JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY
International Business School

The effect of conscious consumerism on purchasing behaviors

The example of greenwashing in the cosmetics industry

Bachelor Thesis in Business Administration

Title:	The effect of conscious consumerism on purchasing behaviors: the example of greenwashing in the cosmetics industry
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Abstract:

Background: The green market has boomed in the past few years in many industries including the cosmetics sector and businesses must now recognize sustainability as part of their overall business strategy. More specifically, the natural and organic beauty market has grown at an unprecedented rate in the last decade. The pressure on businesses to respond rapidly to rising customer demand for green goods has resulted in a deceptive marketing tactic known as "greenwashing." Although, many obstacles have created a gap between the intention to purchase and the actual purchase of green alternatives preventing organizations from benefiting from greener strategies.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to learn about consumer behaviors when it comes to green consumption and how greenwashing affects their buying decisions in the cosmetics industry. In addition to that, conducting a cross-cultural study brings insights on the impact cultural background can have on shaping green consumer profiles.

Method: The research is a qualitative study using an interpretivist paradigm. In addition to that, the study follows a grounded theory approach. In order to collect primary data, in-depth interviews were conducted with nineteen participants from fourteen different countries.

Conclusion: Three key factors affecting customers' buying intentions in the cosmetics industry emerged from the results as well as four barriers preventing consumers from adopting green purchasing behaviors.

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Manon Bernard   Lilana Parker

Table of contents

Tables

Figures

I. Introduction:

This first part provides the readers with a background of the study and presents the purpose and the research questions of the study. The contribution to the research is explained in this section as well as the delimitations of the study.

1.1 Background

Concerns about global warming and emissions, growing consumer understanding of environmental issues, and environmentally friendly supply chains are all putting pressure on businesses to behave responsibly (Kahraman & Kazançoğlu, 2019). The depletion of natural resources has raised the issue of environmental protection, which has resulted in the development of environmentally friendly consumption known as "green consumerism" (Moisander, 2007). Consumers are becoming increasingly conscious of their power when it comes to making ethical purchase decisions, and they believe that by changing their purchasing habits, they can affect ethical dilemmas (Gillani & Kutaula, 2018). The green market has boomed in the past few years in many industries with green energy, sustainable fashion, organic food and green cosmetics, to name just a few. Green is a term defining practices or products "that will not pollute the earth and are less harmful to the environment than the standard alternatives in terms of polluting the earth or depleting natural resources and can be recycled or conserved" (Shamdasani et al., 1993).

With 75% of millennials actively looking to make greener changes in their homes and lifestyles (Glass Packaging Institute, 2014), organizations can no longer focus merely on generating profit but must consider corporate social responsibility in their business strategy. Indeed, consumers expect companies to be involved in environmental or philanthropic causes (De Jong et al., 2017; Krafft, & Saito, 2015; Kotler, 2011). Companies recognize the growing demand for green products and are shifting their strategies by implementing sustainable practices such as green marketing (Riccolo, 2021). Aji and Sutikno (2015) define green marketing as "a concept and

strategy adopted by a company to advertise its green practices as an expression of its concern for environmental issues".

Research has highlighted the fact that it is difficult to predict green behavior therefore we cannot define a specific green consumer profile even though Krafft and Saito (2015) have identified three major profiles (Cervellon et al., 2011; Gabler et al., 2013). Besides, many barriers have created a gap between the intention to purchase and the actual purchase of green alternatives which have consequently prevented companies from benefiting from greener strategies (Gabler et al., 2013; Cervellon et al., 2011; Tsakiridou et al., 2008). As there are many different consumer profiles, Gabler et al. (2013) have suggested conducting cross-cultural research to understand if countries were an influence on shaping these profiles as his research was only conducted in the United States. Busic et al., (2012) cited from Newholm and Shaw (2007) that very few studies have undertaken cross-country comparisons of ethical consumerism. The goal is to obtain a more accurate interpretation of ethical consumption thanks to a cross-cultural investigation.

Following the movement of organic food consumption, consumers have realized the importance of using green cosmetics. In addition to the national beauty industry exploding, the natural and organic beauty market has seen exponential growth in the last decade and is expected to reach $25.11 billion by 2025 (Riccolo, 2021). However, eco-friendly cosmetics contribute to less than 15% to the total market value of the global cosmetic industry (Bhawna, 2020).

The necessity for companies to adapt quickly to the rising consumer demand for green products has led to a deceiving marketing practice: greenwashing (Krafft & Saito, 2014). Due to ambiguous regulations and a lack of clear marketing guidance, many companies are able to bypass marketing legislation and use greenwashed claims in their advertising without punishment (Krafft & Saito, 2014).

1.2 Problem discussion

As green products have become increasingly popular in the marketplace, more consumers have looked for eco-friendly alternatives (Kim & Chung, 2011; Nimse et al., 2007). However, some consumers are outraged, claiming that many businesses are misrepresenting their products as being greener than they really are (Hsu, 2011; Aji & Sutikno, 2015). As consumers are being more suspicious of organizations' eco-friendly claims, they are now questioning the act of buying "green" products. This distrust for corporate green communication has led to consumer skepticism (Krafft, & Saito, 2015; Darnall et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2008).

A lot of research has been conducted to understand greenwashing practices, but few have addressed consumer behavior regarding green products (Cervellon et al., 2011). While sustainable initiatives have boomed in many industries such as green energy, food, tourism, packaging, fashion, architecture, government, and construction; the cosmetics industry has been overlooked by the existing research (Nguyen et al., 2019). The authors will observe the gap between consumer green purchasing intentions and the consumer's actual purchasing behavior as scholars have tried to understand why individuals lean towards ethical consumption but fail to change their purchasing behavior (Baek *et al.*, 2015; Cherry and Caldwell, 2013; Kim *et al.*, 2016; Yoon *et al.*, 2016). This problem will be approached through the consumer's perspective. In addition to this point of view, the authors have chosen to apply a cross-cultural perspective as it was suggested as a future research direction by Gabler et al. (2013). With the amount of information at their disposal nowadays consumers are able to make their own research and can more or less identify the "greenness" of a product. Therefore, the objective is to understand the consumer's attitude when purchasing personal care products and when confronted with greenwashing, with a special focus on the belief-behavior gap.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this research is to understand consumers' perception of greenwashing and the effect it has on their purchasing behavior. This thesis contributes to the research by completing the gaps previously identified such as the belief-behavior gap as well as the cross-cultural research and understanding consumer behavior when it comes to green consumption (Gabler et al., 2013; Cervello et al. 2011). This research has an exploratory purpose combined

with a theory development purpose (Collis & Hussey, 2013). In other words, the purpose is to identify patterns about a phenomenon and build a theory from it. In this particular research, the authors will describe how the consumers perceive and react to greenwashing and develop a theory to understand how the purchasing behaviors have evolved due to greenwashing.

1.4 Research questions

The basic research problem must be sufficiently centered so that a reasonably homogeneous group of people can share their experiences with the subject. The study will address the following research questions:

Q1: What factors influence consumers' purchasing intentions in the cosmetic industry?

Q2: How has greenwashing in the cosmetics industry changed consumers' purchasing behaviors?

1.5 Contribution to the research

This research will add to the understanding of how consumers perceive green cosmetics and how it is impacting their purchasing behaviors. This study will help companies and marketers understand consumers behaviors towards green cosmetics. It will also give insights to companies and marketers thinking about orienting themselves towards a more sustainable business model or to consumers thinking about adopting a different way of consumption.

1.6 Delimitation

It is important to note that this study does not try to understand the whole concept of greenwashing, both from an organization's and a consumer's point of view. In fact, the research focuses on the consumer's perspective. Moreover, the study is limited to the cosmetics industry

therefore the results may not be transferable to understand consumers' purchasing behaviors in another industry.

1.7 Structure of the report

The thesis is composed of six main parts. It starts with an introduction of the topic and the problem studied. The second part is the frame of reference which presents some insights regarding the topic and previous research done. The third part explains the different methods used to collect data and answer the research questions. The empirical findings are then presented and analyzed. Lastly, the authors conclude by answering the research questions and discussing the limitations of the study.

II. Frame of reference

This part summarizes previous research and literature on the topic of greenwashing in the cosmetics industry. The concepts presented in the introduction are further explored to serve as a basis for the interpretations of the findings which will allow the development of a theory.

2.1 Method

The frame of reference investigates knowledge and previous research related to the topic of this study. The following section is divided into three parts, the first one examines the field of conscious consumerism and the rise of this movement. The second part analyses the different theories around greenwashing, how this phenomenon emerged and how companies apply it in their strategies. The last part focuses on consumer perception and behaviors, and highlights the gaps identified during the research. In order to find relevant scientific articles, the research was done through databases like Google Scholar, Jönköping University Library Primo and Kedge University Library.

To keep track of the research, two Excel files were created, one classifying all the keywords search on databases with the number of results found, and another one describing relevant articles found with for each article: the name of the authors, the main topics approached (keywords), a summary, personal comments, future research suggested by the article and the link to the article. The last file helped gather previous knowledge and figuring out what future research could complete this already existing knowledge. The main keywords to find relevant peer-reviewed articles were conscious consumerism, green marketing, greenwashing, cosmetics industry, purchasing behavior, consumer skepticism and green cosmetics. Moreover, the recency of the article was a criterion in the selection of articles for the frame of reference.

The table below gives a clear overview of how the frame of reference was designed:

Frame of reference	
Data bases	Jönköping University Library Primo, Google Scholar, Kedge University Library
Main theoretical fields	Marketing, Sustainability, International Management
Search words	Conscious consumerism, green marketing, greenwashing, cosmetics industry, purchasing behavior, consumer skepticism, green cosmetics
Literature types	Academic articles, books, review articles, scholarly journals
Criteria for article selection	Peer-reviewed articles, key words, recency
Selected articles	42 articles

Table 1: Selection process for the Frame of Reference

2.2 Conscious consumerism

The rising environmental threat of global warming and pollution has created a need for sustainable practices from organizations and responsible consumerism making the green trend a part of the world economy (Cervellon et al., 2011). Many consumers are willing to pay reasonable premium prices for environment-friendly products, due to environmental and health concerns (Kahraman & Kazançoğlu, 2019). Conscious consumption is a lifestyle that recognizes that individual consumption has larger consequences than a mere private impact and that consumer power can transform society. As a consequence, consumers voice their values by purchasing from socially responsible companies and by boycotting unethical companies (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014; Vitell et al., 2015; Zollo et al., 2018). However, ethical purchases produced with fair wages and worker treatment and made sustainably can be impractical and quite expensive (Husted et al., 2014; Zollo et al., 2018).

