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# **Investigating the role of environmental sustainability in fashion**

A conjoint analysis on Finnish consumers' purchase decisions of clothing

School of Marketing  
Master's thesis in Business and  
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A conjoint analysis on Finnish consumers' purchase decisions of clothing**Degree:** Master's Degree in Business and Administration**Programme:** International Business**Supervisor:** Anisur Faroque**Year:** 2025 **Sivumäärä:** 68

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**ABSTRACT:**

The fashion industry raises ethical and environmental concerns among consumers globally, but at the same time the consumption of unsustainable fashion is not decreasing. Conflicting views on the importance of environmental sustainability for consumers have been presented in research previously. This thesis investigates consumer preferences regarding clothing further, attempting to find out how environmental sustainability is valued in purchase decisions of garments and whether environmental knowledge affects this.

The study analyses consumer trade-offs through a choice-based conjoint analysis, simulating real-life scenarios of choosing between clothing items with different product attributes. In addition to environmental sustainability, attributes of price, trendiness and brand trust are inspected. Further, the effect of the level of environmental knowledge on choices is investigated. The data sample of the study includes 212 Finnish consumers of all ages, genders and educational backgrounds. An anonymous online questionnaire was used to collect the data.

The results of the conjoint analysis show that trendiness is the most important attribute for consumers, followed by environmental sustainability, price and finally brand trust. Key takeaways from the utilities of different attribute levels include that timeless clothes were preferred over highly trendy ones, along with highly priced clothing being preferred over cheap clothing. Clothing with certified sustainability claims provided the most utility, whereas clothing with no sustainability provided the least. Similarly with brand trust, a trusted brand was preferred over a familiar or an unknown one. Therefore, consumers were found to prefer sustainably produced clothing that's designed in a timeless fashion, at a higher price point and from a trusted brand. This shows that while sustainability was not the most important attribute, it's still highly valued in the purchase decision process of clothing.

Second key finding of the study is that environmental knowledge was found to influence consumer purchase behavior. Respondents with low environmental knowledge exhibited less consistent and attribute-driven choices, whereas respondents with high environmental knowledge made more structured and consistent choices that can be explained by the product attributes. Moreover, consumers with high environmental knowledge were more driven by sustainability in their choices when compared to consumers with low knowledge.

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**KEYWORDS:** Environmental sustainability, Sustainable fashion, Consumer behavior, Environmental knowledge, Conjoint analysis

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**TIIVISTELMÄ:**

Muotiala herättää kuluttajissa maailmanlaajuisesti eettisyyteen ja ympäristöön liittyviä huolia. Kuitenkin muodin kulutus lisääntyy jatkuvasti, ja erityisesti pikamuodin kulutus pysyy ennallaan. Tutkijat ovat aiemmin esittäneet ristiriitaisia näkemyksiä siitä, kuinka tärkeänä kuluttajat pitävät ympäristökestävyyttä ostokäytöksessään. Tämä tutkimus tarkastelee tarkemmin kuluttajien mieltymyksiä koskien vaatteita pyrkien selvittämään miten kuluttajat arvostavat ympäristökestävyyttä vaateostoksissaan, ja vaikuttaako ympäristötietoisuus niihin.

Tutkimuksessa analysoidaan kuluttajien ostokäyttäytymistä valintapohjaisella conjoint-analyysillä, joka simuloi todellisia tilanteita, joissa kuluttaja joutuu valitsemaan vaatteen ja tekemään kompromisseja erilaisten tuoteominaisuuksien perusteella. Tarkasteltavat tuoteominaisuudet ympäristökestävyyden lisäksi ovat hinta, trendikkyys ja brändiluottamus. Lisäksi tutkitaan miten ympäristötietoisuuden taso vaikuttaa kuluttajien valintoihin. Tutkimuksen aineisto koostuu 212 suomalaisesta kuluttajasta eri ikä-, sukupuoli- ja koulutustaustoista. Aineisto kerättiin anonyymillä verkkokyselyllä.

Tutkimusten tulosten mukaan trendikkyys on kuluttajille tärkein tuoteominaisuus, jonka jälkeen tulee ympäristökestävyys, hinta ja viimeisenä brändiluottamus. Eri tuoteominaisuuksien hyötyarvoista keskeisiä havaintoja ovat, että ajattomia vaatteita suosittiin todella trendikkäiden vaatteiden sijasta ja että kalliita vaatteita suosittiin halpoja enemmän. Vaatteet, joiden ympäristökestävyys oli sertifioitu, olivat mieluisempia kuin vaatteet kokonaan ilman vastuullisuusväittämiä. Brändiluottamus seurasi samaa trendiä, jolloin luotettu brändi toi enemmän hyötyä kuin tunnettu tai tuntematon brändi. Näin ollen kuluttajien havaittiin suosivan vastuullisesti tuotettuja, ajattomasti suunniteltuja ja korkeahintaisia vaatteita luotetuilta brändeiltä. Täten ympäristövastuu on tärkeä tekijä kuluttajien ostopäätöksessä, vaikka se ei ollutkaan tärkein ominaisuus.

Tutkimuksen tulokset viittaavat myös siihen, että ympäristötietoisuus on vaikuttava tekijä kuluttajien ostopäätöksissä. Kuluttajat, joilla oli matala ympäristötietoisuus, tekivät vähemmän johdonmukaisia valintoja vaatteiden välillä, jotka ei juurikaan perustuneet tuoteominaisuuksiin. Vastaavasti korkean ympäristötietoisuuden omaavat kuluttajat tekivät selkeämpiä, jäsenneiltyjä ja selkeästi tuoteominaisuuksiin perustuvia valintoja vaatteiden välillä. Tämän lisäksi korkean ympäristötietoisuuden omaavat kuluttajat painottivat valinnoissaan enemmän ympäristökestävyyttä kuin kuluttajat, joilla on matala tietoisuus.

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**AVAINSANAT:** Environmental sustainability, Sustainable fashion, Consumer behavior, Environmental knowledge, Conjoint analysis

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## 1 Introduction

In recent decades, concerns on environmental sustainability, pollution and the well-being of our planet have become increasingly pronounced. Sustainable consumption and companies' social responsibility have gathered attention from researchers throughout the years, and the current state of our climate has seemingly increased this interest even more. At the center of these environmental concerns the concept of sustainable development directs practitioners and scholars to address and manage issues related to this topic.

The concept of sustainable development was introduced in a report written by the World Commission on Environment and Development titled "Our Common Future" (WCED, 1987) and the report defined sustainable development as filling current needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet theirs. Further, according to the report, sustainable development protects natural resources and social welfare while also ensuring economic growth (WCED, 1987). This concept has set a foundation for policymakers and scholars alike in the context of environmental matters and social initiatives. To date, sustainable development guides consumers and companies in their daily actions, whether it's ethical production of goods or sustainable consumption of them.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its connection to consumers' purchase behaviors and consumption decisions has been a popular research topic throughout decades (Rathore et.al., 2023; Fang et.al., 2017; Öberseder et.al., 2011). As research has investigated the topic in more detail and with a focus on consumers rather than organizations, there has been evidence that CSR and environmental sustainability of companies have significant impacts on consumers' purchase behavior and intentions (Rathore et.al., 2023; Sakr et.al., 2023). The research highlights that not only is there an effect, but that organizations' association with these concepts will improve their image and set them in a more positive light, suggesting that consumers would favor products from companies that act responsibly and are environmentally sustainable (Sakr et.al., 2023). However,

when these findings are reflected against consumers purchasing activity in the fashion industry, it would suggest the opposite.

To date, the fashion industry doesn't seem to be slowing down in terms of growth, despite being the target of considerable ethical concerns (Flood, 2023) and among the top contributors to global pollution (Oizom, 2024). This raises questions about the perceived importance of CSR and environmental sustainability among consumers in the fashion and apparel sector, and specifically whether sustainability is given more value in the purchasing decision process of clothing than for example the price of the product.

Additionally, Öberseder and others (2011) propose in their research that there is a gap between consumers' interest in CSR and its actual effect on their purchase behavior, providing a conflicting view to the previously stated importance of CSR in the consumers' view in this context. Furthermore, Joshi and Rahman (2015) through extensive review of literature found that there are clear indicators to consumers demonstrating a gap between their green thinking and green purchase behaviors. Or in other words, consumers that are aware and find environmental matters important do often not demonstrate these values in their purchases. More recently, Nabi Khan and others (2025) confirmed that consumers with internal positive attitudes towards environmental sustainability are faced with challenges in transferring these attitudes to green purchase behaviors.

Whereas the effects of CSR and sustainability on consumer attitudes have been investigated to an extent, there are contradictions in the research concerning environmental sustainability and its effects on consumer behavior. For example, on the contrary to previous research that found there to be a gap between positive consumer attitudes towards sustainability and CSR and their actual purchase behavior (Öberseder et.al., 2011; Joshi & Rahman, 2015), Akandere and Gümrah (2025) found that environmental knowledge has a significant positive influence on green purchase behavior. Similarly, Li and others (2024) found consumers to prefer clothing items that were perceived sustainable, linking them with higher value, quality and repurchase intention than traditional

garments. Therefore, the affects of sustainability on consumer purchase behavior seems to be ambiguous, showing the need for further research on the topic.

The forementioned themes have been previously studied to an extent, but there are clearly identifiable gaps in the research. While the impact of consumer perceived CSR has been investigated in the purchasing process, it was limited to consumers from an emerging economy and without the selection of a particular retailer or sector (Rathore et.al. 2023) and leaving environmental sustainability out. Furthermore, the purchasing behavior of consumers buying clothing has been researched from the point of brand image and factors like quality and availability (Agdigos et.al. 2022; Mgiba & Koopman, 2023), but this does not address how environmental sustainability affects this behavior in relation to other factors. Additionally, there have been quite recent calls for additional research regarding consumer attitudes towards CSR and sustainability (Olšánová et.al., 2022; Rathore et.al., 2023), highlighting the need for further research in this area.

