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**PURCHASE DECISIONS IN SKINCARE PRODUCTS AMONG  
WOMEN IN FINLAND**

Bachelor's thesis

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the thesis independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors have been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.

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## ABSTRACT

Skincare and the upkeep of basic hygiene is something that is part of the daily routines of many people and have even been the center of some cultures throughout the ages from Turkish baths today to spas in ancient Greece. The skincare routines differ anywhere from the products people are using to how often they are used and what brands they feel are most beneficial to their specific needs. In this thesis the author covers some of the basic principles of skincare and its market, consumer behaviour related to the decision-making of purchasing skincare products as well as the brand loyalty in the parts of theory as well as research results. Through this thesis the author seeks to understand the different factors that might or might not have an effect on the purchasing decisions of consumers.

The aim of this thesis is to first and foremost to provide knowledge on what are the factors that consumers regard or disregard when purchasing skincare products. This is in respect to one of the research questions '*what are the most and least important factors that influence the consumers' purchasing decisions?*'. Quantitative method is applied and primary data was collected through an online questionnaire. The main results ended up proving quality, suitability to consumer's own needs, and promised effects of the product whether it being hydrating or brightening qualities. To conclude this thesis, the importance of brand loyalty, product quality, and word of mouth is highlighted.

Keywords:

Skincare, consumer behaviour, decision-making, brand loyalty, word-of-mouth

## INTRODUCTION

Adaptation and understanding of consumer's behaviour and needs is an absolute necessity to survive in competitive markets (Engel *et al.*, 1995). Education provided by brands about their products' ingredients and benefits have made today's consumer more informed about what they are putting on their bodies and making them more willing to pay. Research is of the greatest importance in improving the understanding of skin and how it functions (Penzer, 2010). Bigger beauty companies are starting subsidiary companies for specified products, increasing their selection along the way. Due to many similar products in the market, it is important for skincare companies to know why consumers would prefer some products over others. This information is especially important for the marketing and sales departments of skincare companies. Especially now in the midst of pandemic the increasing number of mask caused breakouts, also known as "maskne" and medically as "acne mechanica" (Potts, 2020), skincare as a topic is exploding all over social media. However according to Potts (2020), 'maskne' is not a new phenomenon. She explains that mask caused acne is familiar to medical professionals who are accustomed to the use of facial masks, but has now become more widespread among the general population. The main aim of this thesis is to figure out what are the factors that consumers regard or disregard when purchasing skincare products. This thesis aims to provide additional information on consumers' purchasing behaviours for skincare companies in the current cosmetics market.

For the first part of this thesis, the author represents theoretical background and frameworks which cover the main topics of the research conducted as a part of this thesis. The second part of the thesis focuses on the research methodology as well as the results. These are followed by the findings and discussion of the research results where the author provides correlations between the findings and the theoretical background and frameworks.

The history of marketing seems to be greatly intertwined with the history of consumer behaviour (Sheth, 1985). Consumer behaviour is greatly highlighted and relied on throughout this thesis. Consumer behaviour, as specified by Solomon and Bamossy (2006, 33), is *'the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products,*

*services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires*'. Different factors affecting consumer behaviour will be covered such as social, cultural and personal factors as well as how perception and its perceptual process defines the outcome of consumers' purchasing decisions. The five of human senses will be discussed while mainly focusing on three senses - look, smell, and feel - that have the biggest impact concerning the attitudes and patterns of consumer behaviour. We will focus on decision-making, where areas of cognitive psychology will be applied and inspected. Main focus of this is set on problem recognition and problem solving abilities as well as introducing a model of the decision-making process. For some people, brand loyalty and awareness of a brand can play a huge part when making purchasing decisions. Brand loyalty will be further discussed in this thesis as well.

Due to the increasing novelties and rapidly changing trends in the skincare industry it can be difficult for both marketing and sales teams in skincare companies to continually identify missing aspects from their products that are possible deal-breakers when it comes to the finalizing purchasing decisions of consumers. For this thesis, primary data will be applied. Throughout this thesis, these possible deal-breaker factors are studied using quantitative research method and this thesis is considered to be a relational study where we study the relationships between two (*or more*) variables. The **research problem** is defined as *'the lack of knowledge in factors that consumers seem to focus on or ignore when making the purchasing decisions concerning skincare products'*. In order to gain a more fundamental understanding to this problem, the required data for this research is collected via questionnaires sent to respective respondents in respect to each age group studied.

The first research question that we aim to find an answer to with this thesis is *'what are the brands that consumers prefer when it comes to skincare products?'*. With this question we will be able to recognize if for example brand loyalty plays a huge part in the respondents purchasing decisions. The answers for this question will be required through questions, in which the respondents will identify the brands that they know and which brands' products they tend to use most of the time. This will include multiple choice as well as open-ended questions. Second research question is defined as *'what are the most and least important factors that influence the consumers' purchasing decisions?'*. For the third and final research question is *'what are the consumers' courses of actions, when there is no availability on a specific skincare product they wish to purchase?'*. This question focuses mainly on the area of cognitive psychology.

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# 1. BACKGROUND OF SKINCARE

Our skin acts as the exterior protective barrier of our bodies and is the largest organ humans possess, therefore it also contains a complex structure. According to Adu *et al.* (2020, 1) the skin's "*primary function is to serve as a barrier, preventing excessive loss of moisture from the body; while on the outside, it prevents the entry of toxic substances and pathogens*". Skincare is commonly referred to the act of taking care of one's skin with either external products (facial cleansers, moisturizers, etc.) or internal (pill supplements). Rodan *et al.* (2016) define cleansing, protection, prevention, and moisturizing as the key elements of skincare. They also highlight that if skincare routines are implemented daily, they "*potentially have the most significant long-term impact on the overall quality of a person's complexion*" (2016, 2).

From Rodan *et al.* (2016) definitions, we can assume that skincare products' ultimate purpose is to upkeep, restore, purify or enhance a person's complexion. Most often generalized skincare products can be found from common grocery stores and they serve the most basic need for a consumer: upkeep and purifying the complexion. Skincare industry is constantly growing and getting more experimental. Due to the industry's experimental nature, more and more personalized products are introduced to the market. Therefore, nowadays more personalized products are being sold in these aforementioned grocery stores as well as in stores that specialize in skincare products.

The projected revenue in cosmetics segment is expected to be approximately 263.4€ million in Finland in 2021 (Statista, Cosmetics - Finland). In a research conducted by Husain *et al.* (2016) according to Hubspot in 2014, 92% of marketers mentioned social media marketing important for business. Increased traffic on their websites was reported by 80% of respondents. It was stated by Husain *et al.* (2016, 2) that "*social media is a peer influencer when it comes to making buying decisions, as 71% of consumers are likely to purchase an item based on social media referrals*". This is a common phenomenon also in the skincare industry. According to Forbes (2016), social influencers contribute hugely to the eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth). In her research (Forbes, 2016, 85), she discussed that when brands use social influencers as a part of their marketing strategy and influencer presents the product in a positive manner, then "*consumer will attribute more positive outcomes of the product; therefore, the language being used to sell the product in a positive light during the advertorials contributes to the consumer's perceived positive outcomes*".



Over-the-top (OTT) is a streaming media service that is offered via internet directly to viewers. OTT marketing strategy is very popular among skincare product marketers. According to Sandler (2019), the OTT advertisements are more attractive to marketers in the beauty industry due to its lower price (compared to typical TV ads), targeting and retargeting the right audience, more engaging and sophisticated qualities, its retained focus on cost-per-visit, conversion rates, and the lifetime value of a consumer. OTT advertisements do not only target the specific demographics or psychographics, but they can also retarget customers through all of their devices that are connected to the same internet. Plugins can be added to over-the-top advertisements in order to make them interactive. This feature could become of major importance to beauty brands over time due to the vast user number on the biggest social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram.

## 2. CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Consumer behaviour, as stated by Solomon (2017, 22), is “*the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desire.*”. It is now recognized by majority of marketers that consumer behaviour is an *ongoing process*, and not merely what happens at the moment when consumer completes a transaction to receive a good or a service in return (Solomon, 2017). Despite the existing mass culture, where relatively standardized and homogenous cultural products are produced and distributed for the mass market, people are beginning to prefer personalized products more and more. In this chapter the different aspects that have an effect on consumer behaviour are covered such as perception, attitudes, and behavioural factors.

### 2.1. FACTORS IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

We, as humans, are subconsciously always affected by our surroundings whether we acknowledge it or not. There are both external and internal factors that have an effect to the way we act and respond to our surroundings. Some of the internal factors are **socialization, motivation, personality, and lifestyle**. As defined by Burnett (2002, 94-96) **socialization** is “*the process by which persons acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make them more or less able members of their society*”. Furthermore, he defined **motivation** as “*the inner drive or pressure to*

take action to satisfy a need”, **personality** as “all the traits of a person that make him/her unique”, and **lifestyle** as “the attitudes, interests, and opinions of the potential customer”.

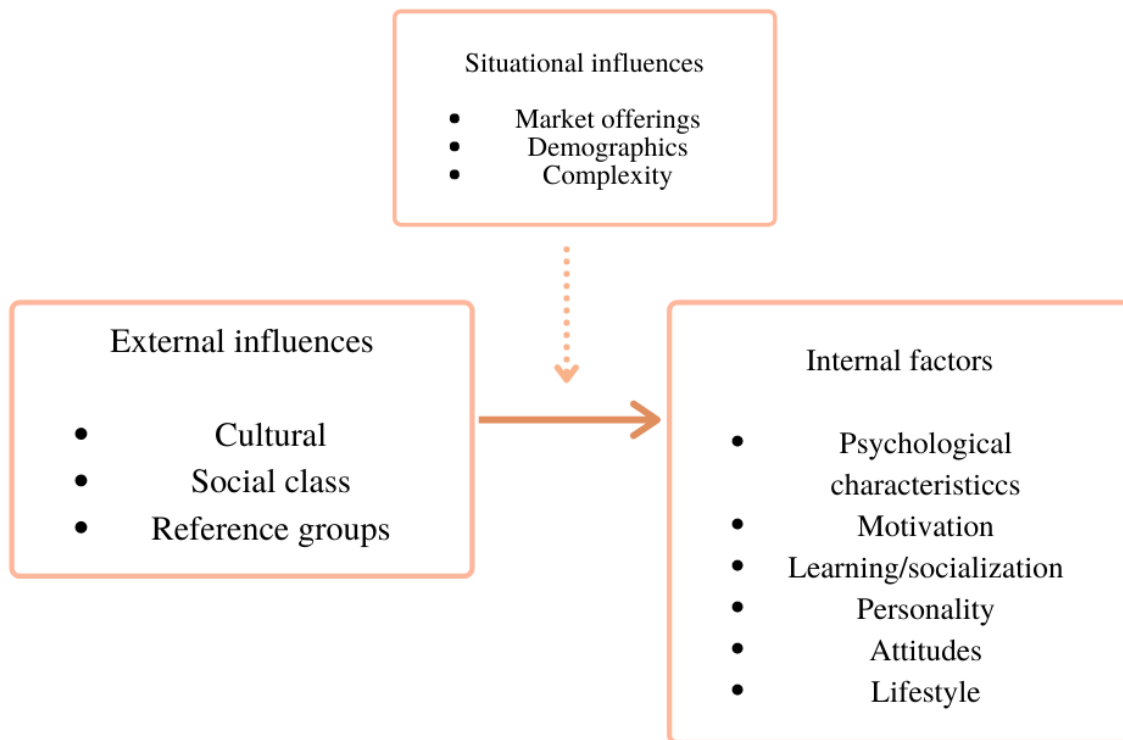


Figure 1  
Source: Burnett (2002), A model of consumer behaviour

For external factors, Burnett (2002), describes cultural, social class, and reference groups as the most important. These will be discussed later on in this thesis. In Figure 1, we can see more of the internal and external factors in addition to situational factors, that have an influence on consumer’s purchasing decisions as well as evaluating products and services (Burnett, 2002).