2.2.1 The cosmetics industry

Consumers are increasingly interested in a green lifestyle as they expect personal benefits from green products in addition to them being environmentally friendly (Nguyen et al., 2019). Some chemicals have been proven to be highly polluting as well as harmful for our body. Because an

increasing number of individuals have decided to adopt a healthier lifestyle, a growing number of consumers demand healthier cosmetics that will be gentle on the skin and minimize the harm to the environment (Stone et al., 1995). Cosmetics is a billion-dollar market, Germany alone generates 6-billion-euro sales per year (190 €/ second) (Cervellon et al., 2011). Cosmetics have been defined in the section 201(i) of the U.S Food Drugs and Cosmetics Act (1938), as a product, except soap, "intended to be applied to the human body for cleansing, beautifying, promoting attractiveness, or altering the appearance". The Act adds that cosmetics may also be considered as a "product intended to exert a physical, and not a physiological, effect on the human body", and that "the raw materials used as ingredients of cosmetic products are by law also cosmetics". The first line of organic cosmetic was launched towards the end of the 70's by Dr Hauschka. However, it is not until two decades later that major cosmetic brands adopted the organic concept and decided to create greener alternatives such as Beauté Bio by Nuxe and Agir Bio Cosmétiques by Carrefour. By 2011, the European market for organic cosmetics was growing by 20% every year (Cervellon et al., 2011). Green cosmetics have become a symbol of well-being and environmental responsibility in the cosmetics industry due to their long-term benefits on health and the protection of the environment (Jaini et al., 2019). In fact, using green cosmetics is now part of a lifestyle based on self-care and sustainability (Lin et al., 2018).

2.2.2 The green consumer profile

Krafft and Saito (2015) have identified three types of green consumers. The first type is the health-conscious consumer whose main objective is to purchase products for health benefits. The second one is the environmentalist, whose major concern is to protect the planet and finally the quality hunter, whose beliefs are that green cosmetics have superior benefits. McEachern and Mcclean (2002) define green cosmetics as a multifaceted construct for environmental protection, pollution reduction, responsible use of nonrenewable resources, animal welfare, and species preservation. Research has highlighted the fact that it is difficult to predict green behavior therefore we cannot define a specific green consumer profile but rather a diverse range of profiles (Cervellon et al., 2011; Gabler et al., 2013). In addition, Ajzen (1985) stated that if a person has a positive mindset when engaging in a particular activity, they will be more likely to do so. Indeed, as Peattie (2010) noted, although field research has revealed variations between countries and cultures, there are striking similarities in the growing environmental

values, concerns, and interest in green consumption. Various studies back the positive relationship between consumers' attitudes and green purchasing intentions in different cultures, such as Asian, American, and European. This relationship works in different product categories (Chan & Lau, 2001; Kalafatis et al., 1999; Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2005; Kim & Chung, 2011). According to Shah (2013), a green consumer is one who is aware of environmental concerns and responsibilities, a consumer who is committed to environmental causes to the point of switching from one product to another even if it comes at a higher cost. A green consumer is an individual who aims at purchasing eco-friendly products. Products that have minimal to no packaging, made from natural materials, and made without polluting the environment are all examples of eco-friendly products (Shah, 2013). Besides, cruelty free products attract green consumers as animal welfare is becoming a major motivator with the expansion of the vegan lifestyle. Finally, some research has also demonstrated that the typical green consumer is usually wealthier and more educated than the average consumer but there has been a democratization of green purchasing especially in Europe and North America (Cervellon et al., 2011).

Conscious consumerism is a trend being driven by consumers who make purchasing decisions based on their core values rather than "income, demographics, geography or other factors" (Godwin, 2009). Consumers' motivational attitudes are impacted by their level of ethical awareness. In fact, social motivators are more powerful than personal motivators in influencing ethical conduct (Freestone & McGoldrick, 2008; Bucic et al. 2012). Even though this trend is a growing movement, research has mentioned that consumers' biggest concerns are the elevated prices, product performance and a lack of choice (Cervellon et al., 2011). These barriers have created a gap between the intention to purchase and the actual purchase of green alternatives (Tsakiridou et al., 2008). A good example of this gap is the study by Cowe and Williams (2000) in which they found that in the United Kingdom, "more than one third of consumers described themselves as ethical purchasers, when ethically accredited products such as Fair-Trade lines only achieved a 1-3% share of their market". In this phenomenon, 30% of consumers claim to have a conscious consumption whereas only 3% of purchases are ethical. Cowe and Williams (2000) call it the "30:3 phenomenon" (Bray et al., 2010). Many researchers undertook studies to find why consumers with positive intentions about ethical consumption often fail to purchase in accordance with these values (Baek et al., 2015; Cherry & Caldwell, 2013; Kim et al., 2016; Yoon et al., 2016; Zollo et al. 2018). Behavior is influenced by far more than attitudes alone, even though it is one of the main influences. Attitudes, experiences, feelings, and social norms

have an impact on consumers' behaviors (Kelkar et al., 2014). This gap prevents companies from truly benefiting from greener strategies (Gabler et al., 2013). This conclusion can explain the reasons for companies to favor greenwashing over actual sustainable changes.

2.3 Greenwashing

2.3.1 Definition

Nowadays, consumers have to be aware that companies shifting to sustainable practices are not automatically sustainable. Before analyzing these practices, it is important to define what sustainability means. According to the Brundtland Report (1987), sustainable development is "a development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". In order to stay ahead in a highly competitive market where consumers demand more choice and ever greater effectiveness, businesses must develop innovative sustainable goods (Bom et al., 2019). Thus, to appear more sustainable, companies have started using greenwashing (Aji & Sutikno, 2015). As explained by Greenpeace, greenwashing is "the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service". It involves suggesting a better environmental performance than the actual environmental behavior justify De Jong et al. (2017). This practice goes back to the mid-1980s when consumers were receiving information about products through different communication channels such as television, radio and print news. At this time, access to information was limited and consumers had to trust those environmental claims (Riccolo, 2021). This practice can negatively affect the market causing consumers to be suspicious about green products and lose trust toward the organization's future claims (Kahraman & Kazançoğlu, 2019).

2.3.2 The different forms of greenwashing

Carlson et al. (1993) classified greenwashed advertisements in four different categories of environmental advertising claims. Commercials can use vague terms such as "natural", it can omit important information, use outright lies or even use a combination of these categories. These environmental claims can be oriented at the product, the process, the image,

or the environment. Research correlating the effectiveness of green advertising and green commitment, have found that environmentally committed consumers are more receptive to green advertising than other consumers (Kim & Shin, 2010; Kim et al. 2016).

TerraChoice (2010) classified the different claims into "sins" such as the "sin of hidden trade-off" (when only one or some of the behaviors are really green), the "sin of irrelevance" (when the green behaviors make no significant improvements), the "sin of lesser of two evils" (when the green behaviors merely reflect a comparison with truly bad previous behaviors), and the "sin of fibbing" which refers to lies. Regarding communicative features, TerraChoice mentioned the "sin of no proof" (when claims are unsubstantiated), the "sin of vagueness" (when claims cannot be verified), and the "sin of worshipping false labels" (when fake or questionable certification icons are used), (De Jong et al., 2017).

As shown by several studies, different environmental claims can be used by companies to improve their green image. Here is an empirical list of those claims: green, natural, organic, ecofriendly, sustainable (Kahraman & Kazançoğlu, 2019). We can also notice different levels of product "greeness" with terms such as biodegradable, biodynamic, and ecological. Many ethical questions have been raised regarding cosmetics such as, the protection of the environment, the use of chemical ingredients in production processes, and animal welfare. A rising number of cosmetics brands now use ethical claims in order to attract consumers with a moral and distinctive image of their brand and by promoting common characteristics between the consumers and the brand (Chun, 2014). Although the retailers using green marketing without giving specific explanations of how they minimize their impact on the environment are usually looked upon with skepticism. Jones (2019) examined greenwashing used in advertising and noticed that no matter how responsible a company is, it uses consumer empowerment narratives to influence them. In order to identify when a company uses greenwashing consumers need to know that less responsible companies use emphasizing philanthropy, scientific innovation, and recycling whereas more responsible companies tend to use emphasizing political action, third-party ecolabels, and longevity (Jones, 2019).

2.3.3 Lack of regulations

As organic cosmetics are considered a mega trend, companies play with the fact that some words have never been clearly defined and therefore can mean anything causing consumer confusion. As mentioned above, it is the case with the term "natural" which has been overused but has no clear meaning although it influences the consumer to think it is not processed and does not include chemicals (Cervellon et al., 2011). In 2014, Aggarwal and Kadyan stated that the average highest greenwashing sector is the personal care sector. Researchers have also mentioned the lack of regulations to explain the extent of greenwashing in cosmetics. An alarming fact is that out of 80,000 chemicals currently manufactured in products within the U.S., only a few hundred have been tested for safety. Many of these untested, or unstudied, chemicals can be found in cosmetics (Riccolo, 2021).

According to Delmas and Burbano (2011) due to the lack of punitive repercussions, differences in legislation across countries and complexity over effective jurisdiction of cross-country activities is a key driver of greenwashing. As a consequence, marketers widely use this deceiving practice with no fear of breaking present legislation. Therefore, there is little incentive for companies to stop using greenwashing, although when consumers feel deceived, they lose trust both towards the advertised product and the company (Newell et al., 1998). Besides, Lyon and Montgomery (2013) state that companies are less likely to greenwash now as they are facing more risks since social media makes it easier for consumers to verify environmental claims.

2.3.4 Origins and effects of greenwashing

There can be numerous reasons why companies would use greenwashing, Delmas and Burbano (2011) identified four main reasons for it. The first explanation may be the firm's character, particularly if competitors and consumers expect them to highlight their environmental performance. The second reason is an incentive structure and ethical climate. An incentive structure refers to a system rewarding managers for their performance often leading to unethical behaviors, and the ethical climate of a company is defined by organizational members' common expectations and values that certain ethical reasoning or actions are expected standards for decision making. These expectations and norms differ from companies

and are sometimes based on an egoistic ethical climate, leading to greenwashing. The third reason mentioned is organizational inertia in which the company presents itself as green before the requirements are met. The final driver is the lack of effectiveness of the business's internal communications. That is to say when there is a lack of coordination and communication between the different parts of a company limiting the development of a globalized environmental strategy. Delmas and Burbano (2011) also created a typology of environmental strategies based on two dimensions, the environmental claims and environmental performance of an organization. This classification is composed of four types of companies: silent brown organizations, silent green organizations, greenwashing organizations and vocal green organizations. "Silent brown" organizations have a poor environmental performance and no communication about it, "silent green" organizations do not communicate about their good environmental performance, "greenwashing" organizations combine bad environmental performance with positive communication about their environmental performance and "vocal green" organizations combine good environmental performance with positive communication about their environmental performance (Delmas & Burbano, 2011).

Greenwashing, according to Polonsky et al. (2010), introduces deceiving green claims to the market, lowering the appeal of genuine green goods. As a consequence, consumers could no longer trust all green product and the support from stakeholders, enterprises, customers and society for the green movement would decrease as well as the green consumption market share (Gillespie, 2008; NGuyen et al. 2019).

