	4
1.6. Structure of the study.....	5
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.1. Introduction	6
2.2. Consumers' perceptions and knowledge on sustainable fashion.....	7
2.3. Consumers' buying behavior related to sustainable fashion	9
2.4. Intention-behavior gap in the sustainable fashion industry	14
2.5. Significance of sustainable apparel buying behavior for stakeholders	16
2.6. Conceptual Framework.....	19
3. METHODOLOGY.....	22
3.1. Data collection, target group and analysis of material	22
3.2. Semi-structured interviews.....	24
3.3. Limitations.....	25
4. FINDINGS.....	27
4.1. Data analysis	27
4.2. Knowledge and concern over the environment.....	27
4.3. Purchasing behavior and decision making.....	28
4.4. Attitudes towards environmentally friendly apparel	29
4.5. Purchasing of environmentally friendly apparel	30
4.6. Increasing environmentally friendly purchasing behavior.....	32
4.7. Key findings	35
5. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS.....	36
5.1. Knowledge, attitudes, and individual concerns over the environment.	36
5.2. Price and situational context	37
5.3. Willingness to purchase sustainable apparel and the intention-behavior gap.....	38
6. CONCLUSIONS.....	39
6.1. Main Findings	39
6.2. Implications for International Business	39
6.3. Suggestions for Further Research	41
REFERENCE LIST	42
APPENDIX 1.....	47
APPENDIX 2.....	48
APPENDIX 3.....	49
LIST OF FIGURES.....	50

1. INTRODUCTION

In the fashion industry, consumers and their buying behavior have a substantial effect on companies, and the companies in their turn have a substantial effect on all of the different stakeholders. Whether or not consumers are willing to purchase and pay a premium on sustainably produced apparel, has many implications on the companies trying to market and sell these products. The following section will discuss the background of the topic, the research problem, research questions and the research objectives, and define terms related to the topic.

1.1. Background

Since the production of apparel takes up a lot of natural resources, many stakeholders appear to be increasingly concerned about the effects of the fashion industry to the environment. Since global warming has become a current and serious issue, many of the companies in the fashion industry have started to implement sustainability and CSR practices (Gwozdz, Steensen Nielsen, & Muller, 2017).

However, companies beginning to produce apparel in a sustainable way will have no impact on the environment unless consumers are willing to pay for those items. Studies have stated that consumers have many different criteria based on which they make purchasing decisions. According to Mishal, Dubey, Gupta and Luo, (2017), there are eight main criteria that consumers consider when buying apparel.

When consumers make a purchasing decision between different items of clothing, and consider different criteria, one of those criteria is price. Crane (2010), states that the higher price of sustainable products is an important reason why consumers do not purchase sustainably produced clothing items as much as the companies and different environmental activists and regulators would prefer.

Thus, companies selling environmentally friendly products in the fashion industry, and different regulators, educators, and activists most likely strive for changing consumers' behavior so that they would be willing to purchase environmentally friendly apparel and pay a premium for it, so that in the future, an increasing number of consumers would prefer sustainable fashion over regular, non-sustainable fashion. If both consumers' attitudes and behavior can be changed towards being more positively inclined to sustainable fashion, an increasing number of companies will be forced to change their production methods and thus the fashion industry as a whole would become more environmentally friendly.

1.2. Research Problem

Fashion industry has a big impact on many different stakeholders. Environmental issues are increasingly relevant today, and many companies are pressured to make their processes and products more environmentally friendly. However, there seems to be an assumption that people are willing to spend more on products that are produced sustainably, but the evidence of that appears to be scarce. The impact of consumers' perceptions and attitudes for companies is big, through the consumers' buying behavior.

Especially millennials will make up a big part of fashion consumers in the future, and so companies should focus on understanding their values. Even though sustainability is said to be important to many consumers, there is a so-called green-gap, which means that there is a difference between what people intend to do and what they actually do. Therefore, it is important for companies to know and understand what consumers value in a product, for example if they would be willing to pay more for sustainably produced clothes, or for clothes that are promoted as high quality, so that they can implement it in their marketing strategies. It is also important for the companies to understand why people buy clothing items and what the reasons for the consumption of these items are. This is also closely related to consumption behavior

of people, relating to whether people buy affordable clothes often and large amounts, or do they buy rarely, but higher quality products. This has a considerable effect on companies in the fashion industry.

1.3. Research Questions

1. What is the common opinion among literature on the knowledge and attitudes of millennials towards sustainable fashion?
2. Are Finnish millennial girls actually willing to spend more on products that are promoted as sustainably produced?
3. What could the companies producing sustainable clothes do to increase the willingness of millennials to pay more for sustainable products?

1.4. Research Objectives

1. To explore the attitudes of millennial consumers towards sustainable fashion products.
2. To explore how these attitudes affect Finnish millennial girls' buying behavior especially related to the higher price that is often connected to these products.
3. To find out the common opinion among researchers about millennial consumers' attitudes and buying behavior in the fashion industry.
4. To find out how companies can positively affect consumers' buying behavior related to sustainable products.

5. To explore the value of promotion campaigns of sustainable clothing items.

1.5. Definitions

1.5.1. Sustainable apparel

Sustainable apparel is defined by Joergens (2006) and Niinimäki (2010), cited in de Lenne and Vandebosch, (2017), as a concept associated with “*valuing CSR and producing garment in a socially, ethically, and environmentally responsible manner.*” Yang, Song and Tong, (2017) state that there are many different aspects of social and environmental sustainability that are affected by the fashion industry and its retailers. These include assortment, packaging, and delivery of the products, among other things (ibid.).

1.5.2. Consumer behavior

Consumer behavior is defined as a study of why people buy, use, and dispose products (saylor.org). These reasons can be situational, personal, social, or psychological. Knowing why people buy the products they buy, where they like to shop, and how people make these decisions will help marketers to both develop and promote products that consumers want to purchase. (ibid.)

1.5.3. Intention-behavior gap

According to Sheeran and Webb, (2016) the intention-behavior gap describes the issue of people not always ending up doing what they originally intended to do. They also state that the quality of the intention, the nature of the goal, and the basis and properties of intention all have an effect on whether or not the intention becomes an action (ibid.). Sheeran and Webb also state three aspects that need to be in place in

order for the intention to become an action, which are *“initiate, maintain, and close goal pursuit.”*

1.6. Structure of the study

The study consists of six main chapters, beginning with an introduction, where the background, research questions, problem and objectives are presented and the relevant terms are defined. In the second chapter, existing literature on the topic is reviewed and a new conceptual framework is presented. Chapters three, four, and five, consist of the empirical part of the study, presenting first the methodology used, and then discussing the findings of the study. The last chapter concludes the study by summarizing the main findings, discussing the implications for international business, and finally presenting suggestions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Environmental sustainability has become an important issue among companies in different industries. The fashion industry is a considerably large industry, and has a substantial effect on many different stakeholders everywhere in the world. It appears that suppliers in the industry that implement different sustainability and CSR programs in order to decrease their negative impact on different stakeholders, are doing so either because they want to reduce their impact on the environment, or because consumers pressure them to do so (Gwozdz, Steensen Nielsen, & Muller, 2017). It appears that the general attitudes towards environmentally friendly consumption among consumers are positive, but the actual amount of green consumerism is still very limited (Crane, 2010).

The literature often focuses on discussing the different concepts around environmental sustainability and how they have developed, and how people's knowledge on them and understanding on environmental sustainability overall has developed (Hill & Lee, 2012; Hiller Connel and Kozar, 2012; Ritch, 2015). However, the literature on people's willingness to pay for sustainably produced fashion is insufficient. It remains debatable whether or not people would actually be willing to spend more of their income on a clothing item which is produced in a way that does not damage the environment as much as other production methods. Therefore, the consumer behavioral aspect of environmental sustainability remains an angle of the issue that provides many possibilities for researchers.

This literature review discusses the different aspects of environmental sustainability in the fashion industry relating to consumers' behavior, based on already existing research. First, the overall perceptions and knowledge on sustainable fashion are reviewed. Next, the intention-behavior gap related to sustainable fashion consumption, and the buying behavior of people relating to these products are discussed. Finally,

the implications for different stakeholders in the fashion industry are discussed, and a proposed conceptual framework is presented.