According to Gajjar (2013), there are three main factors that have an effect on consumer behaviour. These are **personal factors, cultural factors, and social factors**. For **personal factors**, the consumer’s age plays the most important part. Gajjar (2013) states that not only does the age alone have potential impact on the consumer’s buying behaviour, but also consumer’s lifecycle. This is because consumer’s purchasing decisions of goods and services change throughout the passage of time. Occupation also has a significant impact on the purchasing behaviour. For example, people working in offices tend to buy suits, or pencil skirts whereas people working in construction need to focus on protective and durable clothing. Lastly, personality is listed as one of the main aspects. According to Gajjar (2013,12) “*Personality changes from person to person, time to time and place to place. . . Personality is not what one wears; rather it is the totality of behaviour of a man in different circumstances.*”

Culture, subculture, and social class are defined as the main three categories in **cultural factors** by Gajjar (2013). Culture is part of every existing society and reflects on consumer's wants and behaviour. Due to cultural differences, also the purchasing behaviours vary from country to country. Therefore, the analyzation of different groups, regions, and countries is vital when it comes to marketing. Subculture on the other hand reflects on consumer's religions, nationalities, racial groups, etc. In marketing, different products can be designed and produced according to the needs of a, for example, specific geographic group. The importance of social class is of high importance to marketers. The buying behaviour of consumer's in a given social class tend to be homogenous and therefore products and services can be altered to different social classes. Gajjar (2013) highlights that social class is not only determined by income, but also overall wealth, education, occupation, etc.

Lastly, role in the society, social status as well as reference groups are stated as the main aspects of **social factors**. A consumer's role in the society depends on the group they belong to. According to Gajjar (2013), each individual plays a dual role in their society based on what group they belong to. For social status, a person with more wealth could for example spend money on luxury items when they feel like it as for the other end of the spectrum, a person with less wealth would only be buying necessary items for required survival. Reference groups are divided into two sections; primary and secondary group. Friends, family members, relatives, and co-workers are considered to form the consumer's primary reference group. For example, clubs, political parties, and religious associations are considered as the consumer's secondary reference group. These groups share an indirect relationship with the consumer whereas primary reference groups interact with the consumer on a regular basis.

Ramya & Ali (2017) discussed **economic factors** in addition to factors covered by Gajjar (2013). Ramya & Ali state personal income, family income, and savings as economic factors among other factors. The personal income of the consumer consists of the disposable and discretionary income. The disposable income is the remaining balance after tax deduction and other compulsory deductible items from their gross income. Discretionary income is the balance remaining after fulfilling the basic necessities for survival. Consumer's family income is the combined income of all the members of the family. The amount of income influences the buying behaviour of the family. Finally, savings also have an influence on the purchasing behaviour. If the amount saved

changes, so does the spending habits of the consumer. For example, with more money being saved equals to less money being spent on luxury or comfort items.

## 2.2. PERCEPTION

Perception is described as “*a set of psychological processes that enable individuals to experience and make sense of their surrounding environment; that is, it pertains to an individual’s awareness and interpretation of reality*” by Kimmel (2018, 80). According to Kotler & Armstrong (2019), perceptions are more important than reality when it comes to marketing. Perception does not only depend on a physical stimulus, but also on the stimuli’s relationship to the surroundings and on the conditions within each consumer. Kotler & Armstrong (2019) categorizes perception into four sections: **selective attention**, **selective distortion**, **selective retention**, and **subliminal perception**. These four categories will be further discussed in the next sections.

Due to the immense amount of exposure to advertisements or brand communications per day, humans cannot attend to all of those external stimuli’s at once. Therefore, humans subconsciously filter out most of the stimuli. This is called **selective attention**. Due to selective attention, marketers must work hard in order to attract and retain consumer’s attention.

Kotler & Armstrong (2019) discusses that **selective distortion** is where a consumer interprets received information in a way so that it fits consumer’s preconceptions. This can be advantageous for marketers with strong brands if the consumer is receiving neutral or ambiguous information from the brand and then making it more positive.

Through **selective retention**, consumers are more prone to remembering all the positive aspects of a product or service and more likely to forget the negative aspects according to Kotler & Armstrong (2019). Consumers are also more likely to even forget about the positive aspects of a

competing brand, if they already associate strong positive feelings towards a brand that they favour.

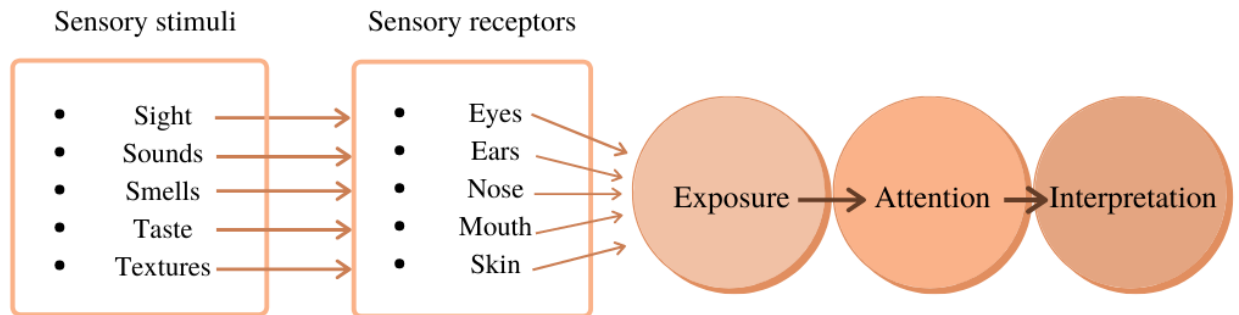


Figure 2  
Source: Solomon (2011), Perceptual Process

Finally, Kotler & Armstrong (2019) discusses that through subliminal perception it is believed that marketers are able to embed hidden messages on product packages or in advertisements. For example, “try it” text embedded onto a product packaging is a great exhibition of this kind of hidden message. However, Kotler & Armstrong (2019) states that there is no evidence that these types of embedded messages could systematically control consumers actions, especially if they are intended to change consumer’s strongly held beliefs.

### 2.3. SENSES

As stated by Splinter (2010), there are five senses that are outlined as the traditional classifications with specific physical attributes. These five senses are hearing, touch, smell, taste, and vision. These can be also seen in Figure 2 on what kind of an impact they have through an individual’s perceptual process. For this thesis, we will mainly focus on **touch, smell, and vision** due to them being respectively related to marketing as for skincare products’ outlook, scent, and feel. According to Splinter (2010), the actual sense of **smell** is perceived from a solution of chemicals. People are able to detect a change in smell with a minimum change of 30%. Factors that effect on

how easily an individual can detect these changes are linked to health, nutrition and to the development of other senses (Splinter, 2010).

For **touch**, Splinter (2010, 8-2), describes its definition as “*the sensation caused by skin displacements, which occur each time we grasp an object. . .*”. However, it is stated that this statement can be restrictive due to illusory sensations that can be induced, for example with stretching of the skin that have an effect to limb movement. As Vieira (2013, 482) states with accordance to Peck & Childers (2003) that “*consumers touch products to simply place them in shopping carts, other consumers spend more time exploring products with their hands before ultimately making a purchase decision. [Thus, it] seems likely that some individuals would prefer information available through the sense of touch*”. This can be interpreted as consumer’s act of gaining more knowledge of a product through how the packaging feels and looks more closely.

**Vision** is generally known as the physical ability to see. In addition, Gottfried *et al.*, (2011) defines the constraints of visual processing as: physical properties of the input, for example its feature content in the terms of colour, moving items, contours, and so on. These factors are regulated constantly by influences that are a reflection of the individual’s behavioural goals therefore indicating that what we see and how we perceive it are more than often determined by an individual’s inner state.

## **2.4. ATTITUDES**

As described by Ajzen (1989), attitude is an individual’s inclination to react either positively or negatively to an object, event, person, institution, or to other aspect of the individual’s world. When considering the differences between attitudes and behaviour Ajzen (1989, 244) considers that “*the problem is typically defined as the degree of correspondence between evaluative responses of a verbal kind and evaluative responses of nonverbal kind*”. In addition, Martin & Deutscher (1966) explain that the difference between attitude and behaviour is the question of what an individual says versus what an individual does.

Ajzen (1989) also discusses the structures of attitude in the most popular classification system called the multicomponent view. There are three different categories for individual’s responses

according to this model. These are: **affect, cognition, and conation**. These can be divided into verbal and non-verbal responses.

In her thesis, Katajisto (2020) discusses these categories one by one with respect to Ajzen (1989). She defines the **affective** response as a demonstration of feelings that an individual has towards the object of attitude. Verbal responses, with regards to affective response, a directly positive or negative expressions to the object. As for the non-verbal response, facial expressions and body language can be regarded as the most common forms.

For **cognitive** response, Katajisto (2020, 8) stated that they “*demonstrate the beliefs an individual has towards the attitude object*”. Verbal responses express the different types of attributes or characteristics an individual associates the object with (positive or negative). Non-verbal responses can be hard to recognize directly. For cognitive psychology, Haase *et al.*, (2018) also state that consumers process information through two different systems: **implicit and explicit systems**. The implicit system processes subconscious stimuli whereas explicit system captures conscious stimuli. Implicit system works automatically and effortlessly when in the other hand explicit system works in a controlled and deliberate manner. The creation of this comprehensive multisensory marketing concept demands for the combination of both implicit and explicit systems.

Table 1

<i>Response Mode</i>	<i>Response Category</i>		
	<i>Cognition</i>	<i>Affect</i>	<i>Conation</i>
<i>Verbal</i>	Expressions of beliefs about attitude object	Expressions of feelings toward attitude object	Expressions of behavioral intentions
<i>Nonverbal</i>	Perceptual reactions to attitude object	Physiological reactions to attitude object	Overt behaviors with respect to attitude object

Source: Ajzen (1989), Responses Used to Infer Attitudes

Lastly, Kataijsto (2020, 8) states the **conative** responses as display of “*the intentions and actions of an individual regarding the attitude object*”. Verbal responses for conative category are the own words and plans of the individual with respect to the object. Non-verbal responses can be seen as negative or positive actions with respect to the object.

## **2.5. BRAND LOYALTY**

When assessing the purchasing decisions of consumers, brand loyalty plays a huge part. Customers’ loyalty to a brand is among one of the most fundamental constructs in marketing, especially at a time when consumers see more and more homogenous products and the expression of preference, when evaluating products among different brands, is becoming increasingly non-existent (Schultz *et al.*, 2014). For a relationship between a consumer and a brand, both the emotional state and the interactivity with the brand can be defined through emotional connection and communication between these two parties. This can be seen as an indicator of consumer’s engagement towards the brand (Veloutsou, 2007).