2.4 Consumer perception

2.4.1 Factors influencing intentions

A major limitation to the development of green consumerism is the lack of information and consumer trust (Cervellon et al., 2011). Kahraman and Kazançoğlu (2019) have identified eight main factors that influenced consumers purchasing intentions for green products: perceived greenwashing, perceived green image, price perception, environmental concern, green trust, skepticism, perceived risk and purchase intention. Perceived greenwashing is influenced by visual and verbal elements for example, Kahraman and Kazançoğlu (2019) demonstrated that "70% of the participants said that using green color as the dominant color in

the ads and package color convinces them to feel that products are natural". Perceived green image is influenced by the origin of the brand, for instance if a company has been producing green products, it appears as more reliable than other companies which started producing green products later. Consumer's experience with the brand also has an impact on a company's perceived green image. In addition, prices have a major effect on the purchasing decision as it is often perceived as a quality indicator. Kahraman and Kazançoğlu (2019) found that consumers expect natural products to be expensive because they are made with natural raw materials and made sustainably. Environmental concerns refer to consumers' attitudes towards environmental protection issues. Green trust is the willingness to rely on the product based on a conviction or assumption about its environmental performance. Skepticism regarding green claims can negatively affect purchasing intentions. To minimize skepticism, consumers research the products natural properties and labels. Consumer perceived risk is defined by Peter and Ryan (1976) as the perception that is connected with the possible consequences of a wrong decision. The notion of perceived risk has been further developed by Aji & Sutikno (2015) into five different risks: financial risk, social risk (traditions, peer group), psychological risk, performance risk and physical risk. Finally, regarding the purchase intention factor, De Jong et al. (2017) confirmed that greenwashing does not affect consumers purchase interests as a real commitment from organizations is necessary to have positive effects on consumers.

An interesting fact about perceived greenwashing is the effect labels have on consumers as a majority of them consider labels as an important criterion when choosing a green product. In fact, one out of two consumers declared they did not trust companies' environmentally friendly claims and needed an official third-party certification (Cervellon et al., 2011). Somehow, Europeans feel lost between the various labels (national, European, third-party certifications). For instance, the eco-label guarantees a production respectful of the environment, but it does not certify that the product is organic (Cervellon et al., 2011). There is a misconception on labels guarantee for example the Cosmébio label only requires 10% of the ingredients of the final product to be organic. Moreover, this research has found that participants have the same perception of products that were 75% or 99% organic. This is an interesting finding for manufacturers that might want to trade off costs-benefits of these additional 25% or so of organic ingredients (Cervellon et al., 2011).

2.4.2 Consumer attitudes

Consumer attitudes have also been analyzed by Lin et al. (2018) based on a tri-component model study which are the affective components, cognitive components, and conative components. The affective components are about emotional feelings. Most participants want to support green cosmetics for emotional reasons because they want to protect the environment and preserve themselves (Lin et al., 2018). However, they found out that consumers were less concerned about green cosmetics compared to traditional cosmetic brands because they focused on product performance rather than green elements (Lin et al., 2018). Cognitive components deal with consumer knowledge of the topic. Respondents with sufficient knowledge of green cosmetics had strong supportive behaviors toward green cosmetics (Lin et al., 2018). However, the major issue for the green cosmetics industry was that consumers lacked sufficient knowledge of the standards of green cosmetics such as the origin of the ingredients, the manufacturing process or the environmental impact (Lin et al., 2018). Lastly, conative components refer to behavioral tendencies.

Lin et al. (2018) found three major factors influencing the formation of attitudes. The first category is knowledge about green cosmetics, the second one is lifestyle and the third one is mass media and family or friends' recommendations. Regarding the lifestyle category, consumers generally favor comfort and quality rather than caring about minimizing their impact on the environment and society (Bamberg, 2003; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Sharma & Joshi, 2017) as well as personal experience. Finally, as Kim and Chung (2011) have said, a consumer's previous experience with organic products significantly impact the purchase intention for organic personal care products.

2.4.3 Obstacles to green consumption

Gabler et al. (2013) present in their study two barriers limiting the consumer's incentives to purchase green products. The first one concerns the lack of green subjective norms, where consumers do not feel social pressure to act green and the second barrier refers to a low perceived behavioral control among individuals that creates a feeling that personal actions are not enough to make a difference and contribute to the larger issue. Other barriers can limit the purchase of green products. For example, consumers' perceptions of a green product can build

barriers as green products are often perceived to be too expensive, they require knowledge and effort to search for information and they can also be difficult to obtain (Tan et al., 2016). When the consumers fail to establish a correct understanding of a product's or service's environmental features during the information-processing process (Turnbull et al., 2000), it is a phenomenon called consumer confusion. Consumers' lack of knowledge or ability to check the environmental and consumer values of green products leads to misperceptions and skepticism which are common (Ottman et al., 2006; Aji & Sutikno, 2015). These feelings cause the consumer to develop negative perceptions about the product's environmental aspects (Turnbull et al., 2000).

Three distinctive types of green consumer confusion can be distinguished. First of all, there is unclarity confusion which is defined as a lack of understanding. This type of confusion may be caused by technological complexity or conflicting information for instance. Similarity confusion is the incorrect brand evaluation caused by the perceived physical similarity of products. Finally, overload confusion is caused by too much information regarding the choice of brands. With such a vast quantity of information available, it may be difficult for consumers to focus on the vital points, thus causing confusion (Mitchell et al., 2005). Even if greenwashing has a negative effect on consumers' perception of an organization's integrity, De Jong et al. (2017) found that consumers still have a better opinion of companies using greenwashing than companies which do not consider the environmental aspect at all.

If consumers no longer trust environmental claims and labels used by companies, this could unconsciously lead to disinterest toward green communication and restrict the development of environmentally friendly products (Do Paço & Reis, 2012). It is also important to note that, highly skeptical consumers are not as easily convinced by advertising (Anuar et al., 2013; Aji & Sutikno, 2015).

III. Research Methods

The following section focuses on the method the authors selected to conduct their research. The first segment introduces the research paradigm, the research approach as well as the research design. The next segment details the sampling method used to collect data. All the information about data, such as data type, data collection and data analysis is defined in the following segment. Finally, the last part of the methodology refers to the ethical implications.

3.1 Research paradigm

Research is based on a philosophy or a paradigm. According to Saunders et al., (2007), a research philosophy is defined as the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge. The research philosophy chosen gives assumptions about the way we view the world and establishes the methodology and research strategy that will be used (Saunders et al., 2007). The most common research philosophies are positivism, rationalism, realism, pragmatism, hermeneutics and interpretivism. This thesis follows the interpretivism paradigm. This paradigm involves an inductive process with a view to providing interpretive understanding of social phenomena within a particular context (Collis & Hussey 2013). The findings are derived from qualitative methods of analysis based on the interpretation of qualitative research data (Collis & Hussey 2013). Interpretivist research philosophy states that the social world can be interpreted in a subjective manner (Žukauskas et al., 2018). It suggests that every person sees the world in different ways and in different contexts. As a result, their attitudes and behaviors are unpredictable (Khan, 2014). This study aims at interpreting and understanding consumer's purchasing behaviors in a subjective manner through qualitative research.

3.2 Research approach

The two most common research approaches are quantitative and qualitative study. Since this study follows an interpretivist research philosophy, a qualitative approach is used. This approach involves collecting qualitative data and analyzing the new data using interpretative methods (Collis & Hussey 2013). It is more clearly defined by Cresswell (2005) as a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the view of participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data from participants primarily in the form of terms, explains and analyzes these words for themes, and conducts the investigation in a subjective and biased manner. A qualitative study is a meticulous research that aims at answering the questions the study has raised. In a qualitative research, the literature review supports the purpose of the study and helps identify the underlying problems (Soiferman, 2010). In this case, the frame of reference does not usually guide the research questions as it would in quantitative research (Soiferman, 2010). This is done to ensure that the literature does not limit the information the researcher will learn from the interviewees (Creswell et al., 2007). Moreover, the research is based on the consumer's perspective of the phenomenon where the focus is on their intentions and purchasing behaviors rather than from an organization's point of view.

3.3 Research design

In accordance with the interpretivism paradigm and the qualitative approach, this research follows an inductive grounded theory approach. In the inductive approach, theory follows data whereas in the deductive approach, data follows theory. In fact, an inductive logic aims at understanding the way humans interpret their social world whereas a deductive logic aims at making causal relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2007). Qualitative analysis is also referred to as inductive thought or induction reasoning because it moves from direct findings about a particular individual to broader generalizations and theories (Soiferman, 2010). This approach is also recommended when there is not enough literature about the phenomenon or if this knowledge is fragmented (Lauri & Kyngäs, 2005). The inductive approach works by making basic observations and measurements, and then goes on to finding themes and trends in the data. Eventually, this data will allow researchers to identify concepts to further explore and the results of the exploration may later lead to theories (Creswell, 2005). The main goal of the inductive approach is to build theories whereas the deductive approach's aim is to test theories that have been presented in the literature.

Grounded theory is defined as the theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This theory focuses on data collection and analysis. As a method of analysis, grounded theory establishes an interpretation or a hypothesis around the central themes that emerges from the data. This approach focuses mostly on people's behavior such as consumer's for instance. A grounded theory strategy is applied to identify a variety of business and management issues (Saunders et al., 2007). Data collection in grounded theory begins without the development of an initial theoretical framework, the theory is then constructed on the basis of data collected by a series of observations (Saunders et al., 2007). This data is used to generate predictions, which are then evaluated in additional experiments to validate or refute the predictions (Saunders et al., 2007).

In addition to an inductive approach, conducting exploratory research is the research design best suited for the study as it aims at developing ideas and patterns about a phenomenon rather than testing a theory already existing. The purpose is to explore a phenomenon that has limited information and research available on the subject area and achieve new insight into this phenomenon for future research. Furthermore, Denscombe (2010) states that qualitative research, exploratory research as well as studies of human interaction and small-scale research are well suited types of research for a grounded theory approach.

3.4 Sampling method

A sample is a subgroup chosen to represent the population studied. As we are doing qualitative research and using the interpretivism paradigm, we will not use a representative sample but rather an exploratory sample. A representative sample enables researchers to generalize their findings to the population (Omona, 2013). Indeed, when doing research under an interpretivism paradigm, the goals is not to make generalizations from the sample's results therefore choosing the random sampling method is not needed (Collis & Hussey, 2013).

Exploratory samples are used in small-scale research which is typically qualitative research. As stated by Denscombe (2010), an exploratory sample is based primarily on the need to gather new insight and discover new ideas or theories. In an exploratory sample, the explorer studies the topic in depth and tries to gather more details than in a representative sample, which is one

of the reasons why exploratory samples are small-scale samples (Collis & Hussey, 2013). The other reason why small-scale samples are used in this type of research, is that an exploratory sample does not focus on having enough participants to allow generalizations but rather on collecting enough information (Omona, 2013). There are numerous non-random sampling methods that can be used in qualitative research such as the snowball sampling, the theoretical sampling, the maximum variation sampling, the homogenous sampling, the purposive sampling, the quota sampling, and the convenience sampling (Omona, 2013).