2.2. Consumers' perceptions and knowledge on sustainable fashion

According to a study by Hill & Lee (2012), Generation y consumers' knowledge on both sustainability and the fashion industry's different effects on the environment appears to be quite insufficient. The participants of their study appeared to have a positive attitude towards sustainability. However, the participants themselves expressed their lack of knowledge of the issues related to sustainable fashion. (ibid.) Consumers apparently do not fully understand the relationship between sustainability and fashion. Some consumers have also expressed doubt on accepting the higher pricing of organic cotton (Ritch, 2015).

Existing literature has also focused on discussing the relationship between knowledge and awareness of sustainable issues and apparel, and purchasing behavior concerning sustainable apparel (Zsóka, Szerényi, Széchy & Kocsis, 2013; Han and Stoel, 2016). It seems that despite the confusion and skepticism, the consumers appear to want to avoid producers accused of exploitation, and purchase from retailers that are established in their home countries. They also seem to be willing to pay more for clothing items that were not produced under exploitation (Ritch, 2015). However, especially when it comes to the purchasing behavior of high school and university students concerning sustainably produced apparel, there are many factors that influence the behavior (Zsóka et al., 2013).

Hiller Connel and Kozar (2012) investigated undergraduate students in the apparel discipline who took part in a course that discussed globalization and the apparel and textile industry. The participants' knowledge about sustainability issues in the fashion industry was assessed before and after attending the course. The results showed substantial change in the knowledge of sustainability issues in the fashion industry. However, the purchasing behavior of the students did not change significantly, and

additionally, the study found that between the participants' knowledge on the issues and their behavior related to sustainable fashion, there was no significant link. (ibid.) As it appears, it is extremely difficult to make any conclusions about the relationship between environmental education and knowledge, and environmentally friendly consumption (Zsóka et al., 2013).

There are differing views on the relationship between knowledge and behavior. Han and Stoel (2016), reviewed two types of norms: injunctive and descriptive, and two types of knowledge: objective and subjective. It appears that for boosting positive attitudes towards socially responsible products, injunctive norms were more influential. For boosting actual intention to purchase these products, descriptive norms appeared to be more powerful. Concerning knowledge types, both of these types were influencers of positive attitudes towards purchasing socially responsible products. (ibid.)

Even though the relationship between knowledge and behavior is not clear, it is important that educational programs are aware of the current issues relating to sustainability and provide the needed knowledge. That way in the future, professionals have the required knowledge to endorse the change in the fashion industry (Hiller Connel and Kozar, 2012). In addition, substantial education of the issues related to sustainability and especially the relationship with the fashion industry is needed to educate consumers further (Hill & Lee, 2012).

Researchers have also studied the change in the knowledge of consumers concerning the sustainable apparel industry. A study by Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012), was conducted by collecting and analyzing discussions in a green fashion forum during two different time periods: 2007-2008 and 2010-2011. The results of the study show a change in the topics discussed. During the first period, the discussions focused on green issues such as pollution and energy waste. The knowledge shared during that period was subjective, based on perceptions and feelings. (ibid.)

During the second period, a change was apparent since the topics discussed focused on fashion, such as green design, and consumption issues (Cervellon & Wernerfelt, 2012). The change was also apparent concerning the knowledge shared in the forum. The knowledge became more objective and precise, and consumers shared information on their expertise and gave others advice on how to assess products and where to find information. (ibid.)

Overall there is a significant change in how consumers saw the link between sustainability and fashion. The consumers became more interested in making fashion sustainable, than making sustainable fashion fashionable (Cervellon & Wernerfelt, 2012). It therefore appears that the knowledge of people has indeed developed even in such a short time period as 2007-2011, and become more objective and precise. Since the study by Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) showed that people shared their knowledge with others, it suggests that in the future, this will aid in educating the consumers, since people do not only gain knowledge from media and educators, but from peers as well.

2.3. Consumers' buying behavior related to sustainable fashion

Consumers and their behavior is often analyzed, in order to come up with implications for companies and investigate what are the best marketing strategies, for example. According to Gwozdz, Steensen Nielsen, and Muller (2017), consumers can be divided into different groups, based on their habits of consumption of clothing items. Their study found that nearly half of the participants purchased clothing items surprisingly rarely, and they preferred affordable budget brand clothing over more expensive brands. The article also strived to investigate how each of the groups should be approached in order to make their consumption habits more sustainable. For consumers with low levels of clothing consumption, it will most likely be more effective to try and change their behavior more towards low acquisition costs, than to lower their consumption any more. (ibid.)

For the consumers consuming high levels of clothing items and spending the most money, shifting their behavior towards both consuming less and consuming better can be effective. For the consumers that do not consume high levels of clothing items but do spend relatively big amounts of money on their consumption, the best strategy would be to try and change their behavior towards consuming differently. Lastly, for the consumers with the highest levels of consumption, and who prefer budget brand clothing, effective strategy could be to attempt to change their behavior towards consuming less overall. (Gwozdz et al., 2017) This is supported by the statement that for the different criteria by which consumers make decisions on products, environmental benefit is at sixth place on the list out of total eight (Mishal, Dubey, Gupta & Luo, 2017). The price factor of garments appears to be important for some consumers, for multiple possible reasons. One possible reason is that some consumers might not have the purchasing power needed to buy sustainable apparel, and therefore prefer budget brands (Crane, 2010).

Even though there clearly are consumers who are interested in environmental issues, green consumption is still not a norm amongst consumers. The reasons why environmental consciousness does not always turn into green purchasing behavior, can be explained by higher price, the products being less available and having less variety than regular products, and green brands not being as reputable as regular brands (Mishal et al., 2017). When it comes to slow fashion, which is considered the opposite of fast fashion brands like H&M and Zara, consumers apparently believe that purchasing slow fashion would take up more of their discretionary income, and in addition, they would be spending it on clothing items that are not as fashionable as non-sustainable products (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013). It appears that slow fashion has potential to improve overall the environmental friendliness of the production of clothing items, but that is likely to happen in the future, since at the moment the concept of slow fashion is in its beginning face (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013).

What seems to interest many companies trying to market their environmentally friendly products, is to find out how can they affect consumers' attitudes and behavior. It has been stated that social media can have a substantial effect on young adults and their attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs concerning environmentally friendly clothing items (de Lenne & Vandebosch, 2017). Positive attitudes towards these products are especially created by sustainable organizations', activists' and sustainable brands' content on social media. In addition, what appears to increase consumers' beliefs that they can purchase sustainably produced clothing items, is content on fashion magazines. Also, it appears that when consuming the content of activists, green brands, and organizations on social media, consumers believed that their relatives purchased and consumed sustainable clothing items. These beliefs in turn increase the attitude of consumers to be more likely to purchase these products as well. (ibid.)

In addition to social media, there are countless other influencers on the attitudes towards sustainable apparel. For example, the attitudes of consumers towards purchasing sustainable apparel have a connection with the overall concern they place on the environmental issues, their opinion about the sustainable clothing items, and what their previous consumption behavior has been in relation to sustainable consumption (Mcneill & Moore, 2015 and Cowan & Kinley, 2014). Additionally, the price of the sustainable products and their availability in the market, and the individual's beliefs on what the impact of their actions is on the environment and its state can influence consumers' attitudes (Cowan & Kinley, 2014). Subjective norms, or how individual thinks others view him or her, can also have an effect on the intentions to purchase organic apparel. Attitude also appears to have a direct impact on the intention to purchase these items (Maloney, Lee, Jackson & Miller-Spillman, 2014).

However, since intentions do not always lead to behavior, many reasons for that have been presented in the existing literature (Mishal et al., 2017; Han, Seo & Ko, 2017). What appears to affect the relationship between intentions and behavior, are the influence from peers, knowledge on the sustainable

products, and whether fashion serves the purpose of purely functional or self-representing (Mcneill & Moore, 2015). Additionally, even though intentions do not always lead to action, people seem to generally think that buying sustainable apparel is a positive thing (Cowan & Kinley, 2014). However, the consumers appear to believe that their actions do not have a significant effect on the state of the environment (ibid.).