Research conducted by He *et al.* (2012) suggests that brand identity as well as brand identification can be significant precursors to trust, perceived value, and satisfaction of consumers. He *et al.* (2012, 654) also suggest that “*since customers with stronger brand identification are also likely to develop negative biased attitude towards the focal brand's competing brands*”. They also discuss that consumer’s trust and customer satisfaction could depend on the brand experience the consumer has encountered. Lastly, they discovered that brand identification links highly to brand loyalty.

According to Kathman (2002) if there is a strong correlation between a consumer and a brand then it creates customer retention as well as loyalty towards the brand. Through this the consumer is more likely to be open to the brand’s new products and exhibit quicker product acceptance. They also state that the consumers are the ones who shape the brand since brands can be considered as an experience in today’s highly digitalized world of marketing. Veloutsou’s (2015) findings support Kathman (2002); Veloutsou (2015) stated that the strength between consumer’s brand relationship is a solid predictor of brand loyalty. However, it was said that the brand relationships do not change due to the nature of the link between the evaluation of the brand, trust, satisfaction,



and loyalty. Satisfaction and trust seem to be considered as the precursors of loyalty in an indirect fashion.

## 2.6. CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING

In this subchapter the author will mainly focus on consumer decision-making process and problem solving. According to Kotler *et al.*, (2019) a five-stage model was developed by marketing scholars in order to recognize the stages of consumer buying process. This can be seen in Figure 3. These stages are **problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour**. It is stated that the actual purchasing process begins long before the actual purchase happens, and the consequences are seen long afterwards. However, Kotler *et al.*, (2019, 214) state that “*Consumers don’t always pass through all five stages in buying a product. They may skip or reverse some.*” This five-stage model contains the similar outline as the consumer decision-making process introduced by Solomon (2019) which he includes in cognitive decision-making process. In the following sections we will cover each step more in-depth.

**Problem recognition** is a state where we experience a noticeable difference between the current state, we are in compared to the desired state of being (Solomon, 2019). In reference to skincare, an example would be when a consumer runs out of a specific product and realizes that they need a new product to replace the one that has run out. When a consumer has recognized a problem, then they proceed onto **information search**. In this stage the consumer typically “*survey the environment for appropriate data to make a reasonable decision*” (Solomon, 2019, 342). In our case of example, a consumer who has run out of product would then proceed onto looking for information about suitable product for replacement either online or in-store. However, Solomon (2019) mentions that some consumers do enjoy browsing products for fun. They might like to keep themselves updated on what is happening in the marketplace and therefore engaging in *ongoing search*.

The next step consumers face is the **evaluation of alternatives**. This is when the consumer in our example has to make the decision of choosing the best possible alternative from all the options in

the available skincare market. Solomon (2019) divides the alternatives into two categories: evoked set and consideration set. In the first set the consumer is already familiar with some of the alternatives and in the latter set the consumer is seriously considering about purchasing new alternatives. Consumers are more likely to add new brands to their evoked set over an alternative that was considered earlier but overlooked at the end even if the marketer's provide positive additional information about it. This highlights the fact that consumers exhibit reluctance to giving the overlooked alternative a second chance and therefore underscoring the importance of a great performance by the alternative when company introduces it to the market (Solomon, 2019).

**Purchasing decision** requires quite a lot of attention and cognitive processing from consumers nowadays. However, in some cases it can also be simple and quick, such as a standard coffee order from the consumer's local coffee shop. Companies are coming out with more and more specified products with different features and we as consumers need to evaluate and assemble all the relevant options (Solomon, 2019). Skincare companies are continuously testing out new products with specific ingredients; for example, new anti-aging ingredients are being tested and introduced to the market in accordance with trending skincare problems. In our example, the consumer faces a lot of similar products within the skincare market and will carry out the most suitable purchasing option with accordance to the previous steps that the consumer has gone through.

Lastly, the definition **post-purchase behaviour** is whether the consumer is satisfied with their purchasing decision or not after undergoing all these stages (Solomon, 2019). Consumer conducts a post-purchase evaluation in which they decide whether or not the purchased option meets the consumer's expectations. According to Solomon (2019), post-purchase behaviour does not only include consumers in today's world. In a process called *social scoring* both service providers and consumers can rate each other's performance (if applicable). With regards to our example, a consumer that has gone into a store and requested help from a skincare professional, they both are able to provide feedback on both parties that have participated in the interaction. On the other

hand, consumer is able to inspect the level of satisfaction of their purchase once they have tried the skincare product.



Figure 3

Source: Kotler *et al.*, (2019), Five-stage model of the consumer buying process

However, Solomon *et al.*, (2006) criticize this traditional model. According to Stankevich (2017, 11) even though this is a rational perspective, yet many consumers behave irrationally: “*such a process is not an accurate portrayal of many of our purchase decisions.*” Purchases are done impulsively that lead to purchasing decisions that are not planned. Also, according to Stankevich (2017) the authors of Solomon *et al.*, (2006) argue that consumers tend to choose a strategy (from a repertoire that they already possess) in accordance with the situation and adjust to the level of effort that is required. This is called *constructive processing*.

**Problem solving** does not initiate with a clear statement of a problem but is rather identified in their existing environment after which they must be defined and represented mentally (Davidson & Sternberg, 2003). Definition of problem is “*the aspect of problem solving in which the scope and goals of the problem are clearly stated*” and problem’s representation refers to “*the manner in which the information known about a problem is mentally organized*” (Davidson & Sternberg, 2003, 6). Mental representations are generally composed of four parts: description of original state

of a problem, description of the desired state of a problem, a set of acceptable operators, and a set of constraints. Psychologists have defined problem-solving process as a cycle:

1. Recognition or identification of a problem
2. Definition and representation of the problem mentally
3. Developing a solution strategy
4. Organizing one's knowledge about the problem

Problems do not possess just one form. Problems can be i.e., visual or verbal (Davidson & Sternberg, 2003). It is however stated that the problem-solving stages are more interactive with each other rather than sequential stages. Problems are divided into two categories by Davidson & Sternberg (2003). These are *well-defined* and *ill-defined* problems. Well-defined problems are problems that have a straight-forward solution paths, whereas ill-defined problems do not conform to apparent solution strategies.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & RESULTS**

#### **3.1. RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION**

There were two main approaches for conducting the research. Firstly, in order to gain a more fundamental understanding of the topics, backgrounds, data that was collected, and results, additional literature and information was studied for the first sections of this thesis. The material, that was used to acquire the information and literature from, was first and foremost found through the online library of Tallinn University of Technology by the primary sources being in the forms of books as well as journal and scholarly articles. Primary data was gathered by the author in order to gain first-hand knowledge and answers from respondents that fell into the required category of demographics.

For the data collection, a quantitative method was applied in the form of an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was created in Google Forms which is an online tool provided by Google Inc. The form of questionnaires is widely used method in quantitative research. The author created three identical questionnaires that were then sent to the people with their respective age groups. By creating three separate forms, the author had a better understanding of the differences between the respective age groups rather than collecting all of the data under one questionnaire. The respondents were both recruited by the author through social media channel, Instagram, as well as by using snowballing technique through the respondents. This is when the person who has already responded to the questionnaire, i.e., sends the link to her friend and they answer to the questionnaire as well. The author requested that the link would not be shared anywhere else except to the people that could be included in the required demographics.

The link for the questionnaire was shared through an email to all the respondents, and it was made clear to the respondents that there were three links included in the email and that they were to pick the link that reflected on their current age. The age groups were stated clearly in the aforementioned emails and this way the possibility of having mixed age groups was minimized from causing any confusion when interpreting the results. The questionnaire began accepting answers on 18.2.2021 and stopped accepting answers on 7.5.2021. The online questionnaire is

represented in appendix 1, and the survey questions and response analyzation with respective graphics are presented in appendices 2-10. Since all of the three questionnaires were identical, the author presents the questionnaire for Group 1 (18-26 years old) as a reference to the questionnaire outlook in the appendices.

### **3.2. DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS**

In total the questionnaires had 99 respondents. There were four questions in the ‘demographics’ section in the questionnaire. The questions were about the respondent’s age, educational background, approximate income, and their occupational situation. The reason for these questions was to find out links between their purchasing decisions and demographic background and whether or not they had noticeable differences between the three age groups.

The demographics for this questionnaire were targeted to be Finnish women in the ages from 18 to 60 years old. The reason for this age range is because skin is known to change its physical qualities throughout a person’s lifetime, never staying the same, therefore creating a possible change in different factors that lead to a consumer’s purchasing decision. The age categories were originally created to be in the categories of Group 1 (18-30), Group 2 (31-49), and Group 3 (50-60). However, after the results the age categories consists of the following age groups: 18-26 for Group 1, 27-38 for Group 2, and 39-59 for Group 3. The response rate was highest in Group 3 with 39 respondents, the second highest was in the Group 1 with 30 respondents as well as in Group 2 with the same amount of 30 respondents. Due to the research focusing solely on women, the results exclude men from any answers.

When it comes to the respondents’ educational background, 14 out of 30 respondents in Group 1 have completed a bachelor’s degree of and 12 respondents have completed either high or vocational school. These two categories had the highest response rate. On the other hand, 13 of the respondents are working under either permanent or temporary employment contract in this group and majority of 17 respondents are currently a student. Whereas for Group 2 the majority is split into two groups: they either have a bachelor’s degree or a diploma from a university of applied sciences, regarding their educational background. For Group 3, the majority have stated a master’s degree or a diploma from a university of applied sciences as their highest level of education that is completed. Both Group 2 and 3 have the majority (22 and 38 respondents respectively) working

under permanent employment contract currently. In Figure 4 the approximate yearly incomes can be seen by the number of respondents with respect to their assigned groups.

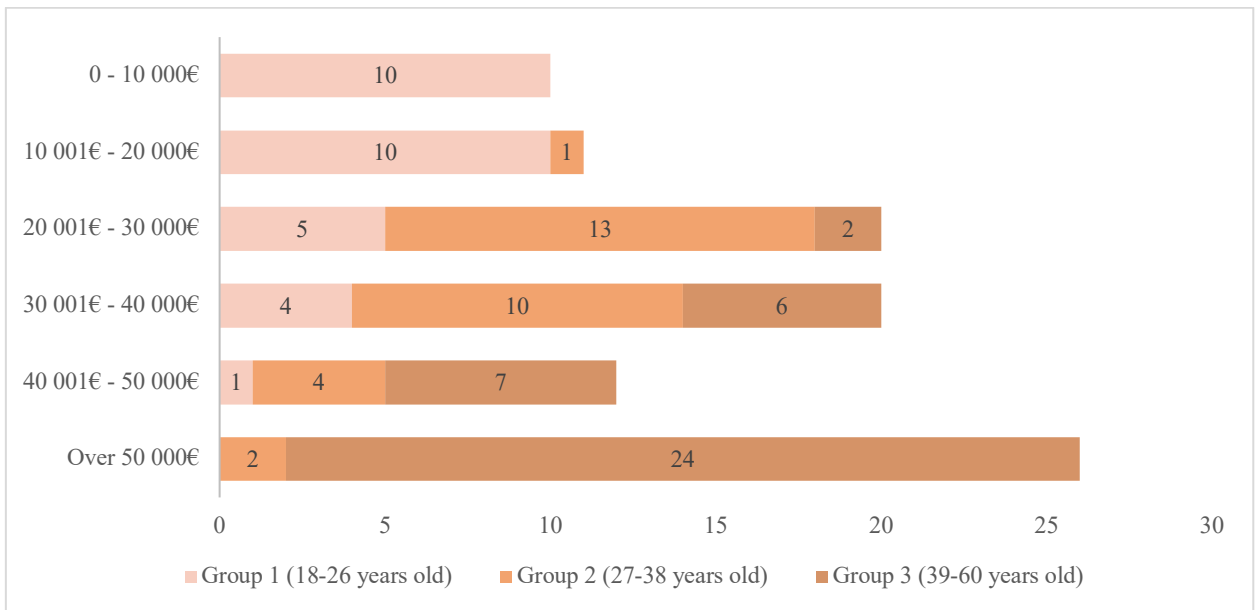


Figure 4

Source: Leino (2021), Approximate Yearly Income

It can be clearly seen from Figure 4 that the respondents from Group 3, as a majority, have the highest approximate yearly income and that Group 1 as a majority has approximate income of mainly 0 to 20 000€ a year.