Different, and repeating, product attributes can be identified in the body of research on consumer behavior. Research has stated the importance of brand image and trust as a factor in consumers' purchase behavior (Agdigos et.al., 2022), alongside with the perceived value of the product (Agdigos et.al., 2022; Chi, 2015). Price has been a widely incorporated attribute in research on consumer purchase behavior (Velčovská & Prokopová, 2025; Fuchs et.al, 2024; Jegethesan et.al., 2012; Sproles & Kendall, 1986), highlighting its relevance. In the context of clothing, Fuchs and others (2024) have investigated the role of environmental sustainability for purchase decisions of sportswear, comparing it to price and functionality. The study also called for further research including the factor of brand. Studies have also recognized that following trends is important to a lot of consumers (Park et.al., 2006; Sproles & Kendall, 1986), making trendiness an interesting and so far under researched attribute in the context of purchasing clothing.

Most importantly, the previous research in this area seems to focus on either consumer purchase behavior in general or purchase intention specifically (Huo et.al., 2022; HA

Dimuthu & Samarasinghe, 2023; Wang & Hassan, 2024) – leaving a gap for more research on the purchase decisions of consumers in this sector. Additionally, Elżbieta and Joanna (2023) have studied the effect of CSR on consumers' purchasing decisions in Central and Eastern Europe, but this was not limited to a certain retail sector and did not consider environmental sustainability, further demonstrating a gap.

Consequently, the majority of the existing research in the fashion sector seems to focus on CSR and ethics when studying consumer behavior – leaving environmental sustainability out – with some exceptions: Lou and Xu (2024) studied the trade-offs consumers make when purchasing sustainable jeans, including sustainable attributes like eco-labeling and material of the product. However, the study is limited to a specific clothing item of denim jeans. Additionally, research by Fuchs and others (2024) have studied the role of social and environmental sustainability on sportswear purchasing among European consumers, but again with a focus on a single clothing item. Therefore, the gap for research on how environmental sustainability is valued in purchase decisions in the fashion sector without a specified item of clothing is not filled. Furthermore, the incorporation of environmental knowledge is absent.

Therefore, considering that the fashion industry is one of the most prominent and ethically and environmentally challenging industries at the moment, and since conflicting views have been proposed by previous research on this topic, it would be beneficial to further investigate consumer attitudes towards environmental sustainability in this context. More specifically, focusing on how environmental sustainability affects consumers' purchase behavior in the fashion sector and whether it's valued as much as initially seems can provide valuable insights to the existing body of research. Furthermore, the research will not focus on a single item of clothing, offering new valuable and more generalizable perspectives on consumer behavior.

## 1.1 Purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of the study is to find out if fashion retailers' environmental sustainability promoting activities – or the lack of them – actually have an effect on consumers' purchase decisions in this specific sector or if other product factors are valued more in regard to environmental sustainability among Finnish consumers. Firstly, this study aims to find out if environmental sustainability is valued in the purchasing decision process of clothing above price, trendiness and brand trust. More specifically, the study will map out how consumers value environmental sustainability in relation to the forementioned factors. The second objective of this study is to investigate how environmental knowledge affects consumer purchase decision processes, if at all.

Further objectives in addition to answering the research questions of the study presented below include providing insights into the consumer behavior in the fashion industry and further investigating the factors that influence the consumer purchase decision process in this sector. Additionally, the study will make a considerable contribution to the existing literature on the topic by mapping out how consumers value environmental sustainability in their purchase decision process of clothing, and if environmental knowledge moderates this.

The thesis will answer and be guided by the following research questions:

1. *How is environmental sustainability valued in the purchase decision process of clothing compared to price, trendiness and brand trust?*
2. *Does environmental knowledge affect consumers' purchase decisions of clothing?*

## **1.2 Delimitation of the study**

As presented, the research will be limited to exploring consumers' purchase behavior in the fashion sector. The factors affecting purchase decisions that will be studied in addition to environmental sustainability will be limited to price, trendiness and brand trust. These factors are being studied from the perspective of Finnish consumers that purchase clothing items. The research focuses on garments, excluding shoes, hats or other apparel. Furthermore, distinctions between second-hand and new clothing are not made, and the study concerns itself with purchases made for oneself, not gifting for example. Post-purchase behavior is also not included in the scope of the study.

## **1.3 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis consists of five main chapters, the first one introducing the topic of the study and providing relevant findings from previous research. Alongside the introduction, the research gap is highlighted, followed by a chapter outlining the purpose and objectives of the study. The research questions of the study are presented as well. Lastly, the delimitations of the thesis are presented.

The second main chapter consists of a literature review of relevant theories and concepts to the subject. Divided into two sections, the first one presents four key theories around purchase behavior, while exploring previous research in the context of fashion and sustainability. The second section dives into environmental sustainability and clothing, introducing the concept of sustainable fashion. Following this, consumer attitudes towards sustainable fashion are investigated through previous literature on the topic.

The third chapter focuses on the methodology of the study, detailing the research method, sample and the data analysis methods. The empirical findings from this data analysis are presented in chapter four, where they are also further analyzed against prior research, partly introduced already in the literature review.

The fifth and final section presents a summary of the key findings of the study and draws conclusions based on them. It also discusses the managerial and theoretical implications of the findings and provides suggestions for future research, along with acknowledging the limitations to this study.

## **2 Literature review**

This section will investigate the different factors and attitudes affecting consumers' purchase decisions in the fashion sector, with the goal of gaining insights into the theories and previous research surrounding the topic and developing a theoretical basis for the rest of the research. The literature review will go through an in-depth analysis of the theories surrounding consumer purchase behavior, followed by an introduction to the concepts of environmental sustainability, green or eco-fashion consumption and environmental knowledge – including insights from the existing body of research in this area. Altogether, this chapter will explore and discuss key concepts and theories related to the topic of this research, providing a foundation for the empirical section of the thesis.

### **2.1 Key theories around purchase behavior**

This section of the literature review will go through the relevant theories and concepts surrounding the research on consumer purchase behavior. The concepts included are the Theory of Planned Behavior, the purchase decision process, perceived value and the Value-Belief-Norm theory. Investigating these concepts will give insights into how consumer purchase behavior has been previously researched and what factors can affect it.

#### **2.1.1 Purchase decision process**

The consumer purchase decision process explains the mental steps a consumer takes to arrive at a decision to purchase goods or services. In 1995 Engel, Blackwell and Miniard presented a model in which the consumer purchase decision process is divided into five steps or stages as follows: (1) the recognition of a problem or a need, (2) the search for information, (3) the evaluation of alternative choices, (4) making the purchase decision and (5) post-purchase behavior (Horvth & Komlos, 2023). Given the many steps that the consumer often goes through before arriving at a purchase decision, and the influx of

products in the fashion sector alone, several factors can be identified that can affect the decision. The next chapters will present external and internal factors affecting the process, followed by a closer look at product attributes and their impact on consumer purchase behavior.

#### **2.1.1.1 External factors affecting the process**

External factors can affect the purchase decisions of consumers. Anderson and others (1966) found that when faced with a large number of options for a purchase decision, consumers tend to require less information about individual products. Moreover, the large amount of choices and the information required to evaluate all of them equally can cause discomfort, distorting the decision-making process. Especially in today's consumption-driven society there are almost without exception several options for any clothing item, making the number of choices a considerable factor that can affect a consumer's purchase decision.

Additionally, social influence is a considerable external factor that has been found to affect the purchase intention of consumers when purchasing sustainable clothing (Thi Thuy et.al., 2024), highlighting that endorsements from family and close people can greatly affect sustainable purchase behavior. Chen and others (2022) define social influence as a demand for behavioral intention that individuals respond to by changing their attitudes, adding that it's prominent in several aspects of our society in different forms, such as in peer pressure, obedience, marketing and conformity. Consequently, Chen and others (2022) found that social influence is a prominent factor in consumers' green product purchase attitudes and therefore in their purchase intention. Similarly, Tjokrosaputro and Cokki (2020) concluded social influence to directly and positively affect consumer value perceptions and purchase intentions. These findings stress the importance of social influence and external factors in general along the purchase decision process.

### **2.1.1.2 Internal factors affecting the process**

When inspecting the factors that influence purchase decisions from an internal point of view, personal perceptions of value, quality and price, for example, play a considerable part in this. Consumers' personal attitudes and values are reflected in their purchase behavior, which is why these internal factors also have important managerial implications (Zeithaml, 1988). For instance, a subjective perception of one product being better quality or better value for money than the other will likely guide a consumer's purchase decision towards the product that they perceive to be better suited to their needs, making understanding these perceptions important for companies and scholars alike.

Consumers have been noted to adopt different decision-making styles that in turn have a strong link to their purchase behavior (Trzebiński et.al., 2024), further showing that internal factors play a significant role in the purchase decision process of a consumer. Sproles and Kendall (1986) define consumer decision-making style as a mental orientation that shapes how individuals approach purchasing decisions, providing eight different conceptualizations: 1. perfectionism, 2. brand consciousness, 3. novelty-fashion consciousness, 4. recreational shopping consciousness, 5. impulsiveness, 6. price and "value for money" shopping consciousness, 7. confusion from overchoice, and 8. habitual, brand-loyal orientation toward consumption. These concepts help contextualize consumer decision-making and especially how consumers arrive at a purchase decision. Since people assign different meanings to products, the relationships they form with them also differ. An individual's attachment to a product, and how they perceive the utility or value of it, can vary greatly in nature and intensity compared to that of their friends or family members.

### **2.1.1.3 Product attributes**

It's generally known that product attributes have a significant effect on consumers' purchase intentions of goods. Research has also found product attributes to be the main

predictor of consumers' purchase intention (Hafiz et.al., 2024). Scholars have used differing terms to describe these attributes, with some referring to 'cues' (Xiao et.al., 2019) and others to 'attributes' (Enneking et.al., 2007). Regardless of the term used, product attributes are seen to describe the characteristics of a product and as a way to signal to consumers the qualities of a product. Product attributes can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic qualities – or in other words – qualities entailing to the physical product or just related to the product in general (Zeithaml, 1988; Enneking et.al., 2007).