For the purpose of this study, a heterogeneous sampling (also called maximum variation sampling) was used. In the heterogeneous sampling method, a wide range of individuals, groups, or settings is purposely selected and allows for multiple perspectives of individuals to be presented that exemplify the complexity of the world (Creswell, 2002). In fact, for the purpose of this cross-cultural research, interviewees were selected to represent a various number of countries and continents. Depending on the country, research revealed diverse consumer attitudes and consumers perceptions (Busic et al., 2012; Auger et al. 2008; Srnka, 2004; Vitell, 2003; Vitell et al. 2001). Differences in ethical perception were noticed depending on the consumer's culture. Moreover, interviewees were selected to represent both genders, female and male. The heterogeneous sampling was combined with a convenience sampling and a snowball sampling to some extent. In fact, convenience sampling was used as the interviewees were also selected for their availability and willingness to participate in the research at the time it was being conducted (Omona, 2013). In addition to the convenience sampling, a snowball sampling was used in the middle of the data collection in order to have people from countries that were not part of the sample yet. Indeed, the snowball sampling (also known as a network sampling) involves asking participants who have already been selected for the study to recruit other participants (Omona, 2013).

3.5 Data type & form

The type of data collected and used in this study to answer the research questions is primary data. It was collected in the form of qualitative data as it is a qualitative research. Hox and Boeije (2005) define primary data as data collected for the specific research problem at hand, using procedures that best fit the research problem. In fact, the data was collected by the

authors themselves, they did not use already existing data to answer the research questions. The data collected is qualitative data, which means non-numerical data that describes through text, audio or visual material, the characteristics of a subject. Qualitative data has the capacity to capture temporally evolving phenomena in rich detail (Langley & Abdallah, 2011). Qualitative data can be a printed material such as texts, figures, diagrams, images, but it can also be an audio or visual material such as recordings of interviews, focus groups and videos (Collis & Hussey, 2013). Thus, in this study, primary data was collected through in-depth interviews and later analyzed by the authors to develop a theory.

3.6 Data collection tools and process

Creswell et al. (2007) have identified four techniques of qualitative data collection which can be used by researchers. These techniques are field work, observation, interviews (including group interviews and focus groups), and document analysis. The authors have decided to conduct interviews to build a theory. Scholars have classified interviews in three main categories, unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews which are usually needed for quantitative research (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). For qualitative research data collection especially in a grounded theory approach, the most common interviewing format is semi-structured in-depth interviews (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Moreover, interviews are often the only data source for qualitative research and are usually scheduled in advance at a designated time and location (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). These types of interviews either occur individually or in groups, in this particular case, interviews were conducted one person at a time based on a collection of predetermined open-ended questions, with additional questions arising from the interviewer-interviewee conversation (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). In fact, interviewers should be prepared to depart from the planned itinerary during the interview because digressions can be very productive as they follow the interviewee's interest and knowledge (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

The authors conducted cross-cultural research since Gabler et al. (2013) suggested expanding the research to multiple nationalities. The sample includes nineteen individuals from Egypt, Sweden, France, Spain, Senegal, Latvia, Mexico, England, China, Vietnam, Jordan, Gambia, the United Arabic Emirates, and the USA. Qualitative research highlights interpretation and

flexibility and this approach is necessary for cross-cultural research because the focus of such research is on meanings and interpretations people give to their behaviors (Liamputtong, 2010). Tillman (2002) defines culture as the 'individual and collective ways of thinking, believing, and knowing' of a group. According to Liamputtong (2010), this culture may include the 'shared experiences, consciousness, skills, values, forms of expression, social institutions, and behaviors' of the group. When research is taken from a culturally sensitive perspective, the researchers acknowledge 'the complexity of an ethnic group's culture, as well as its varied historical and contemporary representations' (Liamputtong, 2010).

The data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interviewees were selected through heterogeneous, convenience and snowballing sampling methods. The purpose was to select people from as many countries as possible in a short period of time. Indeed, the interviews were scheduled by the end of March 2021 and were conducted during the first two weeks of April 2021. Individuals were interviewed through Zoom meetings, phone calls or in person. In the context of Covid 19, social distancing was respected during the interviews.

The interviews were conducted in English for the most part and a few in French as both authors are French, and it was the mother tongue of some of the interviewees. They were asked about their general purchasing habits, their purchasing behaviors and beliefs regarding the cosmetics industry and their perception of greenwashing in this specific market. Open-ended questions were asked to encourage the participants to talk as much as possible and to understand their perception of the different subjects discussed. The interviews were recorded and transcribed into verbatims. The interviews lasted from 20 minutes to 63 minutes.

The Table 2 presents general information about the interviewees such as their gender, their age, their activity, and the length of their interview and since the thesis focuses on conducting a cross-cultural study, the table also presents the participants' country of origin.

Interviewee number	Age	Gender	Country of origin	Occupation	Duration of the interview (min)
Interviewee 1	52	Female	France	Secretary	50
Interviewee 2	25	Male	France	Social worker	63
Interviewee 3	22	Male	France	Student	38
Interviewee 4	19	Female	Latvia	Student	48
Interviewee 5	20	Female	Spain	Student	26
Interviewee 6	26	Male	Sweden	Student	33
Interviewee 7	20	Female	Sweden	Student	46
Interviewee 8	23	Female	United Kingdom	Student	37
Interviewee 9	20	Female	Egypt, Gambia, United Arab Emirates	Student	23
Interviewee 10	17	Female	Egypt	Student	23
Interviewee 11	18	Male	Jordan	Student	30
Interviewee 12	21	Female	Senegal	Student	28
Interviewee 13	50	Female	Senegal	Pharmacist	30
Interviewee 14	22	Male	Mexico	Entrepreneur	36
Interviewee 15	22	Female	Mexico	Student	45
Interviewee 16	22	Female	USA	Student/Nonprofit community coordinator	24
Interviewee 17	23	Male	USA	Musician	24
Interviewee 18	23	Male	China	Student	31
Interviewee 19	20	Female	Vietnam	Student	20

Table 2: Data Breakdown

3.7 Data analysis

In order to analyze the data collected during the nineteen interviews, the authors proceeded to their transcriptions and to the coding of these transcriptions. The Gioia method was chosen to code the interviews as it is usually used for a grounded-theory-based interpretive research (Gehman et al., 2018; Nag et al., 2007; Gioia et al., 2013). This coding method is composed of three main steps. The first step is called the "first-order" analysis, it consists of coding the words, phrases, terms, and labels used by the interviewees and identifying concepts that emerge during the different interviews (Nag et al., 2007). During the identification of concepts, it is important to look for similarities and differences among the interviews (Gehman et al., 2018; Nag et al., 2007; Gioia et al., 2013).

Following first-order analysis in which concepts are identified and labeled, authors proceed with the second-order analysis. This step consists in identifying categories which is done by looking for distinct conceptual patterns among the first-order codes (Nag et al., 2007). Finally, second-order categories are being assembled into themes enabling the creation of a theoretical framework (Nag et al., 2007). It forms the basis for building a theory (Gioia et al., 2013).

3.8 Ensuring trustworthiness and consistency

In inductive qualitative studies, trustworthiness and consistency are the two concepts ensuring the quality and credibility of the study. The four criteria ensuring the accuracy of qualitative findings are dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981).

Dependability refers to the concept of reliability and the stability of findings over time, whether the results would be the same if the same study was replicated with similar participants in a similar context or not (Bitsch, 2005). The different methods to ensure dependability in a study are: using overlap methods, using stepwise replication and leaving audit trail (Guba, 1981). Detailed and comprehensive documentation of the research process and methodological decisions ensure the dependability of research findings. Dependability was implemented in the

study by making sure to leave an audit trail. An audit trail offers the possibility for an external auditor to examine how data was collected and analyzed (Guba, 1981). The audit trail for this study is composed of the notes taken prior and after the interviews in addition to the recordings of the interviews.

Credibility, also called internal validity, refers to the equivalence of research results with the objective reality. It is demonstrated by the correspondence of the participants' perspective with the description of their perspectives by the researcher (Bitsch, 2005). The different methods to ensure credibility are to use prolonged engagement, use persistent observation, use peer debriefing, triangulation, collect referential adequacy materials and to do member checks (Guba, 1981). Credibility was provided in this study by using persistent observation. Persistent observation consists of conducting an in-depth study to gather enough detail and identifying the most relevant characteristics of the situation or problem studied. The persistent observation has been done in the study through in-depth interviews with different consumers.

Transferability, also called external validity, refers to the degree to which the results can be applied to a context apart from where they were gained or regarding other subjects (Bitsch, 2005). The methods outlined for transferability are to collect thick descriptive data and use a theoretical or purposive sampling (Guba, 1981). The authors established transferability during the study by providing thick descriptions, that is to say detailed descriptions of the context in which the data was collected. As explained by Collis & Hussey (2013), when working with qualitative data, the contextualization is very important to provide some background information. Moreover, the authors used a heterogeneous sampling method therefore participants were selected purposely to contribute to the research question.

Confirmability refers to objectivity, it considers the issue of bias and prejudices of the researcher. Individuals and contexts should be the focus of data, interpretation, and findings and not the researchers (Bitsch, 2005). The methods for confirmability are triangulation and reflexivity (Guba, 1981). Confirmability is ensured in the qualitative research through the authors' research process and more importantly thanks to an audit trail which documents the research process and where data was collected. The audit trail helped the authors practice reflexivity.

3.9 Ethical consideration

Ethical considerations were adopted during the collection of data. Prior to the interview meeting, a GDPR consent form (Appendix 1) was sent to the interviewee in order to present the purpose of the interview, explain how data will be collected and used, and to make sure that the interviewee agreed with the process. The GDPR consent form also informed the interviewee of the possibility to remove itself from the research at any point. Once the consent form was signed and collected by the authors, they were able to proceed to the interview. At the beginning of each interview, the interviewees were reminded that they were being recorded and asked if they had any questions concerning the interview process or the research in general.

IV. Empirical findings

This section presents the results and themes identified during the coding of the interviews. Using the grounded theory approach in addition to the Gioia coding method, four main themes which align with the two research questions were identified.