### 3.3. DATA ANALYSIS

In the questionnaire the author had divided the questions into five separate sections. All of these sections will be further discussed later. The first part was to gather general information about the respondents' personal skincare routines and preferences concerning skincare products. This section consisted of seven close-ended questions and one open-ended question. In the second section the author focused on the respondents' brand familiarity, and purchasing preferences given different hypothetical situations. This section consisted of five close-ended questions and two open-ended questions. In the third section of the questionnaire different factors that the respondents might consider when making a purchasing decision were asked as well as questions related to three senses that were covered earlier in this thesis: touch, smell, and look of skincare products. All of the four questions in this section were close-ended. In the fourth section, the author presented questions that give an indication of the respondents' buying behaviour. This section had

eight close-ended questions. The fifth and final section had four close-ended questions about the respondents' demographical information. These were covered in the previous subchapter.

For this data-analysis the author will cover the questionnaire sections by respect to their original order. Across all of the age groups, majority showed interest towards skincare in general. This question was measured with a linear scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is “not at all” and 5 is “very interested”. Only one respondent answered with the option 1, so it can be seen from Figure 5 that most respondents show at least some interest towards skincare. The most answered levels of interest were 4 and 5 which indicates high interest towards skincare among the respondents. Only three respondents showed minimal interest towards skincare and this was in the Group 3.

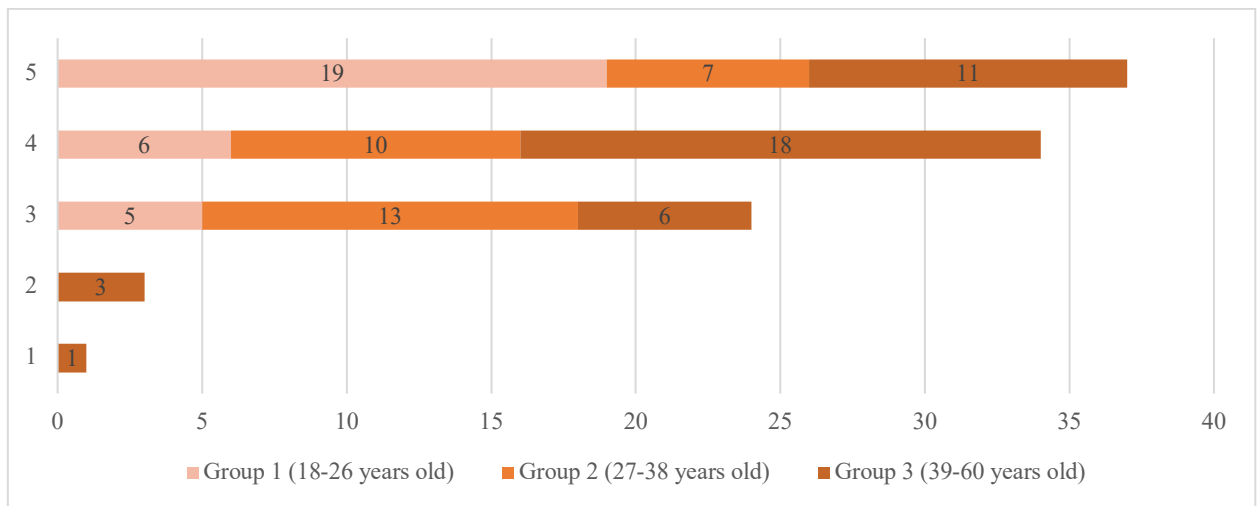


Figure 5

Source: Leino (2021), Interest Level Towards Skincare

Next, five different time options were given regarding the respondents' daily skincare routine, and three respondents stated that they do not have a skincare routine, therefore indicating that 96 respondents do have a skincare routine of some sort. When it comes to the respondents' daily skincare routine, majority of them (46 out of 99) spend between 4 to 6 minutes on it. In all three groups there were a total of eight individuals who stated that it takes them more than 10 minutes to complete their daily skincare routine. From Figure 6 it can be seen that majority of the respondents (49 out of 99) do use skincare products targeted towards their age group. These types of products can be identified, i.e., as anti-aging (typically marketed for aging skin), or acne prevention (typically marketed towards teenagers) products. On the other hand, 28 respondents were not sure whether or not they are using products directed to the respondent's specific age



group as well as 15 respondents stating that they do not use products targeted towards their age group.

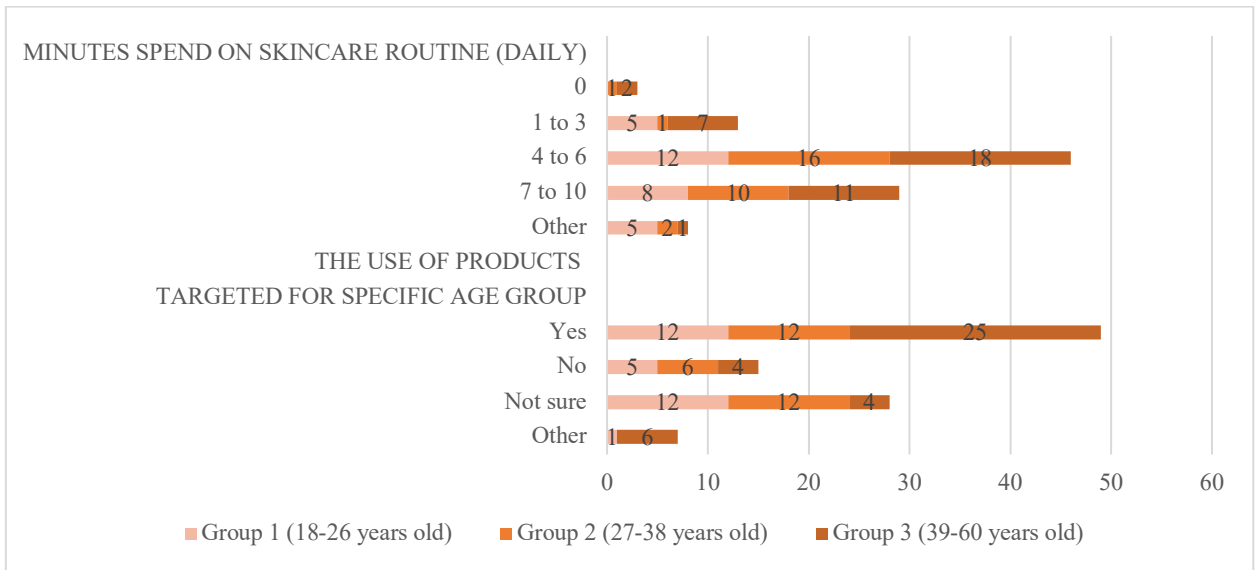


Figure 6

Source: Leino (2021), Minutes Spent Daily on Skincare Routine & The Use of Products Targeted for Specific Age Group

Next, the author will cover the usage of different skincare products by the groups. For Group 1 the majority of respondents stated that they use makeup remover, eye makeup remover, facial cleanser, serum, sunscreen, and toner once a day. Majority of the respondents (22 out of 30) in Group 1 stated that moisturizer is used the most out of all products in this group: twice a day. However, eye cream and toner are being used the least as part of their skincare routine as 11 respondents stated that they ‘never’ use eye cream and 8 respondents stating they ‘never’ use toner. The one variable that stood out the most was that 13 respondents stated that they ‘never’ use eye makeup remover. Both facial masks and exfoliating products are most commonly used at least once a week.

As for Group 2, the products that are used daily by the majority are: makeup remover, eye makeup remover, facial cleanser, toner, and eye cream. Following in the Group 1’s foot-steps, the most used product is also moisturizer in addition to makeup remover. Eight respondents out of 30 in Group 2 use sunscreen once a day as well as 12 respondents using facial masks once a month and 16 respondents using exfoliating products once a week. Lastly, for Group 3, the daily used products are: eye makeup remover, facial cleanser, moisturizer, and eye cream. The most used products in this group were facial cleanser, toner, serum, moisturizer, and eye cream as they are used twice a day. The most divided answers were for facial masks where 10 respondents stated that they ‘never’ use them and nine other stated that they use them ‘once a week’ as well as 14 respondents stating

that they ‘never’ use exfoliation products and 13 respondents stating they ‘never’ use makeup remover.

By inspecting these answers, it is no surprise that the product declared as the respondents’ favorite skincare product across all groups is moisturizer when asked ‘what is your favorite skincare product?’ with 42 out of 99 respondents stating this. The next most favored product was serum. The most looked benefit in a skincare product across all three groups was ‘hydrating’. Lastly, it was asked whether or not the respondents believe that natural ingredients are better for their skin. Out of 99 respondents, 35 stated that they do in fact believe that natural ingredients are better for their skin whereas 48 stated ‘maybe’ as their answer. On the other hand, 15 out of 99 respondents stated that they do not believe that these ingredients are better for their skin. One outlier was in Group 1 where one respondent stated that natural ingredients are better for the skin “*in some products yes, but not all*”.

Table 2

<p><i>“Daily skin protecting from sun and aging. Maintaining hydrations and firmness.” (Group 1)</i></p>
<p><i>“A lot! I love skincare and I’m always in search for the perfect products for my skin” (Group 1)</i></p>
<p><i>“Taking care of myself” (Group 1)</i> <i>“taking care of the skin” (Group 1)</i> <i>“I take care of my skin - healthy and natural skin is best!” (Group 3)</i></p>
<p><i>“Daily cleansing and refreshing moments, clean skin brings a good feeling” (Group 3)</i> <i>“I feel much better and healthier when my skin is in good condition.” (Group 2)</i> <i>“It’s way to relax and it makes me feel good when I take care of myself.” (Group 1)</i> <i>“my own relaxing moment when kids are asleep and I can concentrate to my self for a moment.” (Group 2)</i></p>

Source: Leino (2021), What Does Skincare Mean to You?