Additionally, the consumer decision-making styles characterized by Sproles and Kendall (1986) highlight how product attributes such as trendiness, price and brand image or loyalty affect decision-making and therefore purchase intention. These attributes are displayed in the conceptualizations of novelty-fashion consciousness, brand consciousness and price consciousness (Sproles & Kendall, 1986). Characterizations like these further elaborate how consumers' personal values affect their purchase behavior of products, presenting as for example favoring one attribute to another based on the perceived value of said attribute.

Consumers presenting high in novelty-fashion consciousness are characterized as being particularly interested in the fashionability and trendiness of products. Finding new products that express individuality and allow for keeping up with current fashion trends is at the core of such consumers, demonstrated by high fashion involvement guiding their purchase behavior (Park et.al., 2006). Therefore, for these types of consumers, trendiness as a product attribute acts as an enhancer of perceived value of the product, driving the purchase intention of such products.

Sproles and Kendall (1986) characterize brand conscious consumers as pivoting towards well-known, best-selling and advertised brands in their purchase intentions, along with having positive attitudes towards specialty and department stores that carry established brand names and have higher prices. Ailawadi and others (2001) found brand conscious consumers to be less price sensitive and less likely to compare prices in their purchase

decision process. Consequently, brands that have established a positive image around them can benefit from more inelastic responses from consumers to changes in their pricing. Similarly, Herbst and Burger (2010) found in their research on young consumers' assessment of fashion products that brand is the most important attribute that's considered in their purchase intention, along with price and place of purchase. Overall, brand image can be considered as an important factor affecting consumers' purchase decisions.

According to Sproles and Kendall (1986), price consciousness in consumers refers to the degree to which they are focused on paying low prices. Especially younger consumers have been found to be price conscious and more willing to switch from one brand to another in pursuit of the best price (Herbst & Burger, 2010). Price consciousness therefore influences purchase intentions especially among consumers looking to maximize value for their money. In other words, consumers that perceive price as an important product attribute and specifically low prices as giving more value for them are more likely to be motivated by attractive deals and prices that they perceive as fair. An integral characteristic for price conscious consumers is that they are likely to seek information and compare similar products before making a purchase decision (Sproles & Kendall, 1986).

### **2.1.2 The theory of planned behavior**

One of the key theories that is repeatedly drawn upon in research on consumer purchase behavior is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) from Ajzen (1991). The theory posits that the intention to exhibit certain behavior can be predicted from personal attitudes towards the behavior, perceived control of the behavior in question and subjective norms (Ajzen, 1991). Essentially TPB suggests that behavioral intentions are determinants of actual behavior, hence being especially relevant in research regarding consumer purchase behavior. TPB has already been widely applied to research in several fields such as in IT, marketing, property management and travel (Understanding post-pandemic travel intention toward rural destinations by expanding the theory of planned behavior,

2023; Singh et.al., 2024; Teo & Lee, 2010; Wang & Hassan, 2024). This further shows the extensive applicability of the theory.

Moreover, the TPB can be identified as a significant theory for research on environmental behavior (Zhang et.al., 2019; Niaura, 2013; López-Mosquera et.al., 2014), and it has been used as a basis and extended on several studies regarding the consumption of sustainable clothing (Kumar et.al., 2022; Brandão & Gonçalves da Costa, 2021; Wang & Hassan, 2024). Specifically in the context of consumer purchasing behavior regarding sustainable fashion, Wang and Hassan (2024) integrated the TPB to investigate Chinese consumers' purchase intention of eco-fashion. The study found that the three variables of TPB directly influence the purchase intention of eco-fashion, along with analyzing the influence of consumer's knowledge on eco-fashion and environmental concerns (Wang & Hassan, 2024). Analyzing these two key factors alongside the three variables provided by the TPB model showcases the practical application of the theory in understanding consumer purchase behaviors for sustainable fashion.

Additionally, TPB has been utilized in the research of understanding the barriers for sustainable fashion consumption (Brandão & Gonçalves da Costa, 2021). The study aligns with TPB as it confirms the relevance of the core components of the theory, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control and personal attitudes, as being predictors of sustainable fashion consumption. For instance, the study found that consumers' lack of knowledge of sustainable fashion can act as a barrier for creating positive intentions to buy sustainable fashion (Brandão & Gonçalves da Costa, 2021). This aligns with TPB's premise that personal attitudes can shape behavioral intention, making it highly relevant in researching consumer purchase behavior of sustainable fashion.

### **2.1.3 Perceived value**

The perception of value is an abstract and subjective concept on which several factors, such as the price or quality of a product, can have an effect in the context of purchasing

goods. Zeithaml (1988) defines perceived value as a consumer's overall evaluation of a product's utility, based on their perception of what they receive in relation to what they give. Furthermore, perceived value consists of the intrinsic and extrinsic attributes of a product, intrinsic meaning cues that are physically bound to the product and extrinsic meaning cues that are related to the product but not physically bound to it (Zeithaml, 1988).

In the context of sustainable fashion, perceived value can be derived from both the intrinsic environmental benefits, such as reduced carbon footprint, sustainable materials or product quality, and extrinsic factors such as price or brand reputation. Following the conceptualization from Zeithaml (1988), Dodds and others (1991) describe perceived value as the “cognitive trade-off between perceived quality and sacrifice”. Albeit subjective, understanding perceptions of value is in a key position when analyzing consumer’s purchase decisions – seeing that making a decision of buying a clothing item is based on the cognitive trade-off between sacrificing money and gaining desired value.

Moreover, research has shown that perceptions of value are directly linked to consumer purchase behavior of sustainable fashion. For example, a study on Chinese consumers revealed that when purchasing environmentally sustainable clothing social value is the most desired attribute with price and quality values following it (Chi, 2015). This finding suggests that consumer purchase decisions are not solely motivated by the functionality or intrinsic attributes of a product, but also by the social and emotional satisfaction that comes from buying eco-friendly clothing. Zeithaml (1988) also found that the perceived value of a purchase that has a positive impact on the environment may even outweigh the higher price or other costs associated with sustainable fashion. In other words, consumers who perceive sustainable fashion as offering a higher value to them, for instance due to a positive environmental impact, better quality or durability, may be more inclined to purchase sustainable fashion products.

#### 2.1.4 Value-Belief-Norm theory

The Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory developed by Stern and others (1999) suggests that individuals' pro-environmental behaviors, such as purchasing environmentally sustainable clothing, are driven by a sequence of cognitive and motivational processes. The theory posits that values, beliefs, and personal norms directly influence behavior. In the fashion industry, a consumer's personal values (e.g. environmentalism), beliefs (e.g. the effectiveness of sustainable fashion choices), and personal norms (e.g. a moral obligation to protect the environment) will therefore significantly impact their purchasing decisions. This theory is particularly useful for understanding how the perceived value of sustainability in fashion aligns with consumers' beliefs about the importance of environmental conservation and their ethical responsibilities. Furthermore, the theory highlights the importance of investigating the consumption of fashion through perceptions of value, seeing as personal values guide people's behavior (Wensing et.al., 2019) and therefore play a significant role in the purchase decisions of consumers.

The VBN theory has been widely integrated into research on sustainable consumption behavior (Hong et.al., 2024; Alam et.al., 2025), further showing that personal values, beliefs and norms directly affect consumer behavior. Hong and others (2024) found that variables derived from the VBN theory induce positive intentions to green consumer practices among Chinese youth. Furthermore, the study found that personal values, awareness of environmental consequences, the ascription of responsibility and personal norms had a notable positive influence on the adoption of green consumer practices (Hong et.al., 2024). The results suggest that not only do personal beliefs, values and norms affect consumer behavior, reinforcing the formation of positive personal values, norms and beliefs towards environmental sustainability translate to green purchase behavior. In alignment with this research, Alam and others (2025) found similar psychological factors to affect the acceptance of remanufactured products, while expanding the scope of the VBN theory to include ethical sensitivity. The findings of the study indicate ethical sensitivity to play a significant role in affecting purchase intentions, underlining the importance of moral judgements in consumer decision-making.

## **2.2 Environmental sustainability and clothing**

Environmental sustainability is a subsection of sustainability, focusing on environmental factors. A well-known model, the triple bottom line, for sustainability has been proposed by John Elkington in 1994, dividing companies' impact in three sections of economic, environmental and social sustainability (Harvard business review, 2018). Environmental sustainability therefore describes actions that are made to sustain and prolong the well-being of our environment. In the garment industry, the consideration of environmental sustainability is at a key position for companies as consumers have become more aware of the negative implications the industry has for the environment. Furthermore, pushing the aspect of sustainable development in their marketing, companies in the textile sector can achieve competitive advantage and differentiation (Cui et.al., 2025).

The increased importance of sustainable development and the conservation of the environment sparked the rise of sustainable fashion several decades ago, as consumers grew increasingly worried about the environmental impact of clothing manufacturing (Jung & Jin, 2014). Now, sustainable fashion is also commonly referred to as green or eco-fashion and is characterized as clothing that in its manufacturing involves renewable and eco-friendly materials, reduces carbon footprints and provides ethical conditions for involved laborers (Henninger et.al., 2016). Therefore it can be said that sustainable fashion promotes durability, longevity and transparency in the entire production process. Similarly, McNeill and Moore (2015) define sustainable fashion as producing clothing in a manner that responsibly reduces the environmental impact of garment production, while altogether minimizing negative effects to the society and physical environment.

### **2.2.1 Sustainable fashion**

Fashion designers built the foundation of sustainable fashion in the early 1990s due to the rise in environmental concerns for the expanding fashion industry and as the usage of eco-friendly materials began to regain traction (Csanák, 2023). The concept of slow

fashion – meaning the idea of slowing down consumption of clothing and promoting quality over quantity – can be linked to this time period as well. Whereas mainstream fast fashion models focus on expanding the number of fashion seasons due to the short-lived nature of fast fashion styles, and boosting production and sales volumes, slow fashion practicing companies put emphasis on the opposite (Karim et.al., 2024). During the same period, demands for eco-friendly fibers such as organic cotton increased, motivating the creation of fashionable clothing made from organic cotton, denim or flax materials for example (Csanák, 2023). This development seems to have shaped the fashion market, pushing companies to introduce sustainable clothing lines and promote sustainability in general.