Another influencer on the attitudes towards sustainable apparel is the overall knowledge on environmental issues. According to Noor et al. (2012), in Malaysia, the amount of sustainable apparel purchasing is not high. However, both the knowledge and attitudes of consumers towards environmental issues of the consumers were at a moderate level. It also seems that the knowledge and attitudes towards environmental issues do have a positive effect on green consumption. (ibid.) It does seem like the consumers themselves are not confident about their knowledge of sustainable clothing (Maloney et al., 2014). However, they do apparently view these products as more expensive than regular clothing items. It is likely that these negative aspects cause an overall negative attitude towards organic clothing, and therefore decreases the consumers' willingness to purchase these products. (ibid.) Thus, it appears that green consumption is negatively affected by the fact that consumers still have a limited amount of knowledge and awareness of sustainable apparel (Han et al., 2017). What needs to be noted, however, is that the consumers in different countries might have differing amounts of knowledge on environmental issues, and this can therefore affect the consumers' purchasing behavior as well.

The negative effects that result from the lack of knowledge of the consumers can be overcome by making the purchase experiences as personalized as possible, for example utilizing education of the consumers at the same time (Han et al., 2017). This can be achieved by for example giving consumers knowledge about sustainable apparel in a practical way, while they are having their purchasing experience (ibid.). Additionally, since perceived expensiveness has an indirect effect on the intention to purchase these products, it is possible to overcome the effect of perceived expen-

siveness by increasing the overall positive attitude towards environmentally friendly products (Maloney et al., 2014).

The negative effects from the lack of knowledge on environmental issues, especially related to the apparel industry, can also be overcome by increasing awareness, and educating consumers (Maloney et al., 2014). Since awareness of sustainable issues has an impact on attitude, perceived consumer effectiveness and perceived expensiveness, it seems that increasing awareness of environmentally friendly products has a positive effect on willingness to purchase. Overall, it appears that if marketers want consumers to be more willing to purchase ecological clothing, awareness of these products should be increased, and after that, knowledge should be increased as well. (ibid.)

Even though consumers appear to lack on the knowledge on sustainable apparel, they still state that they are willing to support sustainable apparel (Shen, Wang, Lo & Shum, 2012). It also appears that even though the awareness of sustainable brands is not high, consumers would still be willing to pay more for sustainable apparel (ibid.). However, according to Laroche, Bergeron & Barbaro-Forleo (2001), more and more consumers are becoming aware of their consumption and its effect on the environment. The study states that 67% of consumers have stated that they would be willing to pay 5% or up to 10% more on environmentally friendly products in 1989. It is also claimed that consumers would be willing to pay up to 40% more on product that is environmentally friendly nowadays. (ibid.)

A study conducted in the United States searched for the trade-offs consumers face when purchasing clothing items (Rothenbeg & Matthews, 2016). The study was conducted among college students and its results indicate that consumers prefer to purchase clothing items that are low regarding their price, produced locally, and that are eco-friendly. However, even though most participants preferred to pay 15 dollars for a t-shirt, some of the participants were willing to pay 25 or even 35 dollars for that eco-friendly t-shirt. It also seems that out of the terms eco-friendly and organic, con-

sumers preferred the term eco-friendly, which has an important implication for marketers when targeting younger consumers. (ibid.)

For companies, one important implication from the behavior of consumers is to find out who are the consumers that provide the most opportunities for increasing their clientele. Maloney et al., (2014), state that companies should target young adults in their marketing efforts, since it appears they are the group most inclined to think they can have an effect on the environment with their actions. Laroche et al. (2001), on the other hand, state that the consumers that are the most willing to purchase environmentally friendly products and pay more for those products, are likely to be females, who are married and have one or more children.

2.4. Intention-behavior gap in the sustainable fashion industry

The issue of sustainable fashion consumption has also been looked into from the perspective of intentions and actual behavior, and their relationship (Carrington, Neville & Whitwell, 2010; Crane, 2010; Hassan, Shiu & Shaw, 2016). Carrington et al., (2010) used secondary data collection to construct a conceptual framework describing the intention behavior gap of ethical consumers. The study found three main implications for companies. First, it is crucial to understand individuals' implementation intentions and its role for the intention behavior gap. Second, companies can succeed in changing consumers' behavior by accepting that actual behavioral control has an effect for the intention behavior gap as well. Finally, marketers can reduce the intention behavior gap by understanding the situational context and how it affects people's behavior in different situations. (ibid.)

The same authors later explored the influencers of the intention behavior gap and the factors that are needed to reduce this gap (Carrington et al., 2014). They concluded that in order for the gap to be reduced and behavior to change, practical knowledge about the issues relating to sustainable consumption are needed. In addi-

tion, the change will not be successful if routines and habits relating to sustainable consumption are not fully changed and if consumers do not create new routines for sustainable consumption. (ibid.) Carrington et al., (2014) also concluded that the intention behavior gap is largely affected by individuals' ethical concerns and how the individuals rank those concerns. According to Crane (2010), however, attitude towards environmental issues does not actually fully explain behavior related to buying ecological products. Even if consumers had more knowledge on environmental issues and the effects of their purchasing behavior, their purchasing behavior would not necessarily change significantly (ibid.).

Hassan et al., (2016), however, have found slightly differing conclusions from their review of empirical studies on the topic of ethical consumption and intention behavior gap. The first part of their study, focusing on reviewing empirical studies, found that the number of studies on the intention behavior relationship in ethical consumption is scarce, and therefore concluded that there is not a sufficient amount of research giving proof to the claim of the intention behavior gap. Nonetheless, the second part of the study focused on an empirical case study, the results of which would suggest that there is possibly a substantial gap between intention and behavior. The study also calls for additional empirical studies, specifically longitudinal studies, to further examine the intention behavior gap. (ibid.)

Johnstone & Tan (2015) used the neutralization theory in their study, and found many different ways consumers defend their behavior related to consumption of ecological products. In addition, two new reasons why consumers do not purchase sustainably produced products were discovered. The main neutralization techniques participants used were denial of responsibility, denial of injury, and appeal to higher loyalties. When participants defended their behavior by using the denial of responsibility theory, they stated that buying green products is simply too difficult and expensive. (ibid.) Crane (2010), also states that the higher price of sustainable products is an important barrier to green consumerism. Another barrier may be that consumers find it difficult to understand which products are actually environmentally friendly. Crane also

adds that when environmentalists and activists make statements about the environment, consumers do not necessarily believe them. (ibid.)

The participants of the study by Johnstone & Tan, (2015) stated that purchasing green products requires too much time to search information and find green alternatives, and money to pay for green options. The consumers also used denial of injury as another technique of neutralization, where they stated that there is no direct harm from their actions. Another commonly used technique was appeal to higher loyalty, such as responsibilities for family. Some participants stated that since they need to provide for their families, they cannot buy environmentally friendly products. (ibid.)

Johnstone & Tan, (2015) also found new neutralization techniques. The results imply that consumers do not purchase sustainably produced products because they either have an attachment to a certain brand, or they are preserving their self-identity. This would therefore suggest that green consumption needs to become a norm in the society before change in consumers' behavior will happen and they will put environmental values and goals above those of their own. Even though the study has important implications for companies and policymakers, the implications cannot be generalized fully based on the study. The study itself states that its limitations arise from the frame of the study. It was conducted in an urban center, and males, people from rural areas, and people with lower income were not represented sufficiently. (ibid.)

2.5. Significance of sustainable apparel buying behavior for stakeholders

Since it seems that the amount of green consumerism is not yet significant (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013; Noor et al., 2012), there are many opportunities for companies. Researchers often strive to provide marketers and policymakers with knowledge on how to increase green consumerism and how to change consumers'

attitudes and behavior towards sustainable apparel (Zsóka et al., 2013; Mishal et al., 2017; Ottman, Stafford & Hartman, 2006). The significance for educators of environmental issues, is to recognize that different people have a different attitude towards sustainability issues, and they also do not all have the same amount of knowledge on these issues. The content of courses and educational programs should be designed to be able to interest consumers that have different amounts of knowledge, and have different attitudes towards those issues. (Zsóka et al., 2013)

Increasing consumers' awareness and knowledge of environmental issues is often considered an important step to increasing green consumerism, and it has been stated that consumers do need more education on these issues (Hill & Lee, 2012). For example, governments can take action to increase awareness and knowledge of environmentally friendly products (Mishal et al., 2017). They can announce regulations and also boost green manufacturing with regulations (ibid.). In addition, reliable eco-certifications for products, and informing consumers on what the certification means can have a positive effect on both the sales of the product and increasing the knowledge on environmental issues (Ottman et al., 2006). Education on sustainable issues should be focused on practical matters, such as living and consuming in a sustainable way and assisting consumers in those areas (Zsóka, et al., 2013).