In the second section of the questionnaire the author decided to focus mainly on skincare brands and related all the questions towards that main topic. In the first question of this section, the respondents were asked to select all the brands that they are familiar with, and also to state any possible brands that were not listed. Throughout all three groups the top three of brands that were familiar to respondents were the same. These three were 1. Lumene, 2. Clinique, and 3. Nivea. When asked to state the favorite brand, 21 out of the 99 respondents stated Lumene, 14 respondents stated Clinique, and The Ordinary received 10 replies as a favorite skincare brand. Linked with

the previous question, the number one factor that makes the respondents' brand their favorite is 'quality' which was mentioned by 51 out of the total respondent amount. Price was stated as the next most important factor by 29 respondents and the third most important factor turned out to be 'suitability to own needs' with 14 responses.

To get a sense of brand loyalty from the respondents, the author asked a question relating to how often the respondents tend to alternate between brands. With the question '*In your opinion, do you alternate between brands?*' to get some insight on this matter. As shown in Figure 7, the most answers can be seen in the category "Yes, but only for experimental/comparison reasons". This category rounded up to 36 votes out of the total 99 respondents, therefore making it the biggest reason why the respondents alternate between brands. Not one respondent sticks with one brand always and only three respondents are indifferent of the skincare brand that they are using.

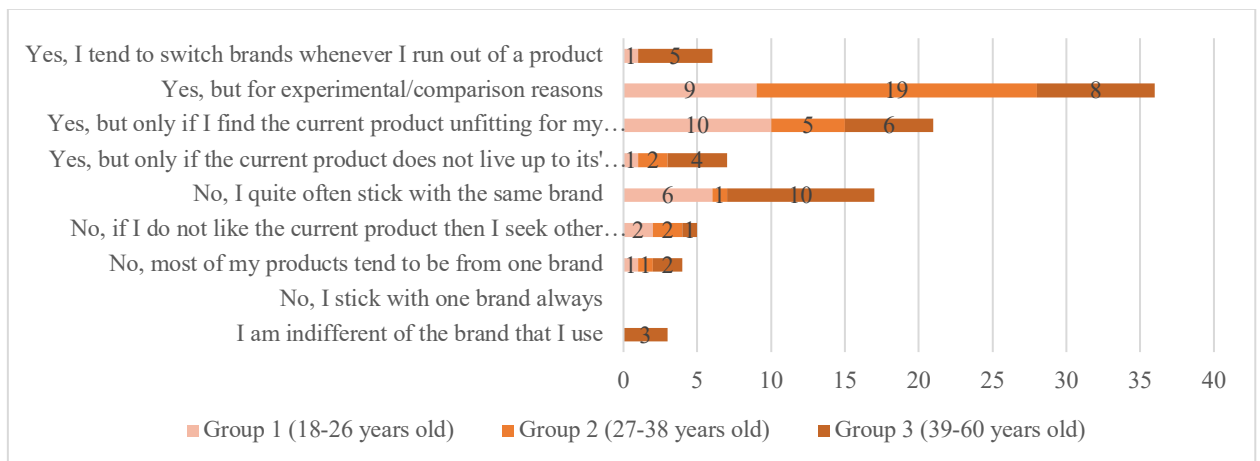


Figure 7

Source: Leino (2021), Alternation Between Brands

The three final questions for this section can be seen in Figure 8. The questions' aim was to find out just exactly how likely the respondents would either repurchase or try other products from a certain brand or how likely they would recommend a certain brands' products to their friends or family depending on the satisfaction of the product. Throughout all three groups, it can be seen on the first question that the majority of the respondents replied with number 5 which indicated 'very likely' on the questionnaires. On the contrary, number 1 represented 'not at all' on the questionnaires. For the second question 44 respondents replied that they would 'very likely' try other products from a certain brand if they were satisfied with one product that was purchased from them. For the last question, 64 of the 99 respondents would very likely repurchase from a

certain brand again if they experienced satisfaction with one of their products. In all of these questions, only one respondent selected number 1 as their answer, which indicates strong willingness on the majority's behalf to contribute on some level of brand loyalty.

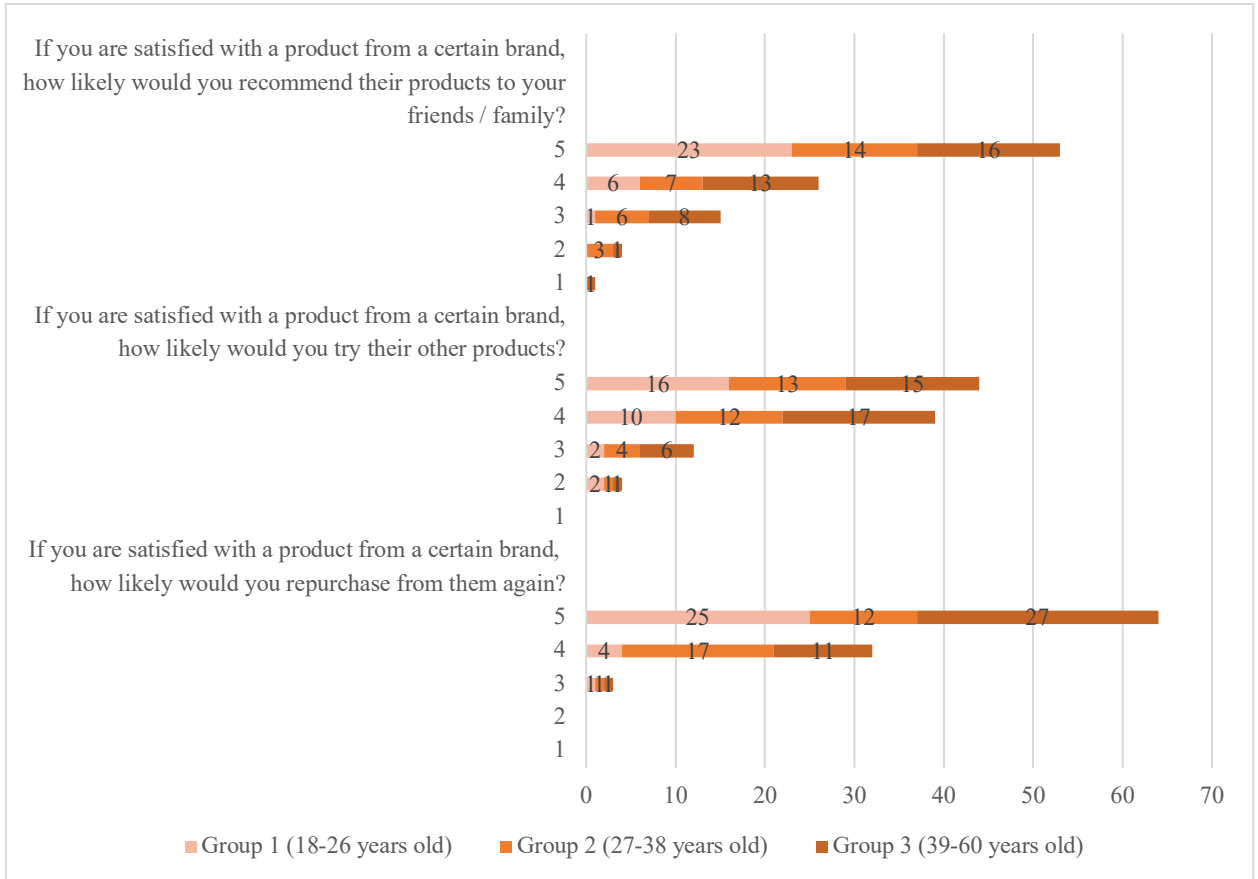


Figure 8

Source: Leino (2021), Satisfaction Variables in Skincare Brands

For the third section of the questionnaire, the author created questions related to different factors that can influence the respondents' consumer behaviour. In the first question, which can be seen in appendix 1, the author asked the respondents to list the three most important factors that they might experience as an important factor while making purchasing decisions. The three most important factors that were listed in all three groups, were 'suitability to own needs', 'quality', and 'promised effects of the product'. For the second most important factor, 'product reviews', 'quality', and 'ecological aspects' were listed as the top three factors in all three groups. Lastly, 'produced in Finland', 'new to the market', and 'brand' were listed as the third most important factors.

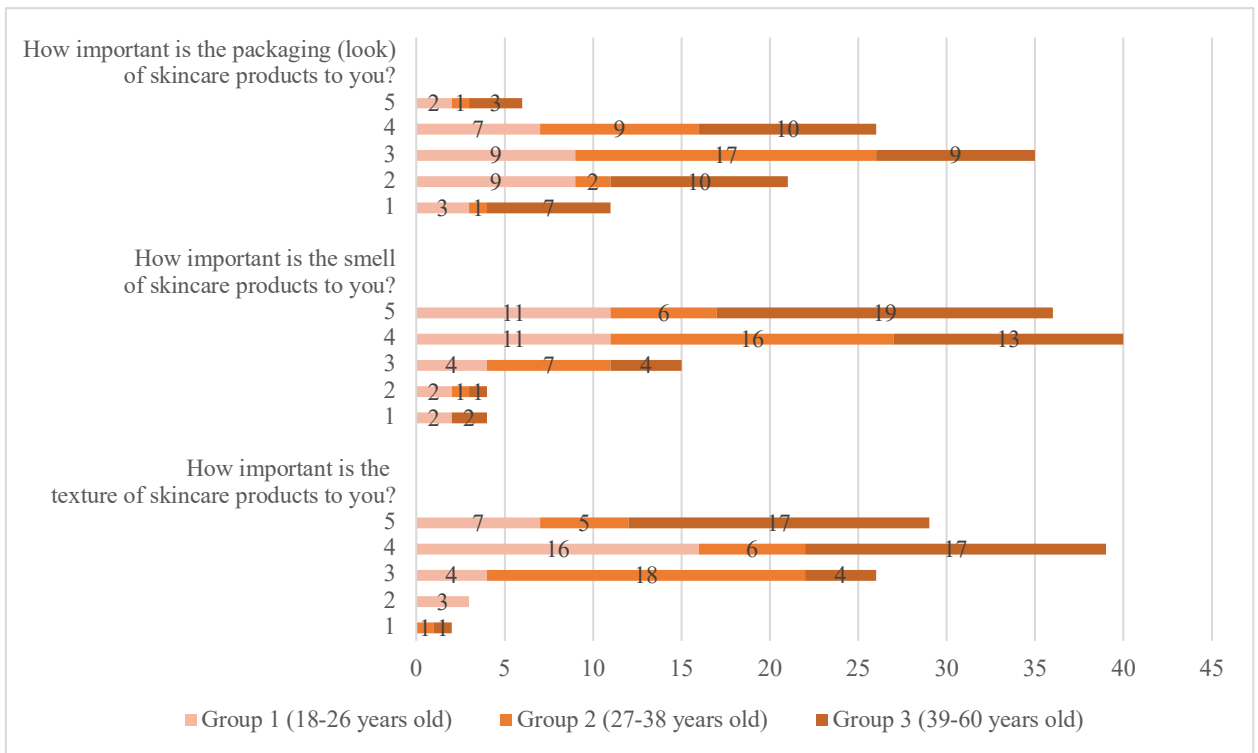


Figure 9

Source: Leino (2021), Importance of Different Factors in Skincare Products

As shown in Figure 9, on a scale 1 (not at all) to 5 (very important), 35 respondents are neutral on the outlook of a skincare product. On the other hand, 40 of the respondents stated that the scent of skincare products is ‘important’. Lastly, 39 responded the texture of skincare products as ‘important’. It is clear, that the scent of skincare products plays the biggest part when considering the answers of all three age groups. It is common that people have sensitivities towards ingredients that create fragrances within skincare products and therefore some companies have brought out alternative products marketed as ‘suitable for sensitive skin’ and eliminating fragrance inducing ingredients from them. This is a great alternative for people who do not enjoy any fragrances in their products or skin types that cannot handle these types of ingredients.