Since its establishment, the concept of sustainable fashion has gained so much popularity among consumers globally, that it could be said that it has since become a presumption rather than a phenomenon. Moreover, sustainable fashion has since its popularization seen significant progress. From the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, sustainable fashion has gained momentum through several initiatives such as the establishment of standards and certifications – Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) and Fairtrade for example – and collaborations between NGOs and governmental bodies promoting sustainability (Csanák, 2023). Set standards and visible certification like Fairtrade help foster the development of sustainable fashion through helping consumers identify sustainable products.

### **2.2.2 Consumer attitudes**

Several researchers have investigated factors that shape consumer attitudes towards green products, brands, sustainable fashion and environmental sustainability in general (Malik & Singhal, 2017; Cheah & Phau, 2011; Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Ahmad & Thyagaraj, 2015), painting a general picture of how consumers perceive environmental sustainability and consider it in their purchase behaviors. Positive attitudes towards environmental sustainability, and products that promote it, and concern for the environment have been

found to positively influence the intention to purchase environmentally friendly or green products (Ahmad & Thyagaraj, 2015; Cheah & Phau, 2011). On the contrary, research has also found that consumers demonstrate a gap between positive attitudes towards environmental sustainability and actual purchase intention (Wang et.al., 2021; Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Margariti et.al., 2024), highlighting that while positive attitudes are present, factors like skepticism and the perception of barriers can prevent the translation of these attitudes into actual purchase intentions or decisions.

This discourse surrounding consumer attitudes and purchase behavior illustrates the complexity of the matter, which can be seen in the context of sustainable fashion as well. Whereas the consumption of sustainable fashion has increased along with its popularity, research has shown that inconsistencies are present between consumer attitudes towards green purchasing and their actual purchase decisions (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). More specifically, Joshi and Rahman (2015) found that the key drivers for purchasing green products are product attributes, environmental concern and knowledge and subjective norms, whereas high price, lack of trust in green products and scarce availability emerged as the main barriers. This suggests that price, lack of trust and availability are perceived to have more value over the environmental benefits of green products. Moreover, the attitude-behavior gap demonstrated in this study suggests that positive attitudes towards green products and the willingness to purchase them do not translate into actual purchases.

### **2.2.3 Environmental knowledge**

An individual's familiarity and ability to understand how their actions affect the environment is called environmental knowledge (Rosdiana et.al., 2025). For example, high environmental knowledge can be displayed in the ability to understand why recycling and conserving resources like water and electricity is important and understanding how one's own actions can directly impact the environment or contribute to global warming.

Environmental knowledge has been observed to directly affect consumer behavior, whether in relation to plastic consumption (Rosdiana et.al., 2025) or purchasing sustainable fashion products (Wang & Hassan, 2024; Thi Thuy et.al., 2024). More specifically, a literature review on green purchase behavior by Joshi and Rahman (2015) found environmental knowledge to be the most popular variable incorporated in research. This highlights the relevance of studying the effects of environmental knowledge further in the context of consumer purchase decisions.

A study on Chinese consumers' purchase intention of eco-fashion found that a positive attitude towards sustainable fashion corresponds in increased intention to purchase products under that category (Wang & Hassan, 2024). It's therefore implied that increased environmental knowledge translates to positive attitudes towards environmental issues – therefore affecting purchase intentions of green fashion. Moreover, Thi Thuy and others (2024) in their study of factors affecting on Vietnamese consumers' intentions to purchase sustainable garments found environmental knowledge to be in an integral role in fostering more sustainable and responsible consumption patterns.

Therefore, according to research (Thi Thuy et.al., 2024; Wang & Hassan, 2024), a consumer that's knowledgeable on the topic of environmental issues is more likely to develop positive attitudes towards sustainable fashion products. Consequently, low environmental knowledge has been found to negatively affect the purchase of sustainable apparel (Connell, 2010), further strengthening the relationship between consumer purchase behavior and environmental knowledge.

### **3 Methodology**

This chapter presents and explains the methodological choices made in this thesis. In the first section, the research approach is described and justified. The second section focuses on data collection techniques and the data sample that is used in the research, followed by the third section that analyses the data. Finally, the last section of this chapter will discuss the reliability and validity of the data, with the aim of underlining the trustworthiness of the research.

#### **3.1 Research approach**

The goal of the research was to find out in what way does consumers' perceived value of environmental sustainability affect their purchase decisions of clothing. Since the factor of environmental sustainability is investigated in relation to other factors, the study will utilize a questionnaire to collect data from Finnish consumers. Data collection through a questionnaire allows for the study to "identify and describe the variability in different phenomena" (Saunders et.al., 2007, p. 356), the phenomenon in this case being to what extent do consumers value environmental sustainability when buying clothes in relation to other attributes.

Therefore, the research follows a quantitative research method and gathers primary data from consumers in the fashion industry through an online survey. The research utilizes the method of conjoint analysis to analyze the survey data. The key advantage conjoint analysis offers is that it can help predict consumer trade-offs between different product attributes, specifically showcasing consumer preferences in a multi-attribute scenario (Arora, 2006). Product attributes such as price and quality are generally known to affect consumer purchase preferences, especially when purchasing clothing. Consequently, the conjoint analysis method enables researchers to evaluate both the relative importance of specified product attributes and the specific levels within each attribute (Jin et.al.,

2010). Therefore, it's a useful method in helping to gain insights into consumer preferences for different product categories, clothing for example.

The method of conjoint analysis has previously been utilized in research on the fashion sector: Fuchs and others (2024) investigated the role of social and environmental sustainability in sportswear purchasing among European consumers, comparing it to the attributes of price and functionality. Lou and Xu (2024) used the conjoint analysis method to investigate consumers' consumption of denim products, examining the attributes of price, brand name, eco-labeling and types of materials used in the product. Further, Jin and others (2010) compared Chinese and Indian consumers' preferred attributes when selecting denim jeans – price, quality, fit, brand country of origin and design were included in the study. Conjoint analysis has also been utilized to map out consumer preferences for the optimal dress design (Zhou & Xu, 2020), including attributes like dress length and silhouette for example. In conclusion, conjoint analysis has been a widely used method for research in the field of marketing, further stressing its relevance as a data analysis method for this study.

### **3.2 Data collection technique**

The empirical data for this study was collected via an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to the chosen target population of Finnish consumers. Using an online self-administered questionnaire offers an efficient way to collect data with a low cost and a tighter timeframe (Saunders et.al., 2007, p. 357-360). Being a widely used method to collect data, using a questionnaire to collect consumer perceptions of product attributes and compare them was deemed an appropriate method for this study as well.

The questionnaire was created through Webropol, and pilot tested with six consumers that belonged to the intended target audience of the final version of the survey. After completing corrections on the survey design based on the feedback received from the pilot testing – mostly centered around the wording of questions or explanations to

increase cohesiveness – the final version of the survey was shared via an online link on the social media platforms WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. Upon sharing the survey link, it was stated that all Finnish consumers can participate. No other restrictions were made regarding the respondents. The respondents were also encouraged to share the link with their network. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, which was also stated in the beginning of the survey.

To minimize respondents' fatigue while answering questions, the questionnaire was designed to be straightforward and concise. Therefore, close-ended questions were used to allow for quick and low-effort completion, along with providing data that is easy to compare (Saunders et.al., 2007, p. 368). Furthermore, the total amount of questions was limited to 17 and they did not go into too much depth regarding the respondents' personal values or background – excluding demographic information. The majority of questions were focused on consumer purchase behavior providing choice sets of clothing items that prompted the respondents to choose one of the given choices based on the preferred attributes it holds.

The first section of the questionnaire gathered demographic information from the respondents, focusing on age, gender, education and income – all factors that can be said to influence purchase behavior of clothing, and are therefore beneficial to record. The demographic questions were modeled after Fuchs and others (2024). The second part had questions about the consumption behavior of clothing, such as purchase location, pre-purchase research and environmental knowledge. This section mapped out how the respondents perceive their environmental knowledge level and whether it affects their purchase behavior. The concept of environmental knowledge was briefly explained before the questions regarding it to reduce the probability of misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the concept. Environmental knowledge was described as the ability to understand how an individual's own actions affect nature and the environment, for example understanding why recycling and conserving water and electricity is important.

The third and final part of the questionnaire focused on the forementioned choice sets between two hypothetical clothing items, prompting the respondents to choose one solely based on the given attributes and their levels. For each respondent, the order of the eight choice sets was randomized to reduce bias in the responses. This prevents for instance respondent fatigue from tampering with a singular choice set that's always presented last.

As stated in the introduction section, after careful consideration of literature and previous research on consumer purchase behavior of clothing items, four attributes were chosen to be included in this study: price, trendiness, environmental sustainability and brand trust – with their respective levels (Table 1). For the attribute levels of price and environmental sustainability, inspiration was drawn from previously conducted conjoint analyses by Fuchs and others (2024) and Lou and Xu (2024). Other levels were determined after the consideration of logicity and realism. Followed by the assignment of attributes and their levels, a total of eight choice sets were created – all including two choices of A or B – with the goal of including every juxtaposition of selected attribute levels. The choice sets are laid out in Table 2.

**Table 1.** Product attributes and their levels.

<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Levels</b>
Price	Cheap Expensive
Trendiness	Timeless On-trend Highly trendy
Environmental sustainability	None Partial Certified
Brand trust	Unknown Recognized Trusted

**Table 2.** Survey choice sets.

Choice set	Option	Price	Trendiness	Environmental sustainability	Brand trust
1	A	Low	Timeless	None	Unknown
	B	High	Highly trendy	Partial	Trusted
2	A	Low	Timeless	None	Trusted
	B	Low	Highly trendy	None	Trusted
3	A	Low	Timeless	Certified	Familiar
	B	Low	On-trend	Partial	Trusted
4	A	Low	Timeless	None	Unknown
	B	High	On-trend	Certified	Familiar
5	A	High	On-trend	Partial	Familiar
	B	High	Highly trendy	Partial	Familiar
6	A	Low	On-trend	Certified	Unknown
	B	High	Highly trendy	Certified	Familiar
7	A	High	On-trend	Partial	Trusted
	B	High	Highly trendy	Certified	Unknown
8	A	Low	Timeless	Partial	Unknown
	B	High	Highly trendy	None	Familiar

### 3.3 Research sample

The sample for this research was collected during September of 2025. The sample collected via the questionnaire consists of 212 voluntary respondents of various backgrounds and ages, with the connecting factor that all of them are Finnish consumers. Detailed demographic information of the respondents is presented in Table 3.