The first theme that emerged following the coding of the interviews (e.g., Figure 1) outlines the importance of social influences, the second theme highlights the importance of quality and product performance in the cosmetics industry, the third theme discusses the different barriers when it comes to sustainable consumption and the last theme examines the impact of marketing.
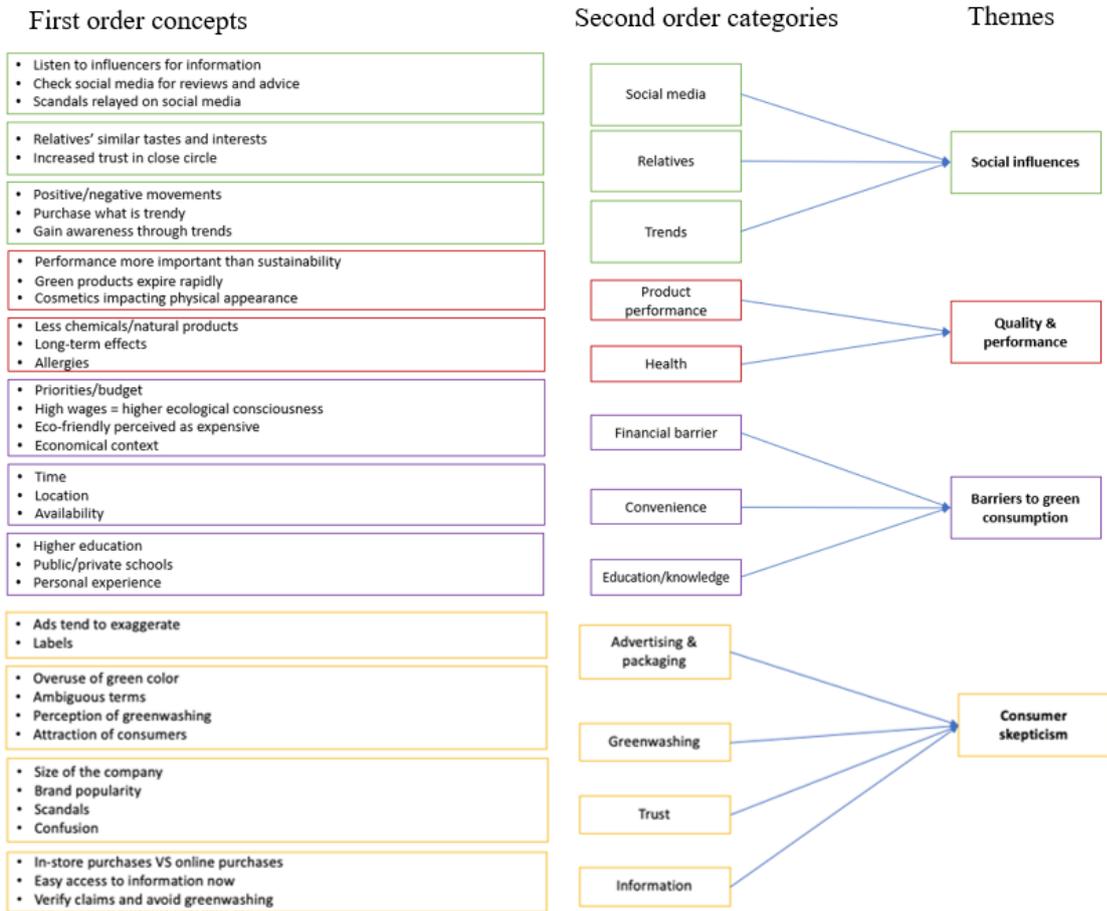

Figure 1: Data analysis outcome

4.1 Social influences

Relatives as well as social media have been perceived as the main source of influence when buying personal care products. These influences initiate change in a general direction which is what we call trends. The importance of trends came back as a recurrent pattern when it comes to changing individuals' habits of consumption as well as their purchasing intentions in the cosmetics industry. Consequently, the social influences theme regroups three categories: social media, relatives, and trends. In addition to social media, the people surrounding us shape our beliefs which has a strong impact on consumers' purchasing habits. Depending on the source of influence, it can have a positive as well as a negative impact on purchasing behaviors.

4.1.1 Social media

Interviewees mentioned social media such as YouTube, Tik Tok and Instagram as major influences when it comes to purchasing beauty products. In addition to presenting new products and their features, social media play a role in displaying information about companies whether it is about a company's shift to be more sustainable or its involvement in unethical practices.

Interviewee 8 from the UK: *"Social media has a massive effect on a brand's reputation because for the American brand Glossier, I have seen a lot of things on social media saying that the CEO and the owners were racist and didn't support people of color. After seeing all of that, I decided not to support this brand anymore. Same thing happened to Victoria Secret, the CEO didn't support plus size models or transgender models and now everybody doesn't feel the same way towards Victoria's Secret as before."*

4.1.2 Relatives

Interviewees tended to believe that their relatives still had more power to convince them to buy a product than social media. They justify it as they trust their relatives to want the best for them and as no money is involved.

Interviewee 4 from Latvia: "*I don't really listen to influencers because they are not that truthful, we never know if they are telling the truth.*".

Interviewee 13 from Senegal: *"The biggest influence for me when it comes to cosmetics is my family, especially my sister and daughter. I don't use social media that much, so I usually follow their advice and discover new products thanks to them"*.

4.1.3 Trends

In addition to influences from social media and relatives, social trends appear to play an important role in influencing purchasing behaviors. Trends are social influences as they introduce the consumer to new ways of consumption, and they normalize new concepts. Trends turn certain ideas into appealing lifestyles. In fact, movements such as Greta Thunberg raising awareness on global warming had an impact on people's mindset whether it is positive or negative.

On the one hand, interviewee 16 from the USA stated that: *"Greta Thunberg is a huge influence, once I started watching her videos a few years ago and hearing what she had to say I thought she was a really awesome positive influence"*.

On the other hand, interviewee 6 from Sweden did not perceive the impact of this movement as very positive: "*Constantly hearing about it in a negative way makes people tired of listening and annoyed". A few years ago it was fresh and new but now they need to reinvent that trend in a more positive way"*.

Interviewee 14 from Mexico discussed how cultural trends impact consumer consciousness: *"In Latin America, trends are always late and always come after the USA and Europe. It is one of the reasons why only few people have adopted conscious consumerism in Mexico, it is not a big trend yet"*.

Interviewee 11 from Jordan confirmed the critical role of trends in the Middle East, also mentioned by the interviewee 9 who used to live in the United Arab Emirates: *"In the Middle East people seem to be more likely to buy what is trendy and famous"*.

4.2 Quality and product performance

Following the interviews, the quality of a product was one of the most significant influence on purchasing intentions. This research also highlighted consumers' health concerns.

4.2.1 Product Performance

Quality was mentioned as one of the main criteria when it comes to purchasing cosmetics. A good quality product meant for the interviewees a product that delivered a satisfying performance, and this factor was usually perceived as a more important concern than sustainability.

Interviewee 12 from Senegal: "*I am suspicious of green products' performance [...] and I think it's the reason why a lot of people are not willing to buy green cosmetics"*.

Interviewee 6 from Sweden: *"I go for greener products, but they expire quicker than regular alternatives"*.

On the other hand, green products were reassuring as some participants assumed it had less chemicals in them.

Interviewee 17 from the USA: *"If it can say organically made or plant-based on the bottle, I definitely have more of an influence to buy that because I know then it's a little more natural, I definitely don't want harsh chemicals on me"*.

4.2.2 Health

Health is a critical criterion when choosing cosmetics. Cosmetics are products in direct contact with skin or hair, therefore, finding products with less chemicals and more natural ingredients was considered highly important for consumers. Interviewees thought that a high-quality product is one that does not contain any potentially dangerous ingredients.

Interviewee 19 from Vietnam: *"With cosmetics it is different because it is directly used on my skin, luckily I am not a person with allergies but I am careful with the ingredients".*

Interviewee 6 from Sweden: *"I am worried about chemicals and long-term effects they can have on your health".*

4.3 Barriers to green consumption

Three main barriers were identified as obstacles towards a greener consumption: the financial barrier, education and convenience.

4.3.1 Financial barrier

Price turned out to be the second most important criteria to purchase cosmetics after quality. It is also perceived as the biggest barrier when it comes to conscious consumption, as eco-friendly alternatives were considered expensive.

Interviewee 14 from Mexico: *"Being sustainable is a privilege, everyone can't be sustainable because of the price. The normal wage of people in Mexico is very low. When you don't have money problems, you find other problems like the problem of sustainability; but when you have your problems of your own you don't think of the problem of the planet".*

Interviewee 5 from Spain also said: *"We [Spanish population] are aware we should change but there's the economic problem. Everything is very expensive in big cities, there's a difficulty to afford certain products"*.

Although according to participants budget is a barrier for consumers, financial resources are also a major concern for companies. Depending on the country, companies have different strategies and priorities. A participant from Sweden discussed the fact that investors are not necessarily ethical, and he outlined scandals that tarnished green brands' image.

Interviewee 6 from Sweden: *"Despite marketing your products as very environmentally-friendly you still go where the money is, if someone wants to invest in your company and they're not completely green you let them"*.

Interviewee 18 from China stated that the focus seemed to be on price instead of sustainability in his country: *"They don't really care about green, it is more about the selling price because in China, there is mass production so if a brand wants to compete among thousands of other brands they have to be cheap and control the costs, so they don't have the energy to care about if it is green or not"*.

According to interviewee 12, in Senegal people do not necessarily have the resources to buy green products therefore companies do not even try to become greener.

Interviewee 12 from Senegal: *"People talk about being more sustainable, but they know green products are more expensive and people don't necessarily have the means to buy these alternatives therefore companies do not really want to invest in green products"*.

4.3.2 Education

Education was a recurring topic during the interviews and was mentioned as another main factor that can guide consumers to buy greener alternatives or prevent them to do so. Many participants were aware of sustainability and the importance of consumers' attitude mostly

thanks to college and their personal experiences. Besides, the socioeconomic context in which a person grew up, including access to education, seems to impact the consumer's awareness and knowledge regarding sustainability.

Interviewee 10 from Egypt: *"People are not educated enough, and some people do not believe in climate change. They do not know what is happening around the world. In Egypt people don't learn about sustainability in public schools".*

This difference between public and private schools is confirmed by interviewee 9 from the United Arab Emirates: "*In private schools in Abu Dhabi, there is a much more international vision and students are also free to choose the subjects they want to learn about; therefore people are more aware about sustainability than in public schools".*

4.3.3 Convenience barrier

Convenience was often mentioned as a barrier that was holding back consumers from reaching their ideal way of consumption.

Interviewee 14 from Mexico: *"Some products are really difficult to make sustainable like deodorant spray or hair spray. They were not designed to be sustainable".*

As part of the convenience barrier, location was mentioned several times as a barrier to a more sustainable lifestyle. To buy different green products the best option is to go to a specialized green store although those are not as easily accessible as regular stores and supermarkets.

Interviewee 14 from Mexico: *"There are a few places where you can find green cosmetics [...] you have to go to green markets or green shops to find these products".*

Interviewee 5 from Spain: "*In Spain there are not really that many stores that are green".*

Time was often mentioned as a reason why people do not consistently buy green products. Whether it was the time required to look for information about the product to then do the research to understand this information such as the ingredients in beauty products or whether it was the time to go to a different store to find a more sustainable alternative.

Interviewee 16 from the USA: *"If I need something and it's a priority of mine and I can't get in a green way right away then I'll just get it and I'm not going to try and make my purchase sustainable"*.