In the last section of the questionnaire, the author focuses on questions linked to the behavioural aspects of the respondents as well as their behaviour when it comes to collecting information about skincare products. The first two questions, that can be seen in appendix 1 were related to how often the respondents read product reviews before purchasing either a new product or a product from a new brand. Before purchasing a new product, out of 99 respondents, 35 stated that they ‘sometimes’ read product reviews. Other 24 said that they read reviews ‘very often’ before making a purchasing decision. When it comes to purchasing from a new brand, 38 out of the total

respondent amount replied that they read product reviews ‘very often’. Also, 27 responded they ‘often’ read product reviews. Based on these replies it is clear that all of the respondents consider the product reviews as an important aspect of gaining additional information about the products that they wish to purchase as well as gaining additional information about a new brand. Based on these numbers it is clear that the respondents consider searching information about a new brand as more important. This is also highlighted through the small number of answers (5) implying that they would ‘never’ read any product reviews.

When it comes to purchasing skincare products, 71 respondents stated that they purchase them mainly from stores that specialize in beauty products. In Finland, these types of stores are, i.e., Kicks, Sokos Emotion, etc., as well as online stores. Grocery stores was stated as the second most popular option for purchasing products with 41 of the total respondent amount stating so. The third most popular option was internet with 40 replies for this option. All of the options can be seen from Figure 10.

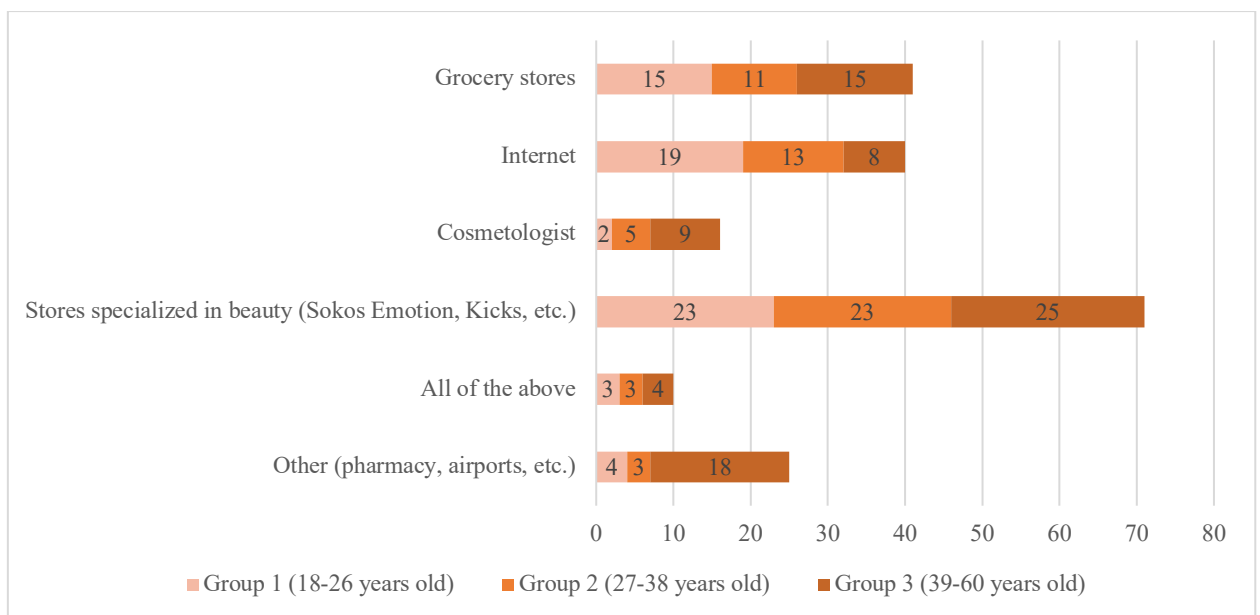


Figure 10

Source: Leino (2021), Alternatives from Where to Buy Skincare Products

When it comes to possible WOM and other intended and non-intended marketing strategies, this was measured with a simple question of “*Have you ever purchased a product based on. . .*” which was then followed by four different alternatives. These can be seen under appendix 1 as well. The most effective channel, through which most of the respondents, 85 out of 99, have reacted positively to is a recommendation by a friend or a family member. The next most effective channel was stated to be the purchase of a product based on a tester. This was stated by 68 respondents.

Third most effective channel is social media with 61 answers. The biggest channel that turned out to be the least effective was normal commercials with 24 respondents selecting this alternative. However, 29 respondents also stated that they were not sure whether or not they had purchased a product based on a normal commercial.

Next, the respondents were given two hypothetical situations related to the availability of a product they would wish to purchase. One of the situations is linked to brand loyalty and the other situation is linked to the place they would buy the product from and they were stated respectively as “*If there is no availability on the product you would like to purchase, what do you do?*” and “*If there is no availability on the product you would like to purchase in the PLACE you are trying to purchase it from, what do you do?*”. For the first situation, majority of 50 respondents stated that in the absence of a specific product they would wish to purchase, they would ‘*look for a similar alternative from the same brand*’. For the second situation, 51 responded that if the product that they would wish to purchase from a specific store/website was not available, then they would ‘*look for a similar alternative from the same store, website, etc.*’. From these answers it can be seen that brand loyalty and the comfortability of getting the product from a certain place, plays a big part when considering the purchase of a specific skincare product.

To get more knowledge about the respondents’ main sources of information regarding skincare, the author asked to list the three most important sources from the respondents. The calculations showed that the number one source across all three groups is WOM by 46 total answers. Not only is it the number one source, but it also the biggest category as a second main source of information with 28 answers. The third main source with a total of 26 answers was proven to be YouTube.

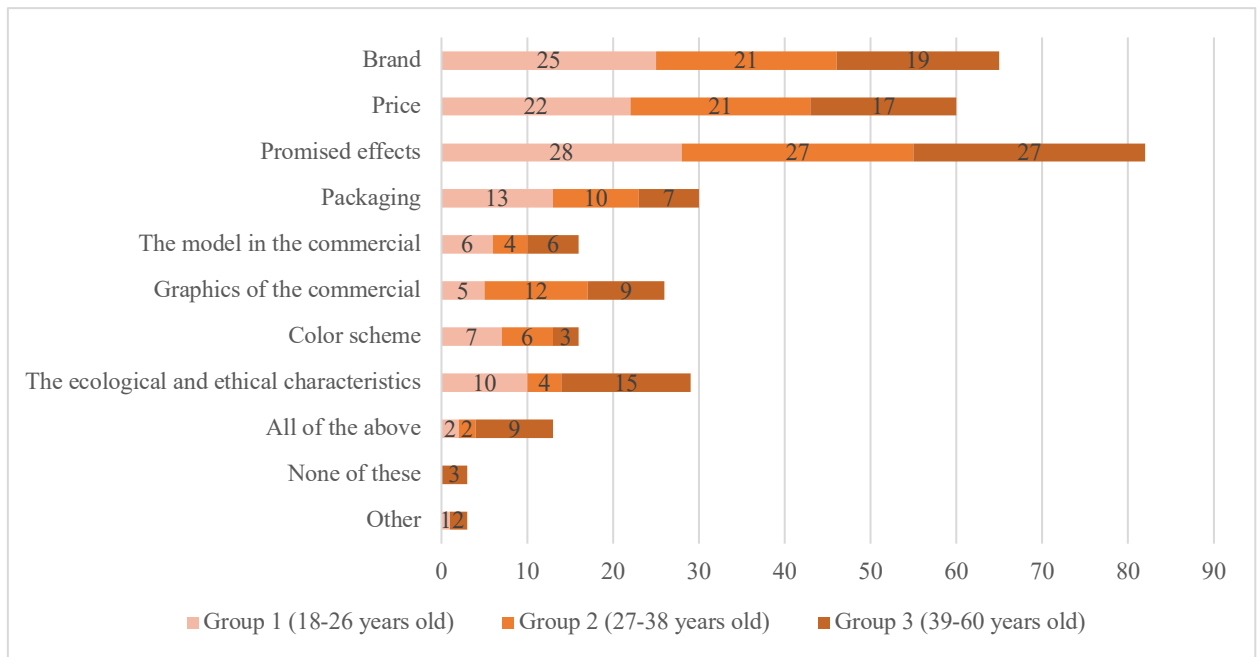


Figure 11

Source: Leino (2021), Aspects of Skincare Advertising

Lastly, the respondents were asked about what aspects they pay attention to related to skincare advertising. This was a multiple-choice question, and it was asked to ‘select all that apply’ in the respondent’s opinion. As can be seen from Figure 11 the number one aspect, with 82 total responses, that is being focused on are the ‘promised effects’ of a product, second most important being ‘brand’ with 65 responses, and third most important ‘price’ with 60 responses. What was found as one of the most positively surprising factors concerning advertising was the ‘ecological and ethical characteristics’ with 29 out of 99 respondents stating this is something they pay attention to.

### 3.4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section the author discusses the results that were gained from the online questionnaire and reflects these results with the literature overview. Starting off with the demographics of the respondents, out of 99 respondents 100% were women, since this thesis focuses solely on women’s purchasing decisions when it comes to skincare products. As mentioned earlier, the author divided the respondents into three separate age groups so that the differences could be easily compared among these groups. The majority of the respondents fell under Group 3 that consisted of ages between 39 and 60 years old. This group had 39% of the total respondent amount with 39 out of 99 respondents in it. The second biggest group was Group 1 tied with Group 2 with both containing



30% of the total respondents. It consisted 30 respondents out of 99. The author did not see it necessary to further inquire about the respondents' living locations, since it was made sure each respondent was a woman living in Finland before giving them access to the online questionnaire. The category of which the respondents declared as their 'educational highest level completed' was bachelor's degree with 35 respondents selecting this throughout all three age groups. When comparing the educational background and the approximate yearly income it became clear to the author that the people in Group 2 and 3 had both more advanced educational background as well as bigger approximate yearly income. This can also be related due to their longer time in the workforce versus in Group 1. Also, when compared to the Groups 1 and 2, Group 3 seemed to be the most alert when it came to using skincare products that were targeted towards their personal age group.

Although eWOM was highlighted in the theoretical background, the traditional word-of-mouth stood out strongly throughout the respondents' answers in this research. Across all three age groups, it became clear to the author that the respondents rely heavily on the good and bad opinions that either their friends, family, or peers share with them about skincare products. The second biggest aspect did turn out to be the trust towards eWOM. In this thesis this could be indicated through the respondents' inclination towards trusting people on social media, such as YouTubers, on the matters related to skincare. These sorts of inclinations are linked with the attitudes of the respondents. It matters from whom these opinions are coming from and how the respondent chooses to react to it. Once the respondent has received an opinion on a product, either has a positive or negative *affective* reaction and then acts accordingly to those feelings. Depending on the affective reactions of the respondent's experiences, then they would strictly correlate with the *cognitive* responses of the respondent which highlight on the beliefs the respondent has towards the attitude object, which in this case would either be the person sharing the opinions of a product, the product itself, or the brand that carries the product. After these two responses the respondent would act on their *conative* response which would lead them to either try out the product, or not. Table by Ajzen (1989) was provided as a more visual representation of these aspects.