The clear majority, or 57,1 %, of the respondents were aged between the years of 25-39, followed by 18–24-year-olds with 17,9 % of the total respondents. Older generations were represented seemingly balanced, with 14,1 % of the respondents being between the ages of 40-54 and 10,4 % over the age of 55. One respondent was under the age of 18 totalling to 0,5 % of the respondents. The female gender was largely represented among the respondents with 68,9 %, while 29,7 % of the respondents identified as male – leaving 1,4 % of respondents who identify as other than the forementioned genders. The most common income level among the respondents can be considered upper-middle class with 56,6 % of respondents earning 2500-4499 € gross monthly. Education levels were slightly more balanced with 37,7 % of the respondents having completed high

school and 41,1 % a degree at a university of applied sciences, followed by 18,4 % having completed a university degree. This totals to over a half, or 59,5 %, of the respondents being highly educated.

**Table 3.** Demographic information of respondents.

Variable	Category	Sample (%)
Age	below 18	0,5
	18-24	17,9
	25-39	57,1
	40-55	14,1
	over 55	10,4
Gender	female	68,9
	male	29,7
	other	1,4
Monthly gross income	less than 1500 €	15,1
	1500-2499 €	19,3
	2500-4499 €	56,6
	more than 4500 €	9,0
Highest educational level	elementary school	2,8
	high school	37,7
	university of applied sciences	41,1
	university	18,4

Furthermore, when the respondents were asked to evaluate their environmental knowledge on a scale of 1-5, the average response came to 3,5. The majority of the respondents evaluated their knowledge at 3 ( $n = 83$ ), or being moderately knowledgeable on the topic. The minority of respondents evaluated their environmental knowledge at very low or low ( $n = 22$ ), or 1-2. In contrast, a significant portion of the respondents evaluated themselves to be highly knowledgeable ( $n = 81$ ) or very highly knowledgeable ( $n = 26$ ). In conclusion, more respondents seem to possess a moderate to very high level of environmental knowledge than not at all or a low level. These details are visualized in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Respondents' environmental knowledge level.

<b>Environmental knowledge level</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
1 = very low	2	0,9
2	20	9,4
3 = moderate	83	39,2
4	81	38,2
5 = very high	26	12,3
<b>total</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>100</b>

### 3.4 Data analysis

A choice-based conjoint analysis was conducted to determine how Finnish consumers value selected garment product attributes. As presented in section 3.2, conjoint analysis simulates real life purchase decisions by offering realistic product options for the participants to choose from.

Survey data was exported from Webropol to Excel for further analysis. Focusing on the eight choice set questions, the data was first expanded into long form by listing all 212 respondents' answers, totaling to 16 rows of data per respondent. To analyse the data further, the different attribute levels were coded by numbering them from 0 to 1 or 2 (price has only two levels). For example, the attributes of option B in choice set 8 (Table 2) are described as (price) high, (trendiness) highly trendy, (env. sustainability) none and (brand trust) familiar, which would after the coding process be described as 1,2,0,1. Assigning a number to the different attribute levels allows for a more straightforward analysis of the data. For the same reason the respondents' choice of option A or B of each choice set was coded as 0 = not chosen and 1 = chosen.

After finalizing the long data, a conjoint regression analysis was conducted on it. The regression returned coefficients for each attribute's levels, with level 0 acting as the intercept. Using the coefficient values, raw utilities were calculated for each attribute level. To make the utility scores comparable with each other, it is common practice to

center the raw values. This was done by first calculating the mean utility scores for each attribute and deducting the raw values from the mean value. This process and the centered utility values are visualized in Table 5. The centered utility values reveal how the different attributes and their respective levels were valued among the respondents.

**Table 5.** Raw and centered utility scores.

Attribute	Level	Raw utility	Mean utility	Centered utility
Price	Low	0	0,11	-0,11
	High	0,21		0,10
Trendiness	Timeless	0	-0,30	0,30
	On-trend	-0,30		0,01
	Highly trendy	-0,62		-0,31
Sustainability	None	0	0,17	-0,17
	Partial	0,22		0,05
	Certified	0,30		0,13
Brand trust	Unknown	0	0,07	-0,07
	Familiar	0,02		-0,05
	Trusted	0,19		0,12

Seeing as the results of the first regression do not include environmental knowledge as a moderating factor, the variable of knowledge score – derived from the respondents' answer when asked to evaluate their environmental knowledge – was added to the long data. The data was then split in two based on what the respondents answered their environmental knowledge to be, creating two groups of low knowledge (Group 1) and high knowledge (Group 2). A split linear regression was then ran on the two groups, returning knowledge-specific utilities for the both groups, allowing for further analysis with environmental knowledge as a moderating factor.

Finally, the relative importance of each attribute was calculated by comparing the respective range of each attribute's utility to the total sum of utility ranges, returning the percentage of importance for each attribute. This was first done on the entire sample based on the first linear regression results, and afterwards repeated for both groups formed at the split regression. This in turn allowed for further inspection of the relative attribute importance between the groups of low and high environmental knowledge.

### 3.5 Credibility of the research

Assessing the credibility of the research is an integral part of every research process. To do so, there are several possibilities for researchers to consider, but with a single objective: The research design should be focused on reliability and validity (Saunders et.al., 2007, p. 149). The following chapters will go through how the reliability and validity of this study were ensured.

The ability of data collection techniques and analysis methods to yield consistent findings is referred to as reliability (Saunders et.al., 2007, p. 149). This study ensured the reliability of the research by using a standardized questionnaire with multiple choice questions. However, it's necessary to acknowledge possible threats to the repeatability and therefore reliability of the data. Saunder and others (2007, p. 149) highlight four threats to reliability: *participant error*, *participant bias*, *observer error* and *observer bias*.

Consequently, it should be noted that the circumstances, physical or mental, in which the questionnaire is taken by respondents can greatly affect the answers (Saunder et.al., 2007, p. 149). *Participant error* could be reduced with a longer time scale given for a study, which was not possible to execute for this thesis. However, the questionnaire was left open to be answered for nearly five weeks, therefore giving the respondents ample time to complete the survey at a suitable time for them. Likewise to error, *participant bias* refers to personal predisposition to answer in a certain way. To reduce bias, the participation in this research was entirely anonymous and part of the questions were presented in a randomized order to the respondents. The goal of anonymization was to encourage respondents to answer questions honestly and in a way that truly reflects their personal values.

Similarly to the respondents, it should be noted that researchers are subject to error and bias as well. *Observer error* therefore refers to different ways of conducting research and forming questions, which can in turn affect the results (Saunders et.al., 2007, p. 150). Attempts to minimize researcher error were made by having regular exchanges with the

thesis supervisor during the process, conducting a pilot test of the questionnaire and critically reviewing the theoretical material. Finally, analyzing the results in an overly subjective manner can affect the outcome of a study, which can be referred to as *observer bias* (Saunders et.al., 2007, p. 150). To avoid it, the data for this thesis was collected and analyzed using digital tools, while also comparing the results to previous findings.

Validity refers to the accurate presentation of findings throughout the research process, or as Saunders and others (2007, p. 150) puts it: “whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about”. This is another important aspect to consider during the research process. Validity of a study is especially concerned with the causal relationship between two variables, and whether that relationship can be proven. For example, in this study, the conjoint analysis establishes causal relationships by isolating the effect of singular product attributes on overall consumer preference of a product.

Furthermore, the generalizability of the results, or external validity, can be a significant concern for researchers (Saunders et.al., 2007, p. 150). This study recognizes that due to the limited sample size and variance, the results might not reflect the entire population of Finnish consumers in the fashion sector. Therefore, the aim of this study is not to reflect the entire population of Finnish consumers, but to explore a phenomenon in a specified research setting.

Several checks were made to ensure the internal and external validity of this study. Firstly, the chosen attributes showed statistically significant ( $p < 0,05$ ) effects in expected directions, indicating internal consistency of the conjoint model. More specifically, the part-worth utilities of chosen attributes followed logical and theoretically expected direction – for example, certified sustainability increased utility, whereas no sustainability decreased utility, and decreased brand trust decreased utility. These observed directions were repeated among the different regression datasets, supporting the internal validity of the model.

Predictive validity of the model was assessed by comparing the model-predicted choices with actual choices of the respondents – or calculating the hit rate. Hit rate is a commonly used, legitimate and important measure of predictive validity in choice-based conjoint studies (Voleti et.al., 2017). It tells the scale of transferability of the choices made in a simulated environment to real life situations. The model used in this study achieved a hit rate of 72,4 %, which can be considered acceptable, as it is well in the empirically observed accuracy range of previous research on choice experiments (Zhang et.al., 2024). However, whereas the hit rate provides insight into the external validity of the conjoint model, it's dependent on the design of the survey and respondent behavior and should therefore not be overemphasized.