Educating consumers can also happen through marketing. Information on the product's sustainability and its implications on the environment could be communicated to the consumers through the labels of products (Ritch, 2015). The more detailed information on the environmental issues that relate to the product can be shared on the website of the company (ibid.). It appears that it is important to show consumers that their actions do have an effect on the environment, and that that effect can be positive (Ritch, 2015; Kang, Liu & Kim, 2013 and Laroche et al., 2001). That way, consumers might be more willing to pay a premium for sustainable apparel.

Another possibility for marketers is to try and strengthen the perceived personal relevance of the consumers (Kang et al., 2013). By making environmentally friendly products valuable for a certain lifestyle, it can increase the willingness of consumers

to purchase sustainable apparel (ibid.). A part of this type of lifestyle promotion is making green consumerism visible for consumers (Han & Stoel, 2016). It appears that when individuals see that other consumers are purchasing sustainable apparel and it is becoming a norm amongst consumers, they are more willing to purchase these products themselves. Therefore, it can be an effective strategy to promote sustainable apparel as a part of a social norm, or that it affects social approval, to increase the positive attitudes towards sustainable fashion. (ibid.)

One way to make green consumerism more visible for consumers is to create online communities where peers can offer each other advice on sustainable purchasing, and overall interact with each other related to this type of sustainable purchasing behavior (Han & Stoel, 2016). Celebrities can also be a usable strategy in making green consumerism a lifestyle (Maloney et al., 2014). Celebrity endorsement can be a way to increase positive attitudes towards organic clothing. Celebrity endorsement could also be used with a large retailer to maximize the positive effect. (ibid.)

Overall, to increase the sales of organic clothing, aggressive marketing is needed (Maloney et al., 2014). Firstly, marketers have to show that the product is as good as other products concerning performance (Ottman et al., 2006). In addition, since consumers who are willing to pay a premium for sustainable apparel do not think buying these products is inconvenient, marketers should emphasize why sustainable apparel products are indeed convenient to purchase and consume, to convince those who yet are not willing to purchase these products (Laroche et al., 2001). Also, since consumers do not appear to be fully educated on environmental issues relating to the fashion industry, they need to be educated through marketing campaigns (Ottman et al., 2006). The different aspects of environmentally friendly products can be shown as solutions to problems consumers may have (ibid.).

Since there are many different terms and concepts describing different environmentally friendly products, such as fair trade and organic, a sustainable concept could be developed for the fashion industry as well (Ritch, 2015). This concept, however, would need to be well contextualized before there is an opportunity for it to become a

well-known concept around the world. Firstly, consumers need to understand what types of negative effects can follow for the environment from violating environmentally friendly standards. That way, the concept can be also linked to sustainability in a way that consumers can also understand their impact on the environment. (ibid.)

2.6. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework identifies different factors that affect consumers' willingness to purchase and pay a premium for sustainably produced apparel.

There are many different factors which affect the willingness of consumers to purchase and pay a premium for sustainable apparel. It has been stated that the knowledge people have and their level of awareness of environmental issues does have an effect on both the attitude towards purchasing sustainable apparel, and their actual willingness to pay for those products (Han & Stoel, 2016; Maloney et al., 2014; Mcneill & Moore, 2015; Noor et al., 2012; Han et al., 2017) Another reason affecting the willingness to purchase, and which most likely reduces it, appears to be the fact that sustainably produced clothes are viewed as more expensive than regular clothes, and people face a trade-off between buying environmentally friendly apparel and paying a premium for it (Johnstone & Tan, 2015; Crane, 2010; Mishal et al., 2017).

In addition to knowledge and price, different studies have discussed the intention-behavior gap and its relationship with sustainable fashion, and how to reduce it (Hassan et al., 2016; Crane, 2010; Carrington et al., 2014). The intention-behavior gap affects the actual behavior of consumers related to sustainable apparel, by reducing it even though these consumers would be willing to pay for sustainable clothes (Carrington et al., 2014; Hassan et al., 2016). Another factor on the willingness to purchase and pay a premium for sustainable apparel is that people have differing views on the importance of environmental issues, and they have different values concerning the environment that affect their decision making (Carrington et al., 2014; Mcneill & Moore, 2015; Cowan et al., 2014). Finally, consumers' behavior is

affected by situational context, which is crucial for marketers to understand if they wish to change consumers' behavior (Carrington, et al., 2014).

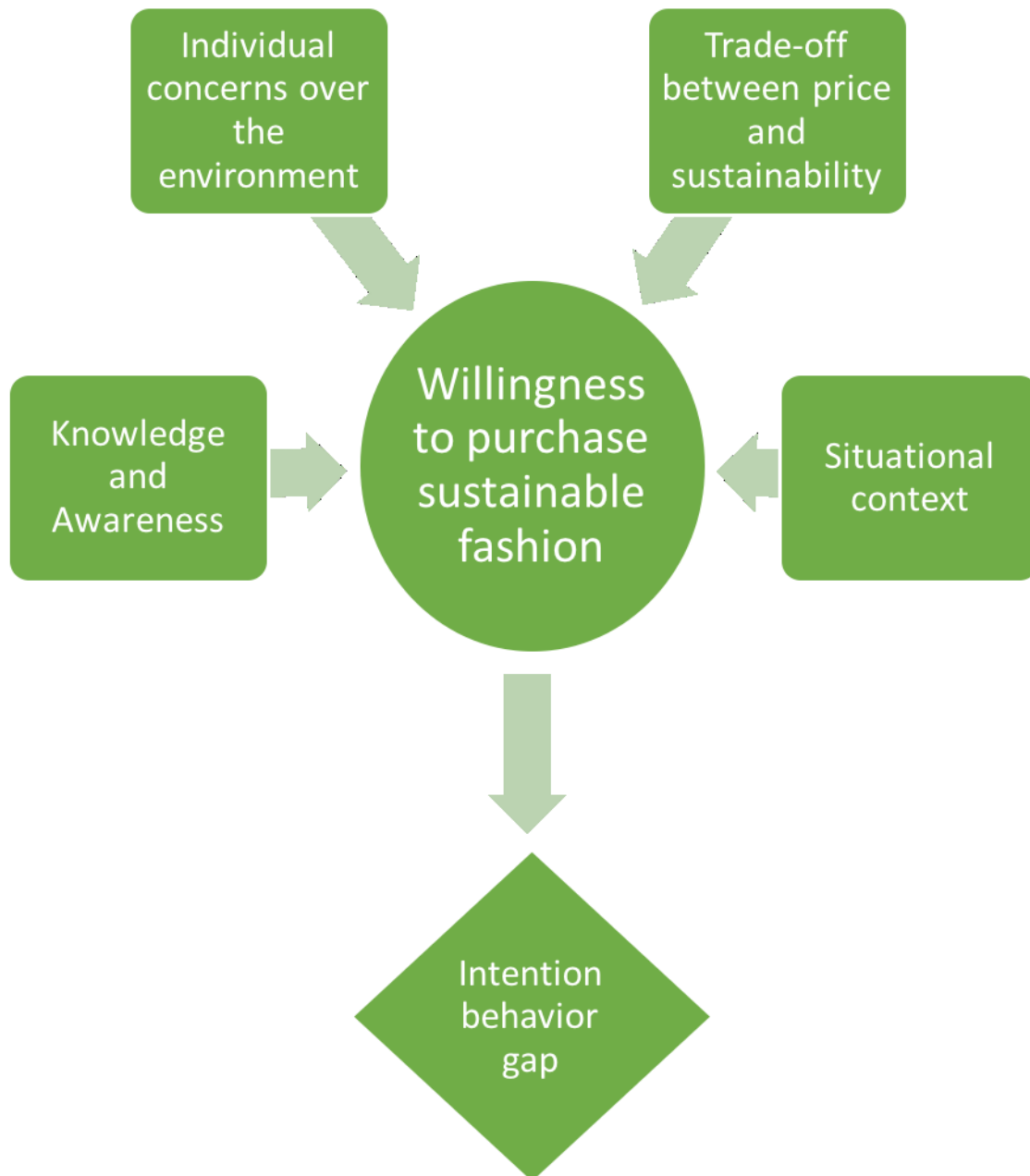


Figure 1 Factors affecting purchase decision of sustainably produced apparel (Hietanen, 2018)