Besides as interviewees 14 from Mexico and 3 from France declared, in order to save time, people often go for the products they already know and the ones they are satisfied with.

Interviewee 14 from Mexico: *"I know that the product works for me so I buy it again"*.

Interviewee 3 from France: *"People don't think about it too much. They are in front of a product they have been using for years so they think why bother looking for other products when this one works fine for me"*.

4.4 Consumer skepticism

The last theme is composed of four categories: advertising and packaging, greenwashing, consumer trust and search for information. This theme explains consumers' perception of marketing and its impact on behaviors. The first category talks about consumers perception of advertising and packaging while the second category focuses on green marketing and more precisely greenwashing. The third one demonstrates the impact their perception of marketing has on their trust which leads to the fourth category describing a common behavior, the search for information.

4.4.1 Advertising and Packaging

Marketing turned out to be a minimal influence when it came to purchasing green cosmetics. A nice packaging could convince participants to purchase a product, but an advertisement did not seem to have as much impact on them. Consumers tended to be aware that advertisements exaggerate and can even be deceiving, therefore an advertisement would not lead to an immediate purchase.

Interviewee 8 from the United Kingdom: *"If I can visibly see on a YouTube video that it's made a difference to their skin then I'd be more convinced instead of just an advert on the TV because you know that there is Photoshop happening"*.

Even though participants had mixed feelings about the presence of labels on packaging, they were more inclined to trust them and thought it was an easy way to know if the company was genuinely taking actions to be more sustainable.

Interviewee 12 from Senegal: *"I look at the labels because I think they're easy to understand and pretty "fun" to read"*.

On the other hand, organizations need to pay to be certified and be able to show labels on their packaging which led a few participants to be skeptical and believe that if companies are willing to pay enough money they will eventually get the labels.

Interviewee 7 from Sweden: *"There is a whole discussion about labels because a lot of them are just here for money."*.

Overall interviewees were very concerned about the ethical part of marketing and even the presence of labels and green claims is not enough to convince consumers of the genuine intentions of green brands.

Interviewee 4 from Latvia: *I don't know if the company is green or not because even the labels sometimes say that it is green, but I know that it is not always as green as they say.*

4.4.2 Greenwashing

Greenwashing is a familiar concept among the interviewees, however, even if they are aware that companies can use deceiving claims to attract consumers to purchase green products, the clear term to define this concept is not as popular.

Interviewee 16 for the USA: *"No, I've never heard of greenwashing […] The thought that companies are probably claiming to be green for marketing purposes has definitely crossed my mind, I am aware of greenwashing in the food industry but not in cosmetics."*

Interviewee 19 from Vietnam is more aware of the tendency companies have of exaggerating claims when marketing green products: "*Most advertising exaggerates the truth. It is not a total lie but it is exaggerated. For some green products, they do it even more because they want to get the attention of people who are not used to using this kind of product, they need more attraction".*

Besides interviewee 14 from Mexico is aware that some companies try to attract people by using the green color: *"They just use the green color. Since everyone is doing that, I have lost sensitivity to green ads and packaging. But when they actually explain what they are doing and what specifically makes it eco-friendly it attracts my attention and makes it more genuine".*

Green marketing has caused confusion for the consumers. Many participants told us how they find the wording on the packaging, or on advertisements, very ambiguous and confusing.

Interviewee 12 from Senegal: *"I think companies play with words and therefore make you believe that a product is greener than it actually is".*

Interviewee 1 from France: *"Green can mean a lot of different things. Just like "organic" for instance. Organic in France doesn't have the same meaning as organic in Spain or organic in Morocco or the United States".*

4.4.3 Consumer trust

Interviewees talked about being more suspicious depending on the size of a company or the popularity of a brand although they had different opinions on the matter. For instance, a few participants mentioned they are more aware of greenwashing when it comes to small businesses.

Interviewee 19 from Vietnam: *"I am a lot more careful with new brands and do a lot more research to see if they are actually green or not".*

Others thought greenwashing was a marketing practice that was more likely to be used by well-known brands.

Interviewee 8 from the United Kingdom: *"I'd probably not trust and believe big companies like L'Oréal and be more skeptical about what big companies say".*

Scandals make people realize the existence of greenwashing which then increases their skepticism. Interviewee 6 from Sweden said: *"My trust for companies and brands claiming they are sustainable is quite low because usually when you research them, it turns out that that is not the case. The only company that I know of which is quite green all the way through is Patagonia".*

One of the main problems is that the increasing skepticism due to greenwashing seems to negatively affects genuinely green companies.

Interviewee 15 from Mexico affirmed: *"As a consequence, the brands who genuinely want to have a positive impact are perceived the same as the other brands and consumers are confused and cannot identify which brand is actually good."*

If a company built its business on sustainable values or if they did a real shift in their business model to become sustainable, the consumers would be more trusting of their eco-friendly claims and be less skeptical. Indeed, the storytelling of a company is considered as a green evidence for some participants as well as transparency.

Interviewee 13 from Senegal: *"They need to provide evidence to back up the green claims, if not they are probably just doing it for marketing purposes. If it is a huge product launch and they're telling the story of how they're making a difference and how they're going green compared to what they were used to then I'll believe it more"*.

Interviewee 7 from Sweden: *"The most important thing is for companies to be transparent regarding what they do for the planet and their packaging because that will pressure the big companies to do the same and lessen the skepticism of consumers"*.

4.4.4 Information

Interviewees have mentioned that researching information was now part of their buying process. They highlighted the importance of verifying claims to find companies that align with their values and to avoid greenwashing.

Interviewee 11 from Jordan: *"I don't think it really matters what they say because if they say that it is sustainable, I am going to take it in my own hands to go and find out how sustainable it really is and then I will be convinced. No matter what part of sustainability they claim (organic, cruelty free, vegan) is good. As long as they throw one factor regarding sustainability, I can do my own research"*.

Moreover, they pointed out that nowadays, information is available within reach which gives consumers much more power than they used to have.

Interviewee 1 from France discussed the evolution of the consumer's role: *"Our network is much larger today, with the Internet a consumer's opinion has much more impact on the*

company, it only takes one slightly influential customer who leaves a bad comment to dissuade many others".

Participants declared that they will not research information while at the store unless they have a quick app that can analyze the product, therefore they either did their research before they went shopping or did not do research at all.

Also, as explained by interviewee 7 from Sweden: "*Now it is easy to do some research about a brand or a product [...]in store it is easier to get greenwashed than on the Internet. In store it is a more compulsive purchase and sometimes you just think the packaging is cute and choose the product. When buying online, it is easier to do research as you are already online. You are thinking more about the environment online".*

V. Analysis

This section examines the empirical results in light of current literature in order to answer the study's research questions. The different interviews followed by a thorough analysis have allowed the authors to identify some patterns and create a framework.

Section 5.1 aims at answering the first research question, Q1: What factors influence consumers' purchasing intentions in the cosmetic industry?

Section 5.2 to 5.4 aim at answering the second research question, Q2: How has greenwashing in the cosmetics industry changed consumers' purchasing behaviors?
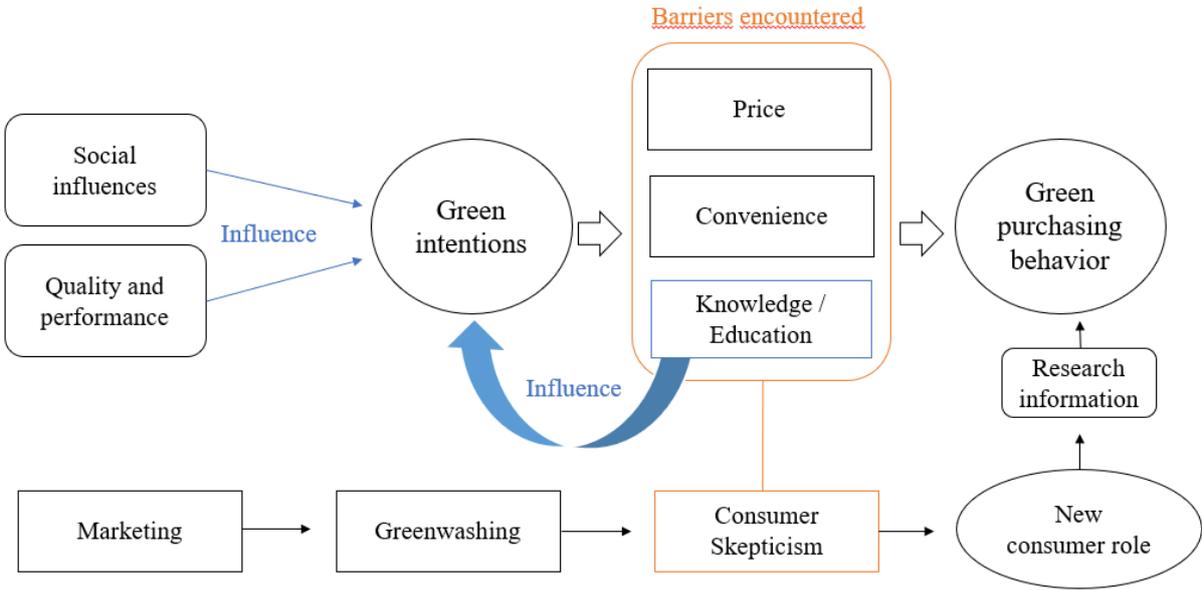

Figure 2: Influences on consumers' purchasing intentions and the impact of greenwashing on consumers' purchasing behaviors

Figure 2 represents the framework built to answer the research questions based on the patterns and themes identified in the findings. First of all, consumers' intentions are highly impacted by social influences coming from their close circle, social media and cultural trends as well as their education. Although conscious consumerism has impacted consumers' purchasing intentions,

a few barriers have been identified creating a gap between green intentions and green purchasing behaviors. The limitations encountered are financial concerns, convenience and lack of knowledge. Moreover, greenwashing has highly impacted consumers creating confusion and skepticism. This skepticism has led to a new consumer role which requires more implication as part of the purchasing process. Consumers have more power today, but they also have a bigger responsibility if they want to purchase cosmetics aligned with their values. The main addition to the purchasing process is the search for information about the company and products prior to the purchase.

5.1 Consumers purchasing intentions

Consumers' intentions in the cosmetics industry are influenced by many elements. Although three major factors that had a direct impact on consumers intentions were identified, some had more power over consumers than others. The three factors are social influences, quality, and knowledge. In fact, the study highlights the fact that our social influences forge our purchasing intentions which is also true when it comes to shaping ethical behavior. Lin et al. (2018) explain how positive attitudes and desire to buy are influenced by word-of-mouth especially if it is recommended by friends and family. Consequently, social motivators have in fact more influence than personal motivators (Freestone & McGoldrick, 2008; Bucic et al. 2012). Social influences not only comprise the people that surround us but also social media and general trends. In other words, one's environment has a major impact on its level of environmental consciousness. Accordingly, whether consumers decide to purchase green beauty products or not is mostly a consequence of their surroundings.