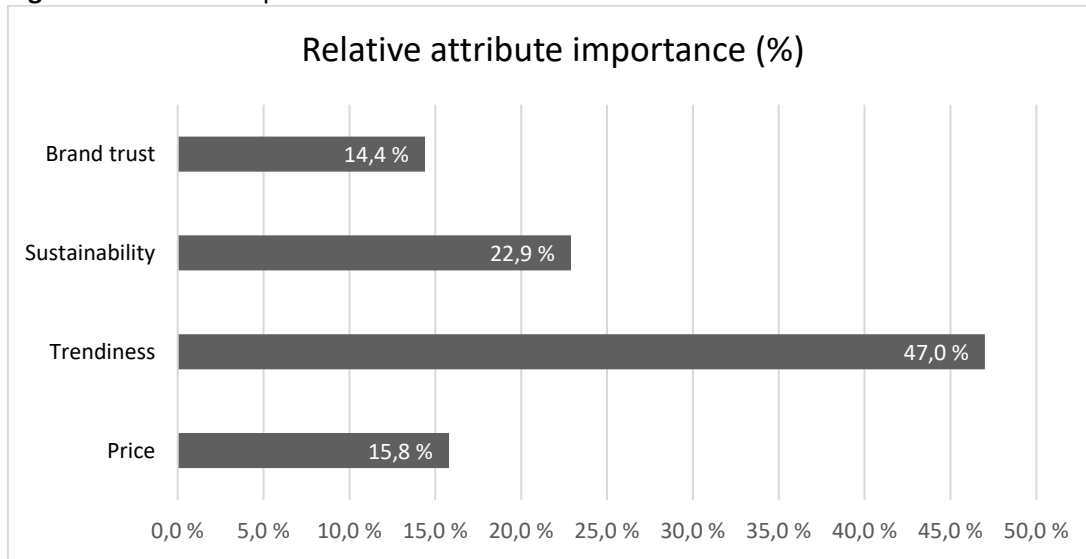
## 4 Findings

The following chapters will present and discuss the empirical findings of this study. Consequently, this section will provide answers to the research questions of the study. The first section will discuss attribute importance and the results of the conjoint choice tasks, therefore answering the first research question: *How is environmental sustainability valued in the purchase decision process of clothing compared to price, trendiness and brand trust?*

The second section will provide findings of the environmental knowledge of the respondents and how it affected their preferences in the choice sets. Thus, this part will provide an answer to the second research question of the study: *Does environmental knowledge affect consumers' purchase decisions of clothing?*

### 4.1 Attribute importance

For the respondents, trendiness is the most important attribute, with specifically timelessness of clothing providing the highest utility for them. Trendiness is followed by environmental sustainability (shortened as "sustainability") and price in terms of importance, where clothing that have certified sustainability claims and are set at a high price point are preferred. Brand trust was deemed as the least important attribute among the respondents, showing that when faced with a choice between two clothing items, the brand has the least influence when compared to the other attributes of trendiness, price and sustainability. Furthermore, clothing from a trusted and well-known brand gives the highest utility. The relative importance of these attributes among the respondents is visualized in Figure 1 below. Trendiness yielded the most relative importance with 47 %, followed by environmental sustainability with 22,9 %, price with 15,8 % and finally brand trust with 14,4 %.

**Figure 1.** Attribute importance.

As stated previously, the respondents were divided into two groups based on a self-evaluation of their level of environmental knowledge – Group 1 being low and Group 2 a high level of knowledge. When the relative attribute importance was calculated for both groups, the trend with the order of importance stays almost the same: Trendiness first, environmental sustainability second, but the last two attributes of price and brand trust switch places between the two groups in terms of importance (Figure 2).

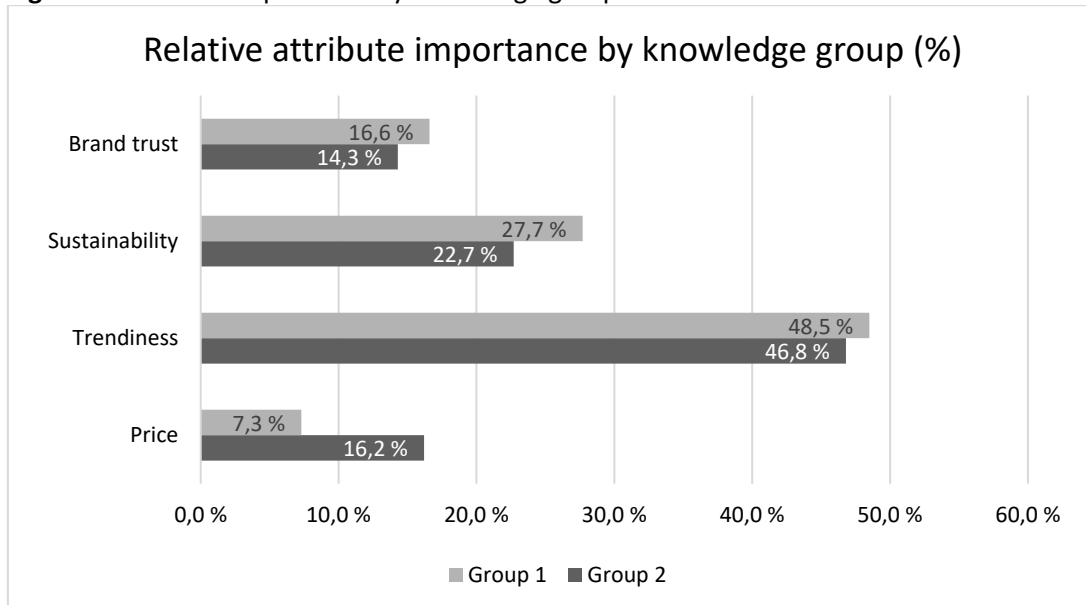
**Figure 2.** Attribute importance by knowledge group.

Table 6 shows the part-worth utility scores for each attribute level, first column portraying the scores of the whole sample, and the following representing the two knowledge groups. The sign of the utility score tells whether the attribute affects consumer preferences positively or negatively. A positive utility score signifies that the attribute increases overall preference for a product, whereas a negative score implies the contrary. In other words, a higher positive utility signals that the specific attribute level was chosen over another in the survey.

**Table 6.** Attribute utilities by level.

Attribute	Level	Utility all	Utility Group 1	Utility Group 2
Price	Low	-0,11	-0,03	-0,14
	High	0,11	0,03	0,09
Trendiness	Timeless	0,30	0,15	0,45
	On-trend	0,01	0,04	0,16
	Highly trendy	-0,31	-0,18	-0,16
Sustainability	None	-0,17	-0,14	-0,31
	Partial	0,05	0,08	-0,09
	Certified	0,13	0,05	-0,01
Brand trust	Unknown	-0,07	-0,04	-0,11
	Familiar	-0,05	-0,04	-0,09
	Trusted	0,12	0,08	0,08

The following chapters will go through each attribute in more detail and analyze the findings presented above, while also reflecting them on previous research and findings. These sections will therefore go into more detail regarding the part-worth utilities of the different attribute levels and their implications. The implications of environmental knowledge on the two groups' choices will be analyzed further afterwards.

#### 4.1.1 Price

As presented previously, the attribute of price was divided into two categories: low price point and high price point. Among the respondents, there was a clear preference for clothing at a higher price point, with the utility score of 0,11, over clothing at a lower price, with the utility score of -0,11. Seeing as generally speaking more expensive

clothing is made from higher quality materials, this suggests that consumers are willing to invest in more expensive clothing that will last them longer. This claim aligns with what has previously been recorded of consumer attitudes (Jegethesan et.al., 2012; Thi Thuy et.al., 2024).

More specifically, consumers have been found to be willing to invest in clothing that is priced higher if it is seen to offer value for them (Thi Thuy et.al., 2024), showing that if other attributes are perceived to offer more value, the price of the product is not necessarily an obstacle to purchase – similarly to the consumers participating in this study. At the same time, this could suggest that the Finnish consumers partaking in this study do not prefer fast fashion over sustainable fashion, as generally the former is significantly more affordable than the latter (Smith & Winterich, 2024). This will be investigated further in the following chapter 4.2.2.

The relative importance of price for the respondents sets the attribute second to last. Therefore, it seems that price is not seen as a core influencing factor for purchase among the participants. This differs from previous research on clothing item attributes, where price has been found to be the most important attribute among Chinese consumers (Jin et.al., 2010) and Australian consumers (Jegethesan et.al., 2012). Interestingly, the study from Jin and others (2010) found price to not be an important attribute among Indian consumers, similarly to this study. This shows that cross-cultural and demographic factors are important to acknowledge as consumer behavior exhibits changes in different cultural and demographic contexts.

#### **4.1.2 Trendiness**

Trendiness was found to be overwhelmingly the most important attribute among the respondents (Figure 1), which shows that considering the current trends and appearing stylish is important to consumers. Previous research on consumer behavior has also determined that to a lot of consumers, following trends is very important (Park et.al., 2006;

Sproles & Kendall, 1986), which is verified by this study as well. However, when the utility scores of the different levels of this attribute are inspected closer, it's clear that the consumers that took part in the study value highly trendy clothes the least. Highly trendy clothing yielded the utility score of -0,31, suggesting that fast fashion and following rapidly changing micro trends are perhaps losing their status as being trendy. This could be explained by the desire to purchase longer-lasting garments and therefore spend less in the long haul. The concept of timelessness and durable style has gained attention recently (Smith & Winterich, 2024; Liu et.al., 2022), making this finding interesting for future research as well.

So far previous research, and especially conjoint-based analyses on consumer behavior, have seemingly neglected the attribute of trendiness. However, similar attributes have been included that can be compared to the results of this study to some extent. Fashion motivation has been found to affect consumer purchase intention for self-use positively, especially in the context of sustainably crafted products (Saepudin et.al., 2023). This study verifies the notion that perception of trendiness does affect the consumer purchase decision process.

Consequently, timeless clothing – with the utility of 0,30 – were clearly the more popular choice when juxtaposed with a trendy or a highly trendy choice of clothing in the survey. While trendiness is important to consumers, perhaps it's not in the sense that one would first think. The importance of trendy clothing for the respondents in this study does not seem to refer to clothes that follow every micro trend but rather to clothes that appear timeless and can therefore be considered trendy throughout a longer period of time. However, a study from Bläse and others (2023) provides a contradicting view on how consumers view trendiness and especially timeless design: Consumers that experience stronger FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) regarding trends were found to be less influenced by sustainability or brand credibility issues, therefore being more likely to purchase highly trendy fast fashion (less environmentally sustainable) garments. This presents a

more nuanced picture regarding consumer attitudes, showing that for some being trendy right now is more important than considering the longevity of their purchases.