In accordance with the previous findings that were stated in the body text, brand loyalty does indeed play a huge part in the skincare industry according to the findings in this thesis. As presented in Figure 8, the most answers were collected in the 'very likely' category when asked about different variable outcomes related to satisfaction from a certain skincare brand. This supports Veloutsou's (2007) findings about the relationship between consumer's emotional

connection and interactivity with a brand does in fact create a strong engagement. The answers from the respondents in this thesis indicate that they would more than likely prefer a certain brand in the future, if they are happy and have experienced satisfaction with the brand's product. However, as seen on Figure 7 not one respondent replied that they would only stick with just one brand. This can indicate, for example, that the respondents do indeed have several skincare products from different brands, but still retain a certain kind of attachment or preference towards one or more skincare brands. Also, in the findings in this thesis it became clear to the author that 15 out of 35 respondents would indeed rather look for a similar alternative from the same brand rather than look products from other brands if there was no availability on a specific product that they are looking for. This finding supports Kathman's (2002) findings about customer retention and loyalty towards the brand as well as satisfaction being considered as a precursor of loyalty towards a brand.

Next the author presents correlations between the findings and 'senses' part of the theoretical background as well as links in different stimuli and advertisements. These aspects are also part of the purchasing decision connected to consumer decision-making. As stated earlier, 40 respondents feel that the scent in skincare products is the most important or noticeable aspect. The author did link this to the possibilities of people having a sensitive skin and that there are separate products in the market that are marketed as 'suitable for sensitive skin'. These types of products have minimal or zero percentage of fragrance in them. On the other hand, for some people it can be simply a choice of preference of not having any fragrance in their skincare products. As stated by Peck & Childers (2003), the importance of touch or feel does play a big part, even when it comes to the purchasing decisions in skincare products with 39 respondents stating this as 'important'. Although, with skincare products this aspect could be defined as the feel of the product packaging as well as the actual product inside of the packaging as well. For example, some people might prefer their moisturizer in a gel form whereas others might prefer it in a lotion form. Lastly, the outlook of skincare products (packaging, design, etc.) was stated as a 'neutral' aspect by 35 of the respondents and therefore playing the least important role when it comes to the aspects of senses.

To the author's surprise, the responses that were received in respect to different stimuli's concerning skincare products, were not as straight-forward as thought. When asked the respondents about what are the most important factors that they focus on in skincare products, the author believed the packaging and brand to play a bigger part than they did. For her surprise, the most important factors were '*suitability to own needs*', '*quality*', and '*promised effects of the*

*product*'. However, the '*physical features of product (look, smell, feel)*' did play one of the second biggest parts in this question. This is in correlation to the previous chapter as well as Solomon's (2011) figure about perceptual process. It is easy for consumers to go back to a certain product or brand once they have established a connection to them through selective retention. For example, if the product is suitable to the consumer's needs, then, as stated by Kotler & Armstrong (2019), they are more likely remember these positive aspects and can even forget the positive aspects of a competitor. This is also supported by Solomon (2019), stating that consumers would be more open to add new brands into their evoked set over alternative set even if the company of alternative set would provide additional positive information about a certain product. This exhibits the unwillingness of consumers to giving a chance to the alternative set's products.

For the last part, information search, and evaluation of alternatives aspects are inspected further. These are all part of the consumer decision-making process, excluding problem recognition and post-purchase behaviour since they were covered in the theoretical background already. The information search is heavily relied on the WOM as stated in the earlier chapters. However, when asked if the respondents look for additional information about a new product or a new brand, which in the case of this thesis was considered to be product reviews, 35 said that they 'sometimes' do and 24 said that they 'very often' do read product reviews before purchasing a new product. On the other hand, 38 said that they 'very often' read the reviews before purchasing from a new brand whereas another 27 said that they 'often' read them. These are strictly corresponding to the Solomon's (2019) mentions of the consumer looking for the appropriate data before making a purchasing decision.

For the evaluation of alternatives, it can be concluded based on the answers provided by the respondents, that the respondents lean more into the evoked set that is presented by Solomon (2019). Evoked set is where a consumer would rather purchase an alternative that is already familiar to them, rather than choosing a new alternative. However, 36 respondents stated that they do alternate between brands mainly for experimental or comparison reasons. This finding is also supported by Solomon's (2019) idea of alternative set.

### 3.5. CONCLUSIONS

The main aim of this thesis is to figure out what are the factors that consumers regard or disregard when purchasing skincare products. The additional aim of this thesis is to provide additional information on consumers' purchasing behaviours skincare companies in the current cosmetics market. The research problem of this thesis was stated as '*the lack of knowledge in factors that consumers seem to focus on or ignore when making the purchasing decisions concerning skincare products*'. Primary data was collected to gain a more fundamental information about this, and the author created an online questionnaire through Google Forms with 27 questions on it. The questionnaire had a total of 35 respondents that were all women. The questions included categories such as the respondents' skincare routines, brand loyalty and brand recognition, problem solving, decision-making, and stimuli importance related to skincare products as well as advertising.

Three research questions were set for this thesis. The first research question is '*what are the brands that consumers prefer when it comes to skincare products?*'. When asked this of the respondents, the one brand that stood out more than any else was Lumene, a Finnish cosmetics brand. The second most favoured was Clinique and in the third place was the brand The Ordinary. For the second research question, '*what are the most and least important factors that influence the consumers' purchasing decisions?*', the factors that revealed to be the most important are the product's quality, suitability to own needs, promised effects of the product (i.e., hydrating, regenerating, brightening), and affordability. The least important factors turned out to be the ecological aspects of a product as well as product reviews. For the third and final research question, '*what are the consumers' courses of actions, when there is no availability on a specific skincare product they wish to purchase?*', the most common answer was to look for a similar alternative from the same brand and therefore highlighting the fact that consumers take brand strongly into consideration whilst making a purchasing decision.

The power of word-of-mouth and eWOM were proven to be substantial factors when it comes to skincare marketing. Good experiences are a strong advertising tool for brands but can also do harm if satisfaction is not felt by the consumers. Brand loyalty is extremely present whilst consumers are making their purchasing decisions. Consumers can favor brand or brands strongly and even though if a competitor brand comes out with a similar product, the consumer would most likely consider it, but would eventually stay faithful to the brands that are already familiar. Quality is the

most important factor looked for in a skincare product whereas the ecological aspects are mostly ignored. When it came to the aspects of decision-making, table by Ajzen (1989) was proven to be an accurate visual representation of the verbal and nonverbal aspects and how they work. The number one thing that the respondents pay attention to in skincare advertisements was clear to be the promised effects of the product. The least attention paid to is the color scheme of advertisement as well as the model, if there was to be one.

In correlation to these findings the author suggests the following as suggestions to skincare companies. Firstly, if a skincare company has a store of their own then they need to make sure that everything from their displays and store upkeep to staff behaviour is excellent. These are some things that have a huge effect on WOM. Not forgetting to upkeep the same standards on their company's website, if they have one. It is also shown from the research results that it pays off to include the promised effects of a skincare product as well as its quality into their marketing techniques since it was proven to be the biggest deal-breaker when choosing between different skincare product alternatives. On the contrary it became clear that color-scheme is not something that the respondents of this questionnaire pay any attention to which gives a strong indication to marketing departments not to put in too much effort in deciding what colors to use.

With regards to the questionnaire, the author could have inserted questions related to the ongoing pandemic and the use of facial masks and how they have affected the respondents' skin and any changes in skincare routines, products etc. This was however realized after the questionnaires were sent to the respondents. The research was very restrictive whilst only taking women into account and ignoring the male sided market all together. This can be easily fixed by doing a research also including men. For future research possibilities one of the categories could be chosen and include more exclusive questions related to just one category. This would give more in-depth answers in respect to more specific problems. Lastly, more countries could be inserted into the research. For example, the addition of different Nordic or Scandinavian countries would not only increase the number of respondents but also give more varied answers due to geographical locations when taking into consideration the differences in climate or weather.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1. The Online Questionnaire



### Factors affecting the purchasing decisions of skincare products among female consumers in Finland

Hello,

This questionnaire is created as a primary data collection method for Spring 2021 Bachelor's Thesis for Nora Maria Mikaela Leino at Tallinn University of Technology, Department of International Business Administration.

The objective of this questionnaire is to gain a more in-depth understanding of respondents' different behavioral aspects when it comes to their purchasing behavior as well as their personal preferences in skincare products.

The answers are anonymous, therefore protecting respondents' identity, as well as handled with confidentiality by the receiver.

Filling out this questionnaire will take approximately 4-8 minutes

I would like to thank the respondents for taking the time from their day to fill out this questionnaire ☺

If there are any questions related to this questionnaire, do not hesitate to contact me:

[noraleino@gmail.com](mailto:noraleino@gmail.com)

or

+358 40 170 5203

\*Pakollinen

## Skincare 1/4

In this section we will cover the primary skincare related questions.

Contact information regarding any questions: [noraleino@gmail.com](mailto:noraleino@gmail.com) or +358 40 170 5203

How interested are you about skincare? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very interested

On average, I use \_\_\_ minutes on my daily (morning and night combined) skincare routine \*

- I do not have a skincare routine
- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-10
- Other (please specify below)
- Muu: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you buy skincare products that are targeted towards your age group? Select one that applies best \*

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Other (please specify below)
- Muu: \_\_\_\_\_

How often do you use these following products? \*

	Never	Once a day	Twice a day	Once a week	Twice a week	Once a month	Once a year
Makeup remover	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eye makeup remover	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facial cleanser	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Toner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Serum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moisturizer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eye cream	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sunscreen (for face)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facial masks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exfoliating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

What is your favorite skincare product? Moisturizer, serum, toner, etc. (if no preference, leave empty)

Oma vastauksesi \_\_\_\_\_

For the following products, what benefits are you looking for?

	Hydrating	Acne prevention	Brightening	Firming	Regenerating	Repairing	I do not search for any specific benefit
Facial cleanser	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Toner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Serum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moisturizer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eye cream	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facial masks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exfoliating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you believe that natural ingredients are better for your skin? Select one that applies best \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Other (please specify below)
- Muu: \_\_\_\_\_

Shortly in your own words, what does skincare mean to you?

Oma vastauksesi \_\_\_\_\_

## Skincare 2/4

In this section we will cover questions related to brands in skincare.

Contact information regarding any questions: [noraleino@gmail.com](mailto:noraleino@gmail.com) or +358 40 170 5203

Which of the following brands are you FAMILIAR with? Select all that apply \*



Nivea



Estée Lauder



Clinique



Dior



Garnier



L'Oréal



Herbina



Oriflame



Lancôme



Lumene



Yves Rocher



The Body Shop



Neutrogena



Holika Holika



The Ordinary



It's Skin



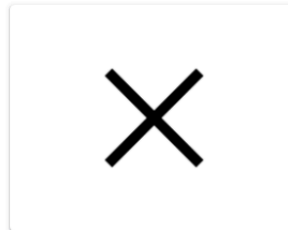
Huxley



Klairs



Missha



None of these are familiar to me

Muu:



Other (please specify to the box to right)

What is your favorite skincare brand? (if no preference, leave empty)

Oma vastauksesi

What are the factors that make the brand mentioned above your favorite? (quality, price, etc.)