The authors also noticed that despite consumers' intentions to turn to green consumption, their priorities did not necessarily align with conscious consumerism. When consumers turn to a greener consumption, it does not always impact all product categories. Some prioritize food as they believe that it is a priority to care about what they ingest. Others prioritize clothes because of personal interests or cosmetics as it is in direct contact with the skin. Therefore, some interviewees were very concerned with purchasing organic food but were not as concerned about buying organic cosmetics.

Social media has become a major source of influence and is also used by consumers to influence others. Moreover, it can be a source of inspiration for consumers looking for new beauty routines and better personal care products. With the increased power of consumers comes greater responsibilities. Consumers can affect ethical dilemmas by changing their purchasing habits due to their increased power (Gillani & Kutaula, 2018). Beauty influencers can be followed by millions of consumers. They play a very important role in a product's research especially the ones who are specialized in green cosmetics and who will share their in-depth research to assure the consumers that the products are green. For the participants it is a quick way to know if the company is trustworthy without doing all the research the influencers had to make. Although some interviewees were suspicious of influencers honesty most still went on YouTube or other social media to get information about a brand or product. Brands are aware of the power of influencers and are now paying some of them to advertise their products. This has led consumers to become suspicious of influencers which explains why close circle is still perceived as more trustworthy.

Current trends turned out to be critical in consumers way of consumption even if certain trends had paradoxical results depending on the country. As the authors have mentioned above, Greta Thunberg was mentioned by two different interviewees with drastically opposite point of views. Cultural trends have an even bigger influence in certain cultures such as in the Middle East where people seem to be more likely to buy what is trendy and famous.

Another interesting trend that started during our interviewing process, was about animal welfare mentioned in an American animated video that went viral. It had an especially big impact in Mexico and later became bigger in Europe. The two Mexicans interviewees mentioned that video and talked about how cruelty-free products are becoming a social trend and one of them declared that social pressure makes you more conscious. Gabler et al. (2013) present in their research the lack of social pressure as a barrier limiting the consumer's incentives to purchase green products.

On the one hand there is social pressure towards companies which feel like offering green products is no longer an option and on the other hand consumers are expected to be more responsible. The example of the "Save Ralph" campaign which is the animated video on animal

welfare mentioned above, is a good representation of the growing social pressure to change our behaviors. The social pressure exercised by consumers on companies is part of the reason why companies try to appear more sustainable and ethical which has led to greenwashing since some companies were not willing to actually become green.

Besides, the level of awareness and knowledge regarding sustainable issues plays an important role in consumers' purchasing intentions. According to Cervellon et al. (2011), the typical green consumer is usually wealthier and more educated than the average consumer even though there has been a democratization of green purchasing especially in Europe and North America. Depending on the country, a difference has been noticed regarding the teaching of environmental and ethical issues at school. Moreover, it seems that many interviewees acquired knowledge about sustainability thanks to college, school projects or work projects. Therefore, it is difficult to cultivate green buying intentions if individuals are not sufficiently conscious of sustainability. Moreover, there seems to be a noticeable difference between public school and private school education in certain countries such as Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. Overall, more and more classes discuss the issue of sustainability.

The next major factor impacting consumers' purchasing intentions is quality. Finding an effective product was for most interviewees more important than finding a green product. Research pointed out the lifestyle factor influencing intentions as consumers generally favor comfort and quality rather than caring about minimizing their impact on the environment and society (Bamberg, 2003; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Sharma & Joshi, 2017). Quality was even considered more important than price. Although, many participants were prioritizing the value for money when choosing a product. Lin et al. (2018) mentioned that consumers were less concerned about green cosmetics compared to traditional cosmetic brands because they focused on product performance rather than green elements. Product performance had an impact on green consumption as a few interviewees stated they were skeptical about green products performance. According to the participants, green products are perceived as less efficient but overall cleaner because they are made of natural ingredients which is considered healthier. One of the main incentives for people to turn to green cosmetics was to avoid chemicals and other harmful ingredients that could have potential long-term effects on their health.

According to Godwin (2009) conscious consumerism is a movement driven by consumers who make purchasing decisions based on their core principles rather than "income, demographics, geography or other factors". Therefore, nowadays a brand's reputation is no longer solely based on its products but also on the values shared by the company as it was explained in the findings with the cases of Glossier and Victoria's Secret. Even though this trend is growing, studies have shown that consumers' biggest concerns are the elevated prices, product performance and a lack of options. (Cervellon et al., 2011). These barriers have created a gap between the intention to purchase and actual purchase of green alternatives (Tsakiridou et al., 2008).

5.2 The impact of greenwashing on purchasing behaviors

A common subject identified during the interviews was the consumer skepticism due to marketing. People are aware that advertising and packaging are designed to attract consumers and sell as many goods as possible by using Photoshop and exaggerating the product benefits. Hence, why consumers are not as easily persuaded by the company's claims.

Participants discussed how a word could have many different meanings and create confusion, such as the words "natural" or "green" which do not have an official meaning and brands can easily mislead consumers with ambiguous definitions. The term "natural" has been overused and has no clear meaning but it leads consumers to believe the product is not processed and free of chemicals (Cervellon et al., 2011). Such terms are even more confusing considering that they will not have the same meaning depending on the country as regulations for the cosmetics industry are different for every country. Delmas and Burbano (2011) state that the variation in regulations across countries and complexity regarding appropriate jurisdiction of cross-country practices is a critical driver of greenwashing due to the limited punitive consequences. Moreover, participants have talked about the overuse of the green color which has decreased their sensibility to it. Finally, consumers have mixed feelings about labels as companies have to pay to get them. Some assumed that paying is enough to get the label without actually taking actions to be more responsible. Overall, participants agreed on the fact that labels are an easy way to give information about a product. Cervellon et al., (2011) studied perceived greenwashing and highlighted the effect labels have on consumers by saying that most consumers consider labels as an important criterion when choosing a green product as they did

not trust organizations' environmentally friendly claims and needed an official third-party certification.

Skepticism was amplified by different scandals which are sometimes leading to the boycott of brands. Research has shown that consumers voice their values by purchasing from socially responsible companies and by boycotting unethical companies (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014; Vitell et al., 2015; Zollo et al., 2018). Different examples of scandals were argued such as the Oatly scandal which was mentioned several times during the interviews. The company selling eco-friendly alternatives to cow milk sold shares to the Blackstone Group, contributing to the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest. In order to decrease skepticism, some participants affirmed their willingness for companies to be more transparent with their processes. Consumers are more inclined to trust companies which clearly communicate the concrete actions taken to be more sustainable as the retailers using green marketing without giving specific explanations of how they minimize their impact on the environment are usually looked upon with skepticism (Chun, 2014).

5.3 Barriers

Throughout the study many factors were identified as barriers discouraging consumers to follow their green intentions and adopt a greener consumption when it comes to cosmetics. The main barriers identified were the financial barrier, the convenience barrier, the knowledge barrier and consumer skepticism.

The financial barrier is the main obstacle towards a greener way of consumption. In fact, green cosmetics are perceived as more expensive. Even though many consumers are willing to pay a little more for better quality products, they are not always ready to invest more money for a greener alternative. Research has demonstrated that consumers are more concerned about comfort and quality than caring about minimizing their impact on the environment and society (Bamberg, 2003; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Sharma & Joshi, 2017).

In some countries, the socioeconomic context explains why buying green cosmetics is not common and is not a priority. Indeed, as seen in the findings with the example of Mexico, a high percentage of the population lives under the line of poverty and struggles financially. Accordingly, adopting sustainable consumption is not a major concern for the population. In other countries where the population is quite poor, such as Senegal and Gambia, consumers have limited resources, therefore it would be a waste of money for companies to enter the green market. Finally, in China, there is fierce competition in the cosmetics industry and companies are focusing on prices to attract consumers rather than sustainability.

The second most important barrier considered by consumers is convenience. Many people want to make the shopping experience as convenient as possible and will evaluate their different options considering time, location, availability and knowledge. Tan et al. (2016) stated that consumers' perceptions of a green product can build barriers as green products are often perceived to be too expensive, they require knowledge and effort to search for information and they can also be difficult to obtain. People are willing to buy products that are easily accessible and going to a specific green store requires too much time and research as people are not always aware of their locations. Some people also tend to purchase the same product over and over again out of habit. Unlike the other convenience factors, habits are difficult to change, and it is hard to convince loyal customers to turn to greener alternatives. Finally, buying green cosmetics requires a lot of knowledge which consumers are not ready to look for as a matter of interest and time.

The last barrier concerns the lack of knowledge. Lin et al. (2018), have explained that consumers' lack of sufficient knowledge regarding green cosmetics was in fact the major problem for the green cosmetics industry. Participants suggested research as a way to avoid greenwashing and as mentioned earlier looking for information takes time, but it can also be confusing to the consumer. Consumers want to find reliable sources to learn about certain products although it is hard to identify which ones are trustworthy sources. Consumers' lack of knowledge and ability to check the environmental values of green products leads to skepticism (Ottman et al., 2006; Aji & Sutikno, 2015). As a result, the confusion involved in the research process discourages people from buying sustainable cosmetics. Therefore, consumers turn to products they already know, with which they have had a satisfying experience. Eventually, they

buy their beauty products out of habit without paying much attention to their overall impact on themselves and the planet.

5.4 The evolution of the consumer's role

The recent rise in conscious consumerism has led consumers to be increasingly aware of their purchasing behaviors. In addition to that, companies are pushing more green products towards consumers. As mentioned above, the pressure perceived by companies to be more sustainable has led to deceiving marketing practices called greenwashing.

The empirical findings demonstrated that greenwashing has had a major impact on consumers' purchasing behaviors. The purchasing process has evolved, it no longer consists in going to the store and purchasing the product that best fits our expectations, nowadays people seek products that align with their values while fulfilling their other needs. In order to find the best option and to adopt a conscious way of consumption, consumers research information about the product and its company. Indeed, one of the major limitations to the development of green consumerism is the lack of information and consumer trust (Cervellon et al., 2011). Accordingly, consumers now have a much more active role when it comes to buying green cosmetics.

Nowadays, information is available within reach which gives consumers much more power than they used to have. Besides, consumers have many options when it comes to information search. They use social media such as YouTube and Instagram, advice from their close circle, review websites, forums or directly use the brand websites on which you can find sustainability reports. Not only is information easily available, it also spreads very fast through the news and social media for instance. In fact, as social media makes it easier for consumers to verify environmental claims, the risks faced by companies when communicating about their environmental performance have increased and discourages them to greenwash (Lyon, & Montgomery, 2013). Someone who has had a bad experience with a product or brand can now share it on social media for millions to see and leave a bad review on the brand's website as well as on review forums which will convince other consumers to consider switching brands. As many participants have mentioned, consumers have an increasing power over companies but only few realize it. Participants also suggested that in order to avoid the spread of

greenwashing, consumers need to take advantage of their power. As mentioned earlier in the part about consumer skepticism, scandals can have dramatic impact on companies, leading to bad reviews and boycott. Consequently, consumers turn to other companies as they prefer to act on their values by purchasing from socially responsible companies and by boycotting unethical companies. This is due to the fact that conscious consumption is a lifestyle that acknowledges that individual consumption has broader consequences than a simple private impact and that consumer power has the ability to transform society (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014; Vitell et al., 2015; Zollo et al., 2018). With such a drastic increase of consumer power, consumers have stricter expectations from companies.