Still, the claim of the importance of timeless design for clothing presented in this research aligns with previous research, where timeless design was found to be an important factor in driving the long-term usage of garments for consumers (Liu et.al., 2022). Therefore, consumers seem to be looking to purchase clothing that serves them longer. The positive relationship between consumer well-being and slow fashion was further studied by Liu and others (2022), and it was proposed that Chinese consumers invest in slow fashion for self-serving reasons rather than common ethical or environmental benefit. This leaves also the results of this study up for interpretation in terms of the driving motivator of the preference of timeless design. However, in terms of relative attribute importance for the consumers partaking in the study, environmental sustainability was deemed as the second important after trendiness.

#### **4.1.3 Environmental sustainability**

According to the data analysis, consumers prefer clothes that have certified environmental sustainability claims over clothes that have partial sustainability claims or none at all. Certified sustainability got a utility score of 0,13, whereas partial sustainability a score of 0,05. Clothing that has no sustainability claims was seen as providing the least utility with a score of -0,17, making clothing with this attribute clearly a less preferred choice. This suggests that consumers prefer garments that have certified sustainability claims, such as being made from 100% recycled cotton, over clothing items that do not. The suggestion aligns with previous research findings from Li and others (2024), who found consumers to link fashion products that are presented as sustainable with higher quality and value, influencing their purchase decisions. It seems that especially when environmental sustainability of a garment is communicated clearly, in the form of certification label for example, it influences the consumer purchase decision process. Supporting this notion, eco-labeling and specifically clear messaging of the label is also something that

researchers have previously concluded to increase sustainable purchasing of clothing (Timmons et.al., 2025).

Whereas it's clear that certification of sustainability – or the visual presentation of it – on clothing items makes them appear more favorable to consumers, it's important to acknowledge how the certification is perceived by consumers. The interpretation of eco-labeling has been described to vary among consumers and factors like credibility, understanding and standardization can affect the effectiveness of these labels (Ziyeh & Cinelli, 2023). This could also partly explain why certified environmental sustainability yielded more utility among the participants in this study when compared to a more ambiguous choice of “partial” or “none”.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the preference for clothes that are at a certified level of environmental sustainability might be driven by perceived credibility, rather than the actual sustainability or environmental performance of the garment. Sigaard and Laitala (2023) have recorded that Norwegian consumers' perceptions of environmentally sustainable fibers used in garments do not align with sustainability comparison tools, as wool was deemed the most sustainable fiber and polyester the least – both set the opposite way in the Higg MSI sustainability comparison tool. Further, the study concluded that consumers' knowledge on sustainable fibers, and their usage in textile production, was low (Sigaard & Laitala, 2023).

#### **4.1.4 Brand trust**

While it was deemed as the least important attribute out of the four, there were still clearly identifiable differences for preference between the different levels of brand trust. Clothing that are branded with a well-known and trusted brand were preferred by the respondents, scoring a utility rating of 0,12. Interestingly, there was only a slight preference for clothing from a familiar brand, scoring a utility rating of -0,05, over clothing from a completely unknown brand, scoring a utility of -0,07. This suggests that if the brand of

clothing is trusted and known by the consumer, it would encourage them to choose it over an otherwise similar clothing item from a familiar but only somewhat trusted or a completely unknown brand. The enhancing effect of a trusted brand on purchase intention has also previously been observed by researchers (Ling et.al., 2023; Wong, 2024), which makes it an expected conclusion.

However, when prompted to choose between a familiar but not trusted and a completely unknown brand, there's only a slight preference for the familiar one among the respondents – suggesting that unless the brand is established and widely trusted by consumers, it does not play a big part in their purchase decision process of clothing. The concept of brand trust is complicated, as consumers have been recorded to prefer a familiar brand even when it's subject to wide criticism of its CSR practices (Achabou, 2020), showing that a familiar brand can provide utility even when it's not trusted on all fronts. Previous research on consumer skepticism towards green marketing found that the general consumer purchases sustainable fashion even if it's connected to non-transparent sustainability claims (Brandão & Gonçalves da Costa, 2021), strengthening the claim that brand can provide utility even if it's not trusted all around.

Therefore, it's important to note that the context matters and the interaction between brand and other attributes (such as sustainability or price) can yield different utilities. Consequently, this complicates the claim that a trusted brand is preferred by consumers when compared to a familiar or an unknown brand.

## **4.2 Environmental knowledge and purchase decision process**

Environmental knowledge has been noted as a key factor in driving consumers' purchase behavior towards more sustainable choices (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). A higher knowledge level affects consumer attitudes towards sustainable products positively, therefore promoting sustainable purchase intentions (Wang & Hassan, 2024). This study identified clear differences in the simulated purchase behavior of the two groups based on low or

high environmental knowledge. Consequently, the perceived environmental knowledge of the respondents was found to affect the choice of a preferred clothing item. This aligns with the VBN theory, which posits that personal values, beliefs and norms affect consumer purchase decisions (Stern et.al., 1999).

The differences between attribute utility scores of the two groups were presented in Table 6, and they show clear differences depending on the level of environmental knowledge. Environmental sustainability provided the least utility for both groups when the clothing item had no sustainability claims: -0,14 for Group 1 and -0,31 for Group 2. Still, for the respondents with higher environmental knowledge, the clothing with no sustainability claims provided significantly less utility than for the respondents with low knowledge. Clothing with partial sustainability provided the most utility for low knowledge respondents (0,08) whereas for high knowledge respondents it provided the second least utility (-0,09). This shows a clear difference in the willingness to invest in clothing with a higher level of sustainability, of which environmental knowledge has an increasing effect on.

Overall, the respondents with high levels of environmental knowledge exhibited more consistent and pro-sustainable choice patterns: They preferred clothing items at a higher price point over low, timeless clothing over trendy and highly trendy, clothes with certified sustainability over partial or none, and a trusted and known brand over a familiar or unknown one (Table 6). It could be said that the respondents in Group 2 prefer to purchase timelessly designed clothing that's manufactured sustainably at a higher price point from a trusted brand. On the contrary, the respondents with low levels of environmental knowledge displayed more random choice patterns that are less directed by sustainability. Similarly to Group 2, the respondents in Group 1 had a preference, although slight, for expensive clothing over cheap, and preferred timeless clothing over trendy and highly trendy. However, clothing with partial environmental sustainability provided the most utility for Group 1, followed by certified and lastly none, and a trusted brand

was preferred, but a familiar and unknown one provided the same amount of utility for them (Table 6).

Additionally, a significant difference between the two groups was the predictability and consistency of the choices the respondents would make. The R squared value is used to describe the accuracy of a predictive model, often included in describing research findings on consumer behavior (Wang & Hassan, 2024; Wong, 2024). In this study, the inspected R squared values for the groups were the following: Group 1 with low environmental knowledge, the value was 0,097 – or the individual variables explained 9,7 % of the variance on the respondent's choices. For Group 2 with high environmental knowledge, the value was 0,203 – meaning that 20,3 % of the variance in choices can be explained by the individual variables.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the respondents with low environmental knowledge show less-structured and less attribute-driven decision-making processes, whereas the respondents with high environmental knowledge make more structured and consistent decisions that can be explained by the product attributes. This finding aligns with what the VBN theory posits (Stern et.al., 1999), and verifies the claim made in previous research (Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Wang & Hassan, 2024; Thi Thuy et.al., 2024) as well, that environmental knowledge does affect consumer purchase decision processes, thus also answering the second research question of the study.

## **5 Conclusions**

The objective of this thesis was to investigate if environmental knowledge of consumers has an effect on their purchase decisions and how environmental sustainability is valued in the purchase decision process of clothing when its compared to trendiness, price and brand trust. This final chapter of the thesis underlines the key findings of the study and draws final conclusions. These are followed by the presentation of the implications of this study from a managerial standpoint, reflection on the limitations of this study and finally some suggestions for further research. Additionally, at the end of the chapter a disclaimer of the usage of artificial intelligence in this study is included.

### **5.1 Summary and key findings**

The importance of sustainable consumption has been increasing throughout the decades due to increasing pollution and the deterioration of the climate. Despite being one of the core industries participating in global pollution and being associated with ethical concerns, the fashion industry keeps growing, and fast fashion retailers are maintaining their customers. Research has shown that consumers' positive attitudes towards sustainability do not necessarily translate to sustainable purchase decisions, hinting at the existence of a green gap between attitudes and action (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). The aim of this study was to further investigate consumer attitudes towards sustainable fashion and see what is truly being valued the most about garments; environmental sustainability or something else.

The first research objective of this thesis was to see how environmental sustainability is valued by consumers in the purchase decision process of clothing when compared to price, trendiness and brand trust, and therefore answer the first research question. The study utilized an online questionnaire to collect quantitative data and conjoint analysis as a tool to simulate real-life purchase decisions and analyze trade-offs between clothing items that possess different product attributes. The chosen attributes and their

respective levels were based on an extensive review of previous research and reflecting on logicity and realism. Environmental sustainability was found to have the second-most importance among the consumers when compared to the other attributes.

The most important attribute among the respondents was trendiness, followed by environmental sustainability, price and brand trust. Whereas it was difficult to find previously conducted conjoint analyses that include trendiness as an attribute, consumers are known to be inclined to follow trends in their purchase behavior (Park et.al., 2006), which was displayed in this study as well. Timeless clothing provided the most utility for the respondents, consistent with prior research (Liu et.al., 2022), whereas highly trendy clothing provided the least utility. Fast fashion consumption is still prominent, contradicting this finding, which is something that previous research has explained through social pressures of appearing relevant (Bläse et.al., 2023).

Environmental sustainability, holding the second-most relative importance, did therefore not emerge as the most important attribute among the respondents, which suggests that consumers perceive trendiness to bring them more value over it when choosing which garment to purchase. This contrasts with the notion that sustainability has been increasing in importance among consumers (Sakr et.al., 2023). Certified sustainability yielded the most utility, while clothing that has no sustainability claims was seen as providing the least utility according to the respondents. This finding is supported by previous research where fashion products with clear presentation of being sustainable were seen to provide higher value to consumers (Li et.al., 2024), and specifically clear labeling on the clothes was found to increase sustainable purchasing (Timmons et.al., 2025).