Figure 1 shows a conceptual framework constructed based on existing studies that have reviewed consumers' behavior related to sustainable fashion (Han & Stoel, 2016; Maloney et al., 2014; Mcneill & Moore, 2015; Noor et al., 2012; Han et al., 2017; Carrington et al., 2014; Cowan et al., 2014; Hassan et al., 2016; Johnstone & Tan, 2015; Crane, 2010; Mishal et al., 2017).

The framework (figure 1) shows a new perspective to the issue of consumers' willingness to purchase and pay a premium for sustainable apparel, by combining different aspects and factors which affect this phenomenon. The framework highlights the effect of these factors together, rather than as individual factors. The framework also considers the issue of intention-behavior gap, and its relationship with consumers' willingness to purchase sustainable apparel. After the consumers' willingness to pay is accomplished, there is still a possibility that the actual behavior will not happen, since the intention-behavior gap affects the actual behavior of consumers related to sustainable apparel, by reducing it even though these consumers would be willing to pay for sustainable clothes (Carrington et al., 2014; Hassan et al., 2016).

The framework provides a new, comprehensive look into the purchasing behavior concerning sustainable apparel, and therefore, can provide important information for both marketers of sustainable apparel, and educators of environmental issues. What should be taken into account, however, is that the markets for fashion around the world are different, and therefore the context where the framework is applied in has a significant impact for the results and findings of studies.

3. METHODOLOGY

This part of the paper will discuss the methodology used to collect data, the chosen target group, the material collected and its method of analysis, and finally the possible limitations of the study.

The methodology used in this study is a face-to-face semi-structured interview method. The purpose of the study is to provide either supporting or non-supporting evidence to the conceptual framework presented in Figure 1, and possibly broaden the theory presented. Semi-structured interviews are a common form to conduct research (Rivano Eckerdal, 2016). In the interview, the questions are divided into themes, but there is no fixed order in which the questions are asked. The interviewee can develop the interview as a conversation and so the interview is more flexible (ibid.). When comparing for example face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews, it appears that the participants in face-to-face interviews require less clarifications for questions, and less adequacy checks, where the participants want to check with the interviewee that their answers are adequate (Irvine, Drew & Sainsbury, 2013). Telephone interviews appear to be shorter on average, and the participants tend to provide less detailing for their answers (ibid.).

3.1. Data collection, target group and analysis of material

The methodology used in this study is qualitative semi-structured interviewing. A convenience sample of ten Finnish female students was selected for the study, on a voluntary basis utilising social media as a platform to reach the target group. The questions were predetermined, open ended questions that were adjusted depending on each interview, based on the interviewee and their willingness to share their opinions about the themes in question. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, and were translated by the author into English. The interview situations were set to remind normal discussions as much as possible, in order to obtain honest answers. In total, ten students were interviewed, since saturation on the relevant themes was reached.

The data collection method was chosen based on the statement that interviews are one of the many methods of data collection by which the researcher can attain data saturation (Fusch, Ness, 2015).

The relatively small sample size of the study can be defended by the statement that the moment when data saturation is reached, i.e. there are no new themes emerged or new relevant data found, varies from study to study (Fusch, Ness, 2015). According to Guest et al. (2006), cited in Fusch and Ness (2015), depending on the study, saturation can be reached even by six interviews. Therefore, it is clear that there is no one universally fitting method to reaching data saturation.

Target Group		
Gender	Age	Status
Female	20-23	Student

Table 1 Target Group

The study focused on female students aged 20 to 23 years, as shown in Table 1. All of the participants were university or other higher education students from different areas in Finland. According to Smith (2011), people’s own individual values are formed early in life and remain relatively stable over time, and therefore the chosen target group is sufficient. The focus group was also determined by the fact that millennials appear to be more open-minded towards ethical issues than other generations (Smith, 2011), and since the purpose of the study is to find out the attitudes and behavior of young consumers towards environmentally friendly products, the target group is adequate. In addition, the target group is relevant since millennials represent one of the biggest groups of consumers (Miller, Yan, Jankovska, and Hensely, 2017).

Even though students are often seen as having a small purchasing power because they are not working full-time, it appears that the millennial generation as a whole (Individuals born between 1980-2000) is becoming one of the largest consumer segments (Bucuță, 2015 and Noble, Haytko & Phillips, 2009). In addition, millennials' buying power appears to be increasing, and therefore, the generation's impact on the economy is big (ibid.).

The used tool for the analysis of the material collected is a qualitative content analysis. More specifically, a directed approach for the content analysis is used (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Hsieh and Shannon state that directed content analysis utilises previous research and theories in analysing the data. Previous research can aid in defining the research question and predicting the variables that are of most importance, and also to plan how to code the interviews and what relationships are most likely found. (ibid.) In the empirical part of this study, previous research was utilised in defining the interview questions, since possibly relevant variables and relationships were identified in the existing literature.

The directed content analysis differs from traditional content analysis also because it usually arrives to the conclusions that are either supporting or non-supporting of a theory that has been previously determined. In addition, the theory can also aid in structuring the discussion of the findings. Even though all the findings are not supporting or non-supporting of the specific theory, they can expand the theory by adding new angles to it. (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) In this study, the data is analyzed by grouping interview questions together by themes emerging from the data, and the results are presented as either supporting or non-supporting of the conceptual framework and its different elements presented in Figure 1.

3.2. Semi-structured interviews

The data collection was conducted by semi-structured interviews (Rivano Eckerdal, 2016). The questions were defined utilising existing research and theories, such as the presented conceptual framework in Figure 1. As stated by Hsieh and Shannon,

2005, existing literature can aid in conducting new research. As the methodology used was semi-structured interviews, the questions were kept as open ended as possible, in order for the interviewees to give unbiased answers and to not pressure the interviewees in any way.

The interview questions began with overall questions about the fashion consumption habits of the students, followed by questions about the different attributes of clothes that affect the decision making. Next, the students were asked if they intentionally purchase sustainable clothes, or think that they possibly would buy them or pay a premium for those clothes. Lastly, the students were asked about their overall concern about the environment and knowledge on environmental issues, and what they believe should change in order for them to purchase more environmentally friendly apparel.

The interviews were conducted face to face, by recording audio from the discussions which was later transcribed. This enabled the interviewer to focus on the interview, and the interviewee to also focus on the questions, since there were no distractions and the material was saved automatically. The recording of the discussions also enabled the interviewer to adjust and fine-tune the questions based on the individual interviewees and their answers to different questions.

3.3. Limitations

The limitations of this study lie in the qualitative approach, which has its own limitations. First, compared to quantitative approach, the amount of data is considerably smaller, and therefore, the conclusions made usually require a quantitative approach before reaching completely reliable generalizations. However, qualitative approaches can supply researchers with important information on the attitudes and behavior of consumers, which can both be useful in terms of managerial implications, and also to guide future research on the topics.

Second, the target group of the study were female students in Finland, who are 20 to 23 years old. The students taking part in the study are students in different schools and cities in Finland, but all of the participants spend a part of their year in the same city. That can be argued to give a one-sided view of the issue. However, it can also be argued that since students often have to home cities, one where they study and one which is their original hometown, they travel between cities and therefore can access clothing stores in multiple different places. In addition, because of the large number of online stores, consumers order a substantial amount of their clothes online, they generally have access to the same clothing items no matter where they come from in a specific country.