Oma vastauksesi

In your opinion, do you alternate between brands? Select one that applies best \*

- Yes, I tend to switch brands whenever I run out of a product
- Yes, but for experimental/comparison reasons
- Yes, but only if I find the current product unfitting for my skin type
- Yes, but only if the current product does not live up to its' expected effects
- No, I quite often stick with the same brand
- No, if I do not like the current product then I seek other options from the same brand
- No, most of my products tend to be from one brand
- No, I stick with one brand always
- I am indifferent of the brand that I use

If you are satisfied with a product from a certain brand, how likely would you repurchase from them again? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very likely

---

If you are satisfied with a product from a certain brand, how likely would you try their other products? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very likely

---

If you are satisfied with a product from a certain brand, how likely would you recommend their products to your friends / family? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very likely



## Skincare 3/4

In this section we will cover personal preferences that come to skincare products.

Contact information regarding any questions: [noraleino@gmail.com](mailto:noraleino@gmail.com) or +358 40 170 5203

When purchasing skincare products, which of these factors are most important to you? List three (3) most important

	1st (most important)	2nd	3rd
Packaging	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Affordability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ecological	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Produced in Finland	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical features of product (look, smell, feel)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promised effects of the product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Product reviews	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New to the market	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Suitability to own needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recommendations from a friend	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How important is the texture of skincare products to you? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

How important is the smell of skincare products to you? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

How important is the packaging (look) of skincare products to you? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

## Skincare 4/4

In this section we will focus on the behavioral part of the questionnaire.

Contact information regarding any questions: [noraleino@gmail.com](mailto:noraleino@gmail.com) or +358 40 170 5203

---

Do you often read product reviews before purchasing a new product? Select one that applies best \*

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Very rarely
- Never

---

Do you often read product reviews before purchasing from a new brand? Select one that applies best \*

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Very rarely
- Never

Where do you purchase your skincare products from? Select all that apply \*

- Grocery stores
- Internet
- Cosmetologist
- Stores specialized in beauty (Sokos Emotion, Kicks, etc.)
- All of the above
- Other (please specify below)
- Muu: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Have you ever purchased a product based on... \*

	Yes	No	Not sure
... a tester?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... recommendation of a friend/family member?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... post on social media (YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... a commercial?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If there is no availability on the product you would like to purchase, what do you do? Select one that applies best \*

- Look for a similar alternative from the same brand
- Look for a similar alternative from a different brand
- Look for a different alternative from the same brand
- Look for a different alternative from a different brand
- Other (please specify below)
- Muu: \_\_\_\_\_

---

If there is no availability on the product you would like to purchase in the PLACE you are trying to purchase it from, what do you do? Select one that applies best \*

- Look for a similar alternative from the same store, website, etc.
- Look for a similar alternative from a different store, website, etc.
- Look for a different alternative from the same store, website, etc.
- Look for a different alternative from a different store, website, etc.
- Other (please specify below)
- Muu: \_\_\_\_\_

What are your main sources of skincare product information? List three (3) most important

	1st (most important)	2nd	3rd
TV	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Magazines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Instagram	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
YouTube	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pinterest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
TikTok	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Word of mouth (friends, family, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skincare professional (cosmetologist, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advertisements in public places	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In which of the following do you pay attention to in skincare advertising? Select all that apply \*

- Brand
- Price
- Promised effects
- Packaging
- The model in the commercial
- The graphics of the advertisement (video, picture, etc.)
- Color scheme of the advertisement
- The ecological and ethical characteristics of the product
- All of the above
- None of these
- Other (please specify below)
- Muu: \_\_\_\_\_

## Demographics

In this section additional information from you is needed.

Contact information regarding any questions: [noraleino@gmail.com](mailto:noraleino@gmail.com) or +358 40 170 5203

How old are you? \*

Oma vastauksesi \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of education do you have? (Select highest level completed) \*

- Compulsory education
  - High school / vocational school
  - University of Applied Sciences diploma
  - Bachelor's degree
  - Master's degree
  - Other (please specify below)
  - Muu: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

What is your occupational situation? \*

- Student
- Working under temporary employment contract
- Working under permanent employment contract
- Unemployed
- Retired

Your approximate yearly income? \*

- 0 - 10 000€
- 10 001 - 20 000€
- 20 001 - 30 000€
- 30 001 - 40 000€
- 40 001 - 50 000€
- Over 50 000€

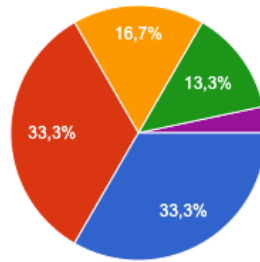
## **Appendix 2. Approximate Yearly Incomes of All Groups**

### **Group 1**



Your approximate yearly income?

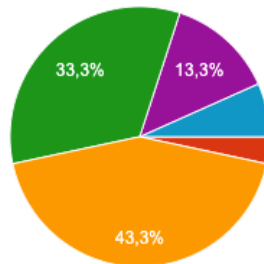
30 vastausta



## Group 2

Your approximate yearly income?

30 vastausta



## Group 3

Your approximate yearly income?

39 vastausta

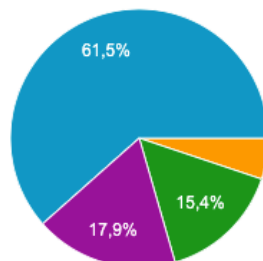


Figure 4 shows the collective data of incomes from all groups

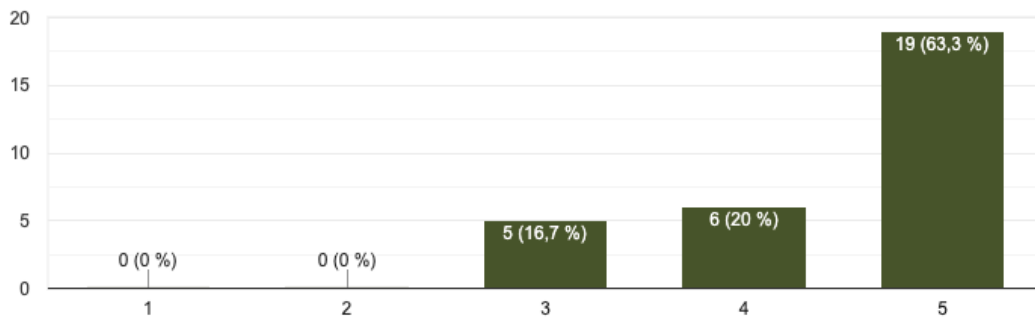
Source: Leino (2021), Online Questionnaire

## Appendix 3. The Interest Levels Towards Skincare of All Groups

### Group 1

How interested are you about skincare?

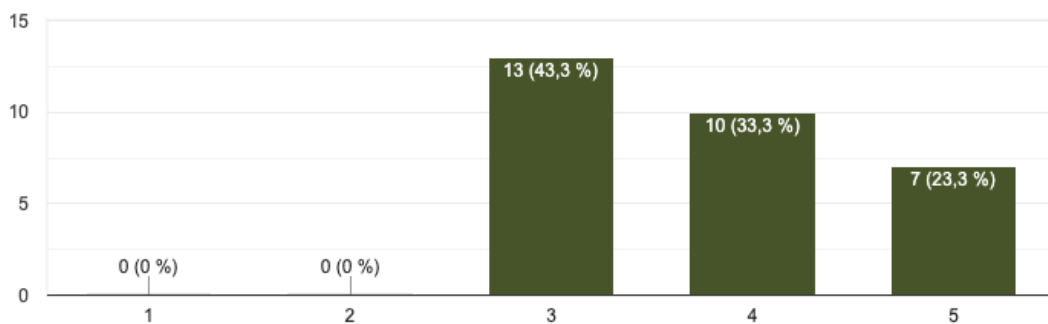
30 vastausta



### Group 2

How interested are you about skincare?

30 vastausta



### Group 3

How interested are you about skincare?

39 vastausta

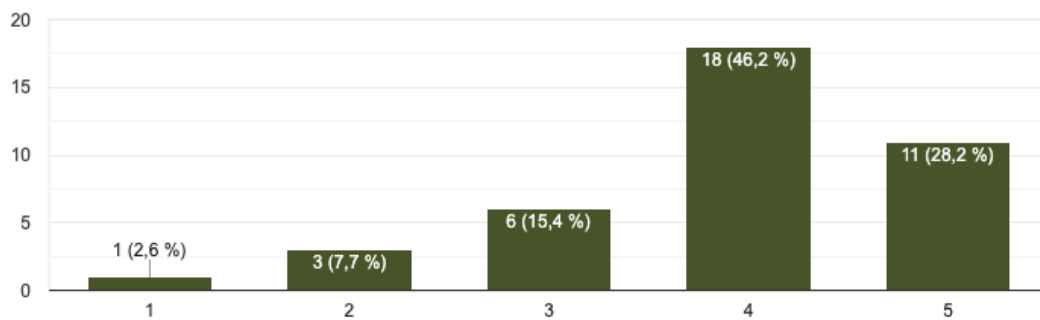


Figure 5 shows the collective data of interest levels from all groups

Source: Leino (2021), Online questionnaire

## Appendix 4. Minutes Spent Daily on Skincare Routine and the Use of Products Targeted for Specific Age Group of All Groups

### Group 1

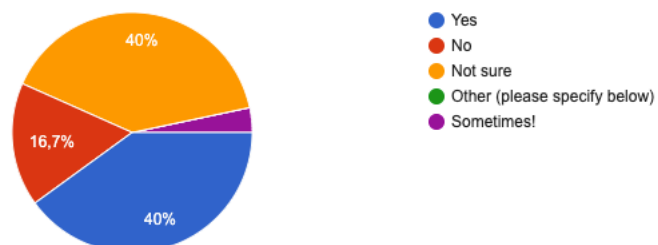
On average, I use \_\_\_ minutes on my daily (morning and night combined) skincare routine

30 vastausta



Do you buy skincare products that are targeted towards your age group? Select one that applies best

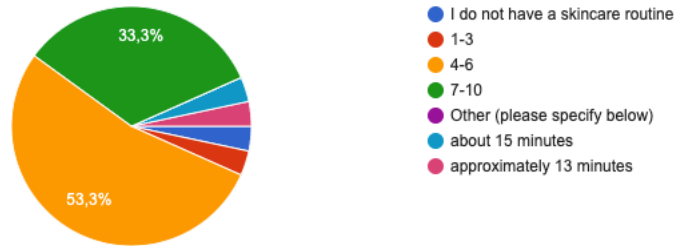
30 vastausta



### Group 2

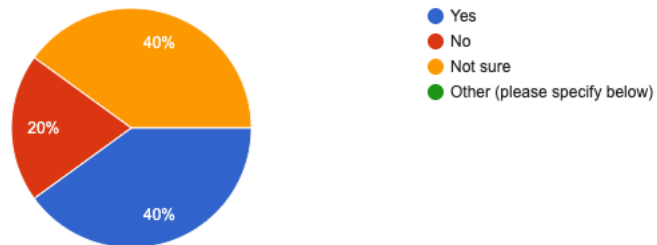
On average, I use \_\_\_ minutes on my daily (morning and night combined) skincare routine

30 vastausta



Do you buy skincare products that are targeted towards your age group? Select one that applies best