Price came second-to-last in terms of importance for the respondents, contradicting previous research that has found price to be the most important product attribute for consumers purchasing clothing (Lou & Xu, 2024; Jin et.al., 2010; Jegethesan et.al., 2012). Moreover, clothing at a high price point provided more utility to the respondents over a

low price point, which has been previously recorded by researchers (Thi Thuy et.al., 2024). It can be concluded that consumers perceive the attributes of environmental sustainability and trendiness as being more important in driving their purchase decision when compared to price.

Brand trust was the least important attribute out of the four. Specifically, a known and trusted brand provided the most utility, a familiar brand second most, and an unknown brand the least. Previous research has also shown that well-known and trusted brands are preferred by consumers (Lou & Xu, 2024; Ling et.al., 2023; Wong; 2024). There was only a slight preference for a familiar brand over an unknown one, suggesting that the brand of clothing influences purchase decisions most when it's trusted by consumers.

The second research question this study aimed to answer was whether environmental knowledge affects consumer purchase decisions of clothing. The respondents were divided into two groups based on their personal perception of their level of knowledge: Group 1 including the respondents with low environmental knowledge and Group 2 the respondents with high environmental knowledge. An important distinction between the knowledge groups was that the respondents with low environmental knowledge exhibited less structured and attribute-driven decision making, while the respondents with high knowledge made more consistent choices that could be explained by the specified product attributes. Environmental knowledge was therefore found to affect consumer choices of clothing, aligning with previous research (Wang & Hassan, 2024; Thi Thuy et.al., 2024).

The relative attribute importance was similar for both knowledge groups, only differing at the bottom of the hierarchy with price being the least important attribute instead of brand trust for the respondents with low environmental knowledge. More specifically, key differences between the two knowledge groups were in attribute importance, the utility that environmental sustainability provides for them and in the consistency of their answers. The positive correlation of higher sustainability and higher utility for the

respondents with high environmental knowledge demonstrates the claims of the VBN theory (Stern et.al., 1999) in action: Personal values and beliefs affect consumer purchase decisions.

## **5.2 Theoretical contributions**

This thesis and its results contribute to the existing body of research regarding consumer behavior in the fashion sector by expanding the research on fashion product attributes and by verifying the role of environmental knowledge in the purchase decision process of consumers. Furthermore, including trendiness as a product attribute in this conjoint analysis provides a new perspective on consumer behavior, seeing as it has so far not been included in research on this topic the same way. Additionally, the thesis focused on simulating consumer purchase decisions, filling the research gap on consumer purchase decisions in the fashion sector. Finally, this study contributes to and expands on the existing research on the roles of environmental sustainability (Lou & Xu, 2024; Fuchs et.al., 2025) and environmental knowledge (Wang & Hassan, 2024; Thi Thuy et.al., 2024) in consumer purchase behavior, providing valuable insights into consumer attitudes towards sustainable clothing.

## **5.3 Managerial implications**

Based on the findings of this research, this section will present developmental suggestions for companies in the fashion industry – focusing on their marketing efforts and how the information provided by this research could be used in better identification on consumer needs in this sector.

Seeing as trendiness emerged as the most important product attribute, even over environmental sustainability, companies could leverage it as a gateway to sustainability. The majority of consumers participating in this study preferred timeless designs over highly

trendy clothing, showing that marketing efforts shouldn't focus on promoting fast fashion and trends that change rapidly. Rather, building on the appreciation of timeless clothing designs, it could be beneficial to focus on high-quality, long-lasting designs. Furthermore, partnering with influencers promoting sustainable fashion could help grab the attention of trend-focused consumers.

Along with previous research (Li et.al., 2024; Timmons et.al., 2025), this study found certified sustainability claims on clothing to be the preferred choice of consumers overall. Therefore, brands are encouraged to adopt standardized sustainability certifications, and more importantly communicate the sustainability of the garment in a clear and highly visible manner. Especially for consumers with low environmental knowledge, clear messaging could help drive their purchase behavior towards more consistent and sustainability-driven choices. Adding short explanations of sustainability certifications at points of sale could help with this as well, seeing as consumers with low environmental knowledge preferred partial sustainability in garments – suggesting that there's a gap in knowledge concerning certifications of sustainability.

While brand trust rose as the least important attribute for most consumers, trusted brands still provided the most utility among the respondents. This shows that brands should implement transparency in their daily activities and throughout the supply chain to gain trust among consumers. Moreover, the importance of a trusted brand and its effect on consumer purchase decisions should not be overlooked.

Finally, consumers preferred clothing that was priced higher, signaling that they're willing to invest in clothing that is perceived as being higher quality and lasting longer. Companies shouldn't therefore shy away from producing sustainable clothing collections at a higher price, as long as the quality and longevity of the garments are communicated clearly. Investing in marketing efforts showcasing the longevity and timeless design of clothing collections will yield strategic benefits for companies in the fashion industry by

supporting profitability while simultaneously aligning with consumer perceptions of value, sustainability and high quality.

#### **5.4 Limitations of the study and future research suggestions**

As with every study, this thesis has some limitations. Firstly, the study is focused on a specific geographical area and the variance in the sample was limited in terms of gender for example. The sample was also on the smaller side, which was mainly due to limited resources. Larger scale studies that include a larger and culturally and geographically diverse sample could offer a more thorough and more generalizable understanding of consumer purchase decisions in the same context.

Secondly, the thesis used solely quantitative data in its analysis. Incorporating qualitative methodology could provide deeper insights into consumer attitudes and perceptions, especially regarding environmental knowledge. For example, trendiness as a concept is subject to interpretation and knowledge based on an individual's personal experience of current trends – therefore the extent of the results should be interpreted critically.

For future research, it would be beneficial to include the attribute of trendiness and further research it in a larger scale or geographical context for instance. Trendiness emerged as the most important attribute in this study, which at the time of making this thesis seems to be an under-researched attribute among fashion researchers. Future conjoint analyses could incorporate trendiness as an attribute and compare it to a wider selection of relevant product attributes, or different attributes entirely. Moreover, applying this research method with the same attributes in a different cultural setting could yield interesting results.

The study did not investigate further what are the motivations behind consumers' choices between the given product attributes. It would be interesting for future research to, for example, tap into the driving motivators behind valuing trendiness by including

the dimension of personal attitude. Additionally, an intriguing perspective would be to study the effects of the current political and economic climate on the motivations of consumers to purchase sustainable clothing. As clothing can be seen as a necessity, could the willingness to spend less overall on necessities prompt consumers to invest in long-term clothing, hence favoring timeless and more durable products?

## **5.5 Disclaimer of the usage of artificial intelligence**

Artificial intelligence, specifically OpenAI's ChatGPT, was utilized in different stages of the thesis writing process. The regulations and rules of the University of Vaasa concerning the usage of AI were followed at all times. AI was used throughout the writing process to brainstorm ideas, help improve the cohesiveness and structure of academic writing and search for relevant academic sources. All output was checked and critically assessed by the author, and I take full responsibility of the contents of this thesis as the author of this study.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Online questionnaire

#### 1. Consent

I consent to participate in the study and commit to answering the questions carefully and truthfully.

#### Part 1: Background Information

#### 2. How old are you?

- Under 18
- 18–24
- 25–39
- 40–54
- Over 55

#### 3. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other

#### 4. Your monthly income before taxes

- Under 1500 €
- 1500–2499 €
- 2500–4499 €
- Over 4500 €

#### 5. Highest level of education completed

- Comprehensive school
- Upper secondary school or vocational school
- University of Applied Sciences

- University

### **Part 2: Your clothing purchasing habits**

Answer the questions with the situation in mind when you purchase clothing for yourself.

Note: In this survey, the term "clothing" does not include shoes, headwear, or other accessories.

6. Where do you usually buy clothing?

- Online store
- Brick-and-mortar store
- Flea market
- Second-hand marketplace (e.g. Vinted, Tori.fi)
- Hypermarket (e.g. Prisma, K-Citymarket)

7. Before purchasing clothing, how extensively do you explore different options?

- Not at all
- A little
- Somewhat
- Significantly
- I don't know

Environmental knowledge refers to the ability to understand how one's own actions affect the environment. It's for example understanding:

- Why recycling is important
- Why it's important to conserve energy and water
- How climate change relates to our everyday lives

Generally speaking, an environmentally knowledgeable person takes the well-being of nature and the environment into account in their daily actions and decision-making.

8. Assess your level of environmental awareness on a scale of 1–5

- 1 Not environmentally aware at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 Very environmentally aware

9. On a scale of 1–5, how much does your environmental knowledge influence your purchase decisions of clothing?

- 1 Not at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 Very much

### **Part 3: Hypothetical Choice Sets**

In this section you'll be presented with eight choice sets of clothing items with different product attributes. Choose option A or B based solely on the presented product attributes.

Below is a list of the four product attributes presented in the choice sets and an explanation of their different levels. Always choose the option of clothing that's the closest to a clothing item you would actually purchase.

**Price:** cheap / expensive

**Trendiness:** timeless (classic, not trend-driven) / trendy / very trendy (aligned with the latest trends, e.g. micro-trends)

**(Environmental) Sustainability:** none / partial (e.g. partly made from recycled materials) / certified (labeled, e.g. 100% recycled material, organic/sustainable material)

**Brand:** unknown / familiar / trusted (widely known brand with a reputation for quality)

With each choice set, a table presenting the product attributes and their levels is included in case you forget their meaning.

10. Set 1

I would most likely purchase

- Option A
- Option B

11. Set 2

I would most likely purchase

- Option A
- Option B

12. Set 3

I would most likely purchase

- Option A
- Option B

13. Set 4

I would most likely purchase

- Option A
- Option B

14. Set 5

I would most likely purchase

- Option A
- Option B

## 15. Set 6

I would most likely purchase

- Option A
- Option B

## 16. Set 7

I would most likely purchase

- Option A
- Option B

## 17. Set 8

I would most likely purchase

- Option A
- Option B