Additionally, the purchasing power of the participants has an important impact on the price sensitivity issue related to the interview questions, and can impact the results of the study. If a consumer has a small income, price of clothing items will most likely be more important than for consumers with larger income. However, in the United States, it appears that millennials today have higher median household income than Generation X or Baby Boomers when they were the same age as Millennials today (see Appendix 3).

Finally, the findings cannot be completely generalised in all countries in the world. As discussed previously, the conceptual framework (Figure 1) needs to be modified to fit the different markets around the world, even though as a broader concept, it can be utilised internationally as well.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Data analysis

The data collected using qualitative interviews is analysed by themes that emerged during the interviews. The findings are also structured by the theories and the conceptual framework previously presented (Figure 1). The themes follow the different factors of willingness to pay for environmentally friendly apparel, and also the intention-behavior gap related to purchasing environmentally friendly apparel. The following section will be structured in terms of these themes, following a conclusion of the findings.

4.2. Knowledge and concern over the environment

Overall the respondents expressed that they do have sufficient amount of knowledge on environmental issues, and so data saturation was reached on that theme in question. When it comes to the fashion industry and its effects on the environment, the respondents stated that they are somewhat aware of the effects, but do not have knowledge on any specific issues such as chemicals or pollution. One participant stated that *“Yes I know that there are issues related to that, but I guess I could have more specific knowledge on issues like chemicals and such”*. These different specific issues like chemicals and pollution were mentioned to be ones of which the students wished they had more knowledge on.

The interviewees also stated that even though they have knowledge on environmental issues and they are aware of them, they do not think about those issues very often, especially when they are purchasing clothing items. However, it appears that the influence of peers, especially friends, and the media can have a positive effect on the awareness of people. Many participants stated that after talking to friends or

watching the news or a documentary, they became more aware of the harms that consumption can have on the environment.

Relating to concern over the environment, all of the participants expressed at least moderate concern over the different environmental issues. The specific issues that the students were the most concerned of were pollution of the environment, especially water.

Even though the participants did express their concern over the environment, most of them stated that they did not think about the issues when purchasing clothing items, because they think it is such a big topic and feel that it is still somehow distant to themselves. Many of the students stated that it takes quite a lot of effort to constantly think about global warming for example, and thus it is not the biggest priority in their minds.

4.3. Purchasing behavior and decision making

In addition to finding out whether the students are aware of the problems of the fashion industry regarding the environment, the students were asked about their decision making when purchasing clothing items. The interviewees were asked to prioritize the different motives behind their purchases.

The answers show, that for students, the first motivator to buy a product is the appearance. After that, they look at both the quality and material of the product, and see if it fits into their budget. For all of the participants, price was mentioned as a factor in the decision-making process, even though it was more important for some than for other participants. All of the students appeared to rarely look at the country of origin, and most of them stated that they assume that the price of the product and the country of origin go hand in hand. Many participants stated that they know and assume that any clothes that are affordable are most likely to be produced in a country such as Bangladesh for example.

Overall the participating students appeared to purchase a relatively high amount of apparel, even though the results varied among the participants. Most students stated to purchase clothing items at least monthly, with two exceptions were the students only bought new clothing items approximately once in two months, when they have a need for a specific item. The rest of the participants stated that they enjoy shopping for fun, not always only when they have a need for something.

What was also discovered from the answers, was that for most of the students, money was very important factor, but for some, it was more of a restricting factor that affected the purchase if the price was over a certain limit. Those students, however, expressed that their budget is quite large and they are willing to spend money on clothing items if they are of high quality. Another aspect of the results was that when the students were buying clothing items just for fun, they considered price as more important, than when they had a specific need for something, when they were more willing to pay higher prices for products.

4.4. Attitudes towards environmentally friendly apparel

The interviews also discussed the attitudes of the participants towards environmentally sustainable consumption. Saturation was attained for the theme of attitudes, since all of the students stated that they are able to see themselves as consumers who purchase environmentally friendly clothing items regularly. They also viewed the overall green consumption as a very positive way of life, and liked the idea of purchasing these products.

Even though the students appeared to like the idea of purchasing sustainable apparel, it appears that the actual consumption of these items is not very high. In the words of one participant, *“Yes of course it’s a nice idea, but the reality is very different”*. Therefore, from the question of whether the participants could see themselves as buyers of sustainable apparel, it can already be seen that even though the students like the idea, they might not act by it in reality.

4.5. Purchasing of environmentally friendly apparel

As discussed previously, even though the students enjoyed the idea of purchasing environmentally sustainable apparel, they do not do so sufficiently. Two participants out of the total ten did search for information on sustainable brands and options. The rest of the participants had never searched information of those alternatives.

Two participants also stated that they have bought sustainably produced alternatives intentionally. An example of this is that one participant said that they avoid the fleece material because it is not sustainable. Another participant also expressed the want to buy sustainable alternatives because of ethical reasons. However, the student also stated that the brands selling sustainable fashion and advertise it clearly, tend to be quite extravagant and not similar to the ordinary street style, which is why they also buy clothes that are not sustainably produced.

Most of the students did not intentionally buy clothing alternatives that were sustainable. Many different reasons for that emerged. The biggest reason why the students do not buy sustainable fashion, which was expressed by all of the students who do not purchase sustainable apparel intentionally, was that it requires too much effort from consumers to find information and find sustainable alternatives. The second biggest reason was that the students thought sustainable alternatives were much more expensive than regular clothes. Other reasons for not buying sustainable apparel were that according to one participant that thinking about sustainability takes the fun out of shopping, and if one is looking for something specific and have trouble finding it, they do not want another limiting factor to affect their search. As one participant stated, *“If I thought about it and searched for those items, shopping wouldn’t be as fun anymore. Shopping is like therapy for me”*.

Two more reasons were presented as well. Even though the students did express their worry over the state of the environment, some participants stated that their own actions do not feel very significant, which is why they do not take part in activities that preserve the environment if they require too much of their attention. One partici-

pant also said that it would be nice to see the benefit that comes from environmentally friendly activities. Relating to being able to see your own effect in real life, multiple students said that recycling is important to them, also regarding clothing items. They stated to give their old clothes to friends or family, or then selling them at a second-hand store.

It is therefore clear that the students do care about the state of the environment and are interested in sustainable fashion as well. When the students were given the hypothetical situation were asked to choose between two basic black t-shirts, out of which the other was sustainably produced and the other was not, and the material on both would feel similar, nine were not willing to pay more for the sustainable product, as presented in Table 2. One participant would have been willing to pay 1.5 times the price of the regular t-shirt, the price of which was 10 euros, and another participant was hesitant about paying a premium, and ultimately ended up choosing the cheaper alternative, stating *“... so if I right now would be in that situation, I would probably choose the cheaper one even though it would be a nice thought to pay a bit extra for the better option”*.

Even though the majority of the students would not have been willing to pay a premium for the sustainable product, all of the participants would have been willing to choose the sustainable alternative if the price was the same between the two t-shirts. The students willing to pay a premium stated that it would feel like doing something good, and also it would be nice to say to other people that they have bought sustainable clothes and that way be able to spread the consumption of those products.

Millennial students' willingness to pay for a sustainably produced t-shirt	
Number of students choosing the sustainable alternative with the same price as a regular option	Number of students choosing the sustainable alternative with more expensive price than the regular option
10	1

Table 2 Millennial students' willingness to pay for a sustainably produced t-shirt

The interviewees stated that whether or not they would buy sustainable apparel also would depend on the situation. If sustainability and the benefits are visibly stated near a product, it can have a positive effect on their behavior. In addition, the company they are in also appears to have an effect on the types of clothing stores students visit. It seems that there is potential to change the behavior of students, but at the moment the level of green consumerism does not appear to be very high. As one of the participants stated, *“Sustainability of a clothing item is more of a plus than an actual reason that makes you buy that product”*.

4.6. Increasing environmentally friendly purchasing behavior

The students were also questioned about what in their opinion would need to change in order for them to buy more sustainable apparel. The participants were able to give

very specific recommendations that in their opinion would have an effect on their buying behavior.