Research is now a way, according to consumers, to avoid greenwashing and figure out companies' true intentions by verifying their claims. Also, consumers are more inclined to do research if they shop online because they are already using the Internet and information is just a click away as opposed to shopping in a brick-and-mortar store where the buying attitude is usually more compulsive.

Although not all consumers are willing to put in the effort to make research and are not as careful as they used to be about being more sustainable. This phenomenon is counterproductive because the rise of green products as a consequence of social pressure has lowered people's interest in developing a sustainable lifestyle even though some companies are genuinely trying to reduce their impact on the planet. Kahraman and Kazançoğlu (2019) explain how greenwashing can negatively affect the market causing consumers to be suspicious about green products and lose trust toward the organization's future claims. It is necessary to find solutions to reduce consumer skepticism which is the main consequence of greenwashing.

VI. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors influencing consumers' purchasing intentions in the cosmetic industry (Q1) and to understand consumers' perceptions of greenwashing when it comes to personal care products and the effect it has on their purchasing behaviors (Q2). The study follows a qualitative research approach combined to a grounded theory research design based on nineteen in-depth interviews with participants from fourteen different countries. An exploratory study was conducted in order to compare and contrast purchasing intentions and behaviors from a cultural point of view as well as to contribute to research gaps. The first research gap the authors decided to explore was to conduct a cross-cultural research to study the behaviors of people from different cultural backgrounds. Another gap aimed at studying consumers' behaviors regarding their green consumption while the last gap focused on the reasons why consumers' purchasing behaviors do not always align with their intentions.

The findings were analyzed with the frame of reference to build a framework answering the research questions. From the findings emerged three main factors influencing consumers' purchasing intentions in the cosmetics industry which are the impacts of social influences on consumer's willingness to be more sustainable, the critical importance of quality and product performance and the role of education in raising awareness on the importance of conscious consumerism. Somehow, even if consumers have strong intentions to purchase green cosmetics, they encounter several barriers which impact their purchasing behaviors.

Four barriers have been identified: the financial barrier, the convenience barrier, the lack of knowledge and consumer skepticism. Consumer skepticism is a direct consequence of companies using deceiving claims to fit in the movement of green consumption. The fact that consumers are highly skeptical about companies' green claims has an effect on their behaviors. Consumers are now prone to do research prior to their purchases in order to verify claims about a product or a company and to find a product that best fits their expectations. All of these barriers are the reasons for the gap noticed between consumers' intentions and behaviors.

VII. Discussion

This last section elaborates on the way this research contributes to the existing literature. It also provides details on the implications and limitations of this study. Lastly, this part gives suggestions for future research.

7.1 Theoretical contributions

The study adds to the current body of knowledge and offers a cross-cultural consumer perspective on the impact of greenwashing in the cosmetics industry. Getting a consumer's perspective on the same topic from people from different countries shows the similarities and differences depending on a consumer's background. New insights have been brought about aspects preventing consumers to truly shift to a conscious consumption. The study confirmed the belief-behavior gap previously identified by researchers (Gabler et al., 2013; Cervellon et al., 2011; Tsakiridou et al., 2008) and builds upon this gap to explain the impact of greenwashing on consumers' purchasing behaviors.

7.2 Implications

This study can provide guidance to companies who want to get a deeper understanding and find a solution to the intention-behavior gap. It also explains what influences consumers' intentions when it comes to personal care products. Companies can also benefit from the study to find ways to break down the barriers and make green consumption easily accessible and less confusing to consumers. Besides, the framework built in this study shows how critical it is to gain back consumers' trust. The research also highlights the differences between cultures, and it gives them insights on ways to reach consumers depending on the country.

7.3 Limitations

Throughout the thesis, a few limitations can be noted and must be recognized when assessing the thesis' relevance. The cross-cultural research was limited even though participants represented fourteen different countries, the sample did not represent every continent. The research would have also been more relevant if more people came from the same country to find patterns and similarities depending on the nationality. Indeed, it would have helped to make better correlations between consumers' intentions and behaviors and their countries. Moreover, most of our sample comprised people in their twenties and it may not be representative of all the generations' purchasing habits. It is important to note that most interviewees had lived abroad, traveled a lot, and went to college, therefore, the sample had received a higher education and had an international vision.

The authors noticed that participants did not always have an accurate perception of their own behavior. A few contradictions occurred as the interviews went on such as interviewees claiming they were not attracted to a product depending on its packaging but would later state they are more likely to buy a product if the packaging looks nicer than the other alternatives. Besides, some consumers had green purchasing attitudes for certain types of products but not for others. For instance, some participants would do a lot of research and be very careful to buy organic food or clothes made sustainably but would not really pay attention to the cosmetics they would purchase which made it complicated to identify clear green purchasing intentions and behavior.

Finally, some participants had strong personal beliefs regarding certain topics such as believing small businesses were more prone to use greenwashing or on the contrary corporations were more likely to use deceiving claims without clearly understanding where those beliefs originated and therefore depicting patterns in those cases was difficult.

7.4 Future research

This study only focused on the consumer perspective and it could be interesting to know what companies' point of views regarding consumers' skepticism are and in what way could they tackle the issue.

As the sample was limited to only fourteen countries, it could be interesting to study a much bigger sample which would represent all continents in order to better identify the impact cultural background can have on people's purchasing intentions and behavior.

The topic of gender and generations have not been addressed in this research but it was mentioned by several interviewees. Identifying the different factors influencing men and women as well as people from different age ranges can bring new knowledge to the topic.

With the issue of consumer skepticism and the impact it has on green consumption, it would be interesting to understand how green companies could develop relationships built on trust with their customers as transparency is no longer enough, they need proof of the brand's genuine intentions. In addition to that, it would be interesting to identify the elements that would make green marketing more believable in the eyes of the consumers.

Lastly, it could be interesting to further explore the reason why consumers adopt a green way of consumption for certain product categories but not others. As it was mentioned above, some consumers prioritize sustainable consumption when it comes to clothes and others when buying beauty products.

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IX. Appendix

8.1 GDPR consent form

JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY
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Business School

GDPR Thesis Study Consent Form

The GDPR consent form should always be accompanied by a Participant Information Sheet [see JIBS' guidelines at the end of this template]

GDPR Consent for "The effect of conscious consumerism on purchasing behaviours: The example of greenwashing in the cosmetics industry".

Please tick the appropriate boxes	Yes	No
Taking part in the study		
I consent to JIBS processing my personal data in accordance with current data protection legislation and the data delivered.	☐	☐
I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.	☐	☐

My signature below indicates that I choose to take part in the thesis study and consent to JIBS treating my personal data in accordance with current data protection legislation and the data delivered.

_____   _____   _____

Name of participant [IN CAPITALS]   Signature   Date

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Participant Information Sheet template

This is for guidance only, You MUST, however, include contact details and the Data Protection Privacy Notice.

We would like you to participate in our thesis study concerning consumers purchasing behaviours in the cosmetics industry. Before you decide to participate in our research, we would like you to understand the purpose of the research and what it will involve. Please, make sure to carefully read the following information.

The purpose of the study is to understand consumers' perception of greenwashing and the effect it has on their purchasing behaviour in the cosmetics industry. The collecting data contributes to the building of a theory for our Bachelor Thesis. The study takes place during the whole spring semester 2021. The data is collected through interviews with about 20 people from different nationalities. The interviews are taking place via Zoom sessions or face-to-face interviews. The data collected on our phones and computers.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to do so, you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to give your consent.' All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any ensuing reports or publications.

Under GDPR you have the following rights over your personal data:

- *__The right to be informed__. You must be informed if your personal data is being used.*
- *__The right of access__. You can ask for a copy of your data by making a 'subject access request'.*
- *__The right to rectification__. You can ask for your data held to be corrected.*
- *__The right to erasure__. You can ask for your data to be deleted.*
- *__The right to restrict processing__. You can limit the way an organisation uses your personal data if you are concerned about the accuracy of the data or how it is being used.*
- *__The right to data portability__. You have the right to get your personal data from an organisation in a way that is accessible and machine-readable. You also have the right to ask an organisation to transfer your data to another organisation.*
- *__The right to object__. You have the right to object to the use of your personal data in some circumstances. You have an absolute right to object to an organisation using your data for direct marketing.*
- *__How your data is processed using automated decision making and profiling__. You have the right not to be subject to a decision that is based solely on automated processing if the decision affects your legal rights or other equally important matters; to understand the reasons behind decisions made about you by automated processing and the possible consequences of the decisions, and to object to profiling in certain situations, including for direct marketing purposes.*

8.2 Interview guide

General consumption habits:

- How would you describe your purchasing habits?

- Would you say that your purchasing behaviors have changed over the years? If yes, to what extent has it changed?

- Who and what can influence you to buy a product? (social media, family, friends, etc…)

- How do you get information about a product?

- What do you do to identify if a product is green or not? What would make you buy an "environmentally friendly" product?

- Do you think that the consumer role has maybe evolved over the last few years and how ?

- Why do you think consumers are not systematically buying green products?

- Would you like to turn to a new way of consumption?

- If so, what drives you to change or on the contrary what is making it difficult to switch to new purchasing habits?

Cosmetics:

- What cosmetics do you use in your daily life?
- What is your process when buying cosmetics and what is important to you when you buy cosmetics?
- Are you sensitive to green cosmetics?
- Tell us what "green cosmetics" mean to you?
- What are the incentives for you to turn to greener alternatives?
- Do you ever look at the ingredients, percentage of organic product, other labels?
- What do you think of companies selling green cosmetics?

Cross-cultural research:
- Do you often see ads for green cosmetics?
- Are green alternatives widely available in your country?
- In your country, do you consider the level of awareness regarding green consumption high?

Greenwashing/ green marketing:

- What do you think of cosmetics advertising and packaging?
- When you see ads for cosmetic products, what are the factors that will convince you to buy them ?
- Are you sensitive to green cosmetics ads and why?
- Are you familiar with the concept of greenwashing?
- Are you aware of it when you see an ad for green products ?
- What role do you think a consumer needs to have regarding greenwashing?
- According to you, what are the ways to avoid greenwashing ?

Follow-up questions:

- Why do you think your parents may not care as much about sustainable consumption?
- How could we change this?
- How could we make more people interested?

- Do you know what the labels mean?
- Are the green alternatives as easily accessible?
- Why are people growing more aware of their consumption habits?
- What are the main factors making them aware?
- How could we improve this even more?