The two main things that were mentioned in all of the interviews were visibility and price. For many of the participants, price is not the most important factor, but it does restrict the options available for them to purchase. Therefore, many stated that the price of sustainable apparel should not be too much higher compared to other products, even though the students were aware that the products might need to be somewhat more expensive. Another major recommendation was that the marketing of sustainable fashion would need to be more visible, both in the media and in stores. Some also stated that they would like brands to explain why they call themselves sustainable, so that it is not just a word on a label.

Multiple students also mentioned the design of sustainable apparel, and stated that even though promoting sustainability in marketing is beneficial in their opinion, the design of the fashion should be visible in marketing as well, to minimize any negative connections to sustainable fashion that people might still have. What also came up, was that in the opinion of a few of the participants, change would need to happen in the overall field of business and especially the design of sustainable fashion, because the participants felt that there is not yet a sufficient amount of different sustainable clothes available that are of the general style of young people.

A point was also made that not only is it enough to change the design style of the sustainable apparel and reduce the costs and so the price of those products, but a change in the consumption culture also needs to begin before significant change in the habits of consumption of consumers can happen. If the culture of consumption changed, and people could resist the pressure to consume fashion constantly, then the price of the products would decrease in importance, since people would consider their consumption more and buy clothing items with more thought. At the moment though, as stated by three of the interviewees, students still place higher importance on looking fashionable and owning large quantities of clothing items because that is the norm within young people.

As previously mentioned, students appear to want to have some rationale from companies supplying sustainable fashion. When asked, all of the participants were sceptical of the sustainability of for example the Conscious –line of H&M. The interviewees were also asked about other clothing brands that merely state the environmentally sustainable –term on their product page and provide no additional explanation, and again, all of the interviewees expressed their concern over the reliability of those statements since there is no reasoning or justification behind those claims that would have been visible immediately.

Changes required to increase green apparel purchasing	
<p><u>Changes in the culture of consumption</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consumers need to resist the pressure to consume constantly - Consumers need to be knowledgeable and aware of environmental issues 	<p><u>Changes in the fashion industry</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More visible marketing - More conventional designs of sustainable apparel - As low prices as possible - Providing rational for sustainability statements - Increasing the number of sustainable brands in the market

Table 3 Changes required to increase green apparel purchasing

Table 3 groups together the suggested changes that the interviewees stated would make them purchase environmentally friendly clothes. The table separates the changes that relate to the culture of consumption and consumers themselves, and the changes that are required in the fashion industry as a whole.

4.7. Key findings

From the results of the interviews and themes where saturation was reached, it can be concluded that the students are worried about the state of the environment, but do not think about the issue in all their everyday actions related to all consumption. They are, however, aware of sustainability issues and do recognise that consumption of clothes, especially mass produced very affordable clothes, can have a negative effect on the environment and for example global warming.

Even though the students expressed their awareness and concern, almost all of the participants stated that they do not want to think about environmental issues in everything they do. Most of the participants did state that they do recycle their garbage and clothes, and avoid littering and do other activities that do not require too much effort from them and that are considered by them as self-evident. Therefore, there is certainly potential to change the behavior of students, but clearly, there are many aspects to be considered.

5. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The following section will bring together the findings of the empirical study, together with the theory presented in the conceptual framework in Figure 1. The section will focus on the different aspects affecting consumer willingness to purchase environmentally friendly fashion, and the intention-behavior gap relating to the willingness to purchase these products.

5.1. Knowledge, attitudes, and individual concerns over the environment

It appears that the issue of willingness to purchase environmentally friendly fashion is very complex, having many affecting factors. Based on the results of the empirical study, it can be concluded that even though knowledge and attitudes towards environmental issues may not be the most important factor in encouraging sustainable fashion consumerism, it does have an effect on it, as suggested in Figure 1, and as has been suggested by existing literature (Han & Stoel, 2016; Maloney et al., 2014; Mcneill & Moore, 2015; Noor et al., 2012 and Han et al., 2017). Without understanding and recognising issues that relate to the environment, consumers cannot be genuinely interested in taking part in environmentally friendly fashion consumption.

In addition, the individual concerns of consumers can by the results of the empirical study be stated as affecting the willingness to purchase green fashion, as existing literature has suggested (Carrington et al., 2014; Mcneill & Moore, 2015; Cowan et al., 2014). Saturation on the theme in question proved that all the participating students were at some level concerned about the state of the environment, and all of them also viewed purchasing sustainable fashion positively. Again, however, willingness to purchase green fashion does not necessarily lead to consumers actually purchasing green fashion. These results however do show, that consumers need to have some level of knowledge on environmental issues, and they need to be interested in environmental issues, before committing to the consumption of environmentally friendly apparel.

5.2. Price and situational context

The empirical study shows, that consumers do believe that the price of environmentally friendly fashion can be a restrictive factor in their consumption, as has been previously stated (Johnstone & Tan, 2015; Crane, 2010; Mishal et al., 2017). Since saturation was reached, and all the participants stated that price is one important factor in the purchasing of clothing items, it can be concluded that the pricing of sustainable apparel is an important factor in the purchasing behavior of consumers. Since consumers have varying amount of income available to be used in clothing items, the amount consumers are willing to pay varies, but all the consumers did have a limit which they wished not to cross with regard to sustainable clothing items. Previous studies have also concluded that because consumers may view sustainable apparel as more expensive, it most likely has an effect on the consumers not purchasing those items regularly (Johnstone & Tan, 2015; Crane, 2010; Mishal et al., 2017).

In addition to price, the context of the situation also will affect consumers' purchasing behavior, as stated by Carrington, et al., (2014). The results of the empirical study suggest that different surrounding factors will affect the attitude towards sustainable apparel. The information recently received from media, for example, can make consumers more aware of environmental issues and possibly affect their thinking while they are making purchases. The company consumers are in also can affect they choices they make, and additionally, the presentation of the items at a store can either encourage or discourage consumers to choose a specific item.

Since saturation was also reached on the theme of marketing sustainable fashion, it can be concluded that young consumers do believe that sustainability is indeed a benefit in marketing, that can bring an advantage for the companies offering those products. However, marketing should also take into account that a part of consumers might still have negative connections regarding the design of these products, and so the design should be also visualized clearly in marketing to minimalize these negative connections. Therefore, companies manufacturing or selling sustainable products should take advantage of environmental friendliness.

5.3. Willingness to purchase sustainable apparel and the intention-behavior gap

As presented in Figure 1, willingness to purchase sustainable fashion and the intention-behavior gap are complex issues, and even though many factors affect willingness to purchase sustainable apparel, it does not always indicate the genuine action of the purchase. According to Carrington et al. (2014) and Hassan et al. (2016), there indeed is a gap between the intentions of consumers and their actual behavior. Indeed, the empirical part of the study showed that even though all of the participants enjoyed the idea of purchasing sustainable clothes, only two of them actually had experience from purchasing those products, which suggests that the intention-behavior gap exists.

What further appears to support the existence of the intention-behavior gap, is that all of the interviewees would have chosen the sustainable alternative of two similar clothing items, if the price had been the same. Therefore, young consumers appear to be interested in sustainable apparel, but the majority of them is not yet at a point where they would be willing to pay a premium for sustainable apparel.

The gap in the intentions or attitudes, and actual behavior, also appears to have multiple different reasons behind it, and those reasons provide companies in the sustainable fashion industry with important implications on how to increase the amount of those clothing items consumers purchase. The two most important reasons why consumers do not currently purchase sustainable apparel seem to be the overall lack of information and marketing of sustainable clothing brands, and the higher price that is perceived by consumers. Consumers wish to have more visible options for their regular clothing purchases, and more accurate reasoning behind sustainability claims. In addition, the pricing factor is important, since there is not yet a majority of millennial consumers who would be willing to pay a premium for sustainable apparel, and therefore, there needs to be a reasonable pricing on those products in order for consumers to become regular purchasers of sustainable clothes.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Main Findings

The main findings of the study suggest, that even though young consumers are concerned about the state of the environment, and are at least moderately aware of the issues of the fashion industry regarding the environment, specific actions are needed in order to increase the amount of green fashion consumerism among millennials. The results indicate, that there indeed is a gap between millennial consumers' attitudes and intentions, and their actual behavior, and at the moment, there is not a significant number of consumers who would be willing to pay a premium for sustainable clothing items.

All of the different aspects of consumer willingness to purchase sustainable apparel in Figure 1 were supported by the empirical study and its results, with the notion that not all of the presented factors are of equal importance, and that there are also differences between consumers regarding for example the price they are willing to spend on clothing items. This is partly explained by the differences in the purchasing power of students, which leads to differences in price sensitivity. Overall, the results support the theoretical view of consumers' willingness to purchase sustainable fashion, and the intention-behavior gap.

The results also indicate, that environmental sustainability is a benefit for companies, and they should take advantage of it. However, the study also provides companies with important areas of improvement, such as increasing the visibility of sustainable brands, and increasing the amount of sustainable clothes and brands with more conventional design. The different areas of improvement are presented in Table 3.

6.2. Implications for International Business

Both the contextual framework presented in Figure 1, and the empirical study provide important implications for international business. The implications presented can

be divided into theoretical implications, managerial implications, and policymaking implications.

The most important theoretical implications come from the study's conceptual framework presented in Figure 1, which combines the different aspects of sustainable fashion consumerism. The framework takes into account the several different factors affecting the issue of consumer willingness to purchase sustainable apparel, and combines it with the theory of the intention-behavior gap, creating a new framework for researching consumers and their behavior related to environmentally friendly fashion. The framework also provides a basis for future researchers to expand on, with new factors and viewpoints.

The study also provides managerial implications for different businesses internationally. Even though the study was conducted in Finland, most fashion companies operating in Finland such as H&M and Gina Tricot for example, are international companies. Therefore, understanding young consumers and their attitudes and behavior in Finland provides implications for those companies internationally as well. The findings of the study suggest that brands producing sustainable fashion should visibly promote the sustainability factor, while at the same time providing rationale for the statement, and showing visually the design of the clothing items. This would increase the positive connections consumers make with brands, since they would become aware of the options, and being able to visualise the style and design of the clothes simultaneously.

Additionally, the producers of sustainable fashion need to take into account the different groups of consumers they can target. Designing the apparel as being a better fit to the street style of young consumers could increase their customer base significantly. Another managerial implication for businesses that surfaced, was that the price of sustainable fashion should preferably be as close to regular alternatives as possible.

The study also provides implications for different policymakers. The study found that even though there are many ways to increase the purchasing of sustainable clothes, a change in the culture of consumption would make a significant difference in the

consumption habits of consumers and that way, in the state of the environment as well. Changing the current culture, in which consumption is of high importance, is very difficult, but with different regulations and policies the culture of consuming large amounts of products and resources could change.

6.3. Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that additional research is required in order to make reliable generalizations about the issue. Especially quantitative studies are required, since qualitative research is not reliable enough to generalize the findings, even though they do provide important implications for different stakeholders. Especially international studies are required, since the scope of the study in question is relatively small.

The intention-behavior gap is a recent term and concept, which could be focused on even more in future research. This concept can bring very important implications for companies, if research focuses on trying to find new, specific ways to reduce the gap. In addition, future research could also focus on modifying the conceptual framework in Figure 1 into a more internationally comprehensive framework. Currently, the framework can be utilized internationally as well, but with the consideration that the findings can vary and all of the aspects of the framework may not be as relevant everywhere, because of differing markets.

Overall, additional research is required on the topic, in order to both aid companies in marketing their environmentally friendly products, and to help educators design ways to supply consumers with knowledge about environmentally friendly apparel and its importance. If research succeeds in those two areas, it can have a substantial role in the transitioning of the fashion industry and the consumers' habits of consumption. However, before significant change in the fashion industry can happen, all of the different operators in the industry will have to be a part of the change, including suppliers, producers, and investors, not only the retailers of sustainable products.

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APPENDIX 1

Semi-structured interview:

1. Do you enjoy shopping for clothes? How often do you approximately buy new clothes?
2. What are the most important attributes for you when you make decisions about buying clothes? Why are these attributes important?
3. Do you pay attention to the environmental aspects of clothes when buying them? Why or why not?
4. Do you intentionally buy sustainably produced clothes? Do you ever search for information on sustainable alternatives? Why or why not?
5. If you had to choose between two black t-shirts that appear to be equally good quality and the design is very similar, but the other shirt has a tag that says sustainably produced, which one would you choose in the following situations?
 - a. The t-shirts have the same price
 - b. The sustainably produced shirt costs 12€ and the regular t-shirt costs 10€
 - c. The sustainably produced shirt costs 14€ and the regular t-shirt costs 10€
 - d. How much more would you be willing to pay for the sustainable option?
6. Can you imagine yourself as a person who buys sustainable apparel regularly? Do you enjoy the idea of purchasing those products? Why or why not?
7. Do you think that environmentally friendliness is a benefit in marketing? Do you think companies should promote the sustainability of their products? Why or why not?
8. Are you generally worried about the state of the environment? What are you the most concerned of?
9. Do you think you have sufficient amount of knowledge of environmental issues relating to the fashion industry? Do you believe that people's knowledge and awareness has an effect on the sales of sustainably produced apparel?
10. What do you think needs to change in order for you to buy more sustainably produced clothes?

APPENDIX 2

Puolistrukturoitu haastattelu:

1. Pidätkö vaatteiden ostamisesta? Kuinka usein suunnilleen ostat uusia vaatteita?
2. Mitkä asiat vaikuttavat eniten päätökseesi, kun ostat uusia vaatteita? Miksi juuri nämä syyt?
3. Kiinnitätkö tietoisesti huomiota vaatteiden ympäristöystävällisyyteen, kun ostat vaatteita? Miksi tai miksi et?
4. Ostatko tietoisesti ympäristöystävällisiä vaatteita? Etsitkö ikinä tietoa ympäristöystävällisistä vaihtoehdoista? Miksi tai miksi et?
5. Jos sinulla olisi vaihtoehtona kaksi mustaa t-paitaa, jotka vaikuttavat yhtä hyvälaatuisilta ja joiden tyyli on hyvin samanlainen, mutta toisen lapussa lukee kestävästi tuotettu, kumman valitsisit seuraavissa tilanteissa?
 - a. Paidat ovat samanhintaisia
 - b. Kestävästi tuotettu paita maksaa 12€ ja tavallinen paita 10€
 - c. Kestävästi tuotettu paita maksaa 14€ ja tavallinen paita 10€
 - d. Kuinka paljon enemmän olisit valmis maksamaan kestävästi tuotetusta vaihtoehdosta?
6. Osaatko kuvitella itsesi ostamassa säännöllisesti kestävästi tuotettuja vaatteita? Pidätkö ajatuksesta, että ostaisit näitä tuotteita? Miksi tai miksi et?
7. Onko ympäristöystävällisyys mielestäsi hyödyksi markkinoinnissa? Kannattaisiko yritysten mainostaa tuotteidensa ympäristöystävällisyyttä? Miksi tai miksi ei?
8. Oletko huolissasi ympäristön tilasta? Mistä olet eniten huolissasi ja miksi?
9. Onko sinulla omasta mielestäsi tarpeeksi tietämystä ympäristöasioista muoti- ja vaatealaan liittyen? Onko ihmisten ymmärryksellä ja tietoisuudella mielestäsi vaikutusta kestävästi tuotettujen vaatteiden myyntiin?
10. Mitä muutoksia mielestäsi pitäisi tapahtua, jotta ostaisit ympäristöystävällisesti tuotettuja vaatteita?

APPENDIX 3

Median household income of Millennials compared to other generations in the United States

Median household income		
	2016	When they were ages 21-36
Millennials	\$72 500	\$72 500
Generation X	\$84 506	\$70 311
Baby Boomers	\$70 690	\$59 147

Table 4 Median household income in the US (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) cited in Pew Research Center, 2018)

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Factors affecting purchase decision of sustainably produced apparel

Table 1 Target Group

Table 2 Millennial students' willingness to pay for a sustainably produced t-shirt

Table 3 Changes required to increase green apparel purchasing

Table 4 Median household income in the United States (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) cited in Pew Research Center, 2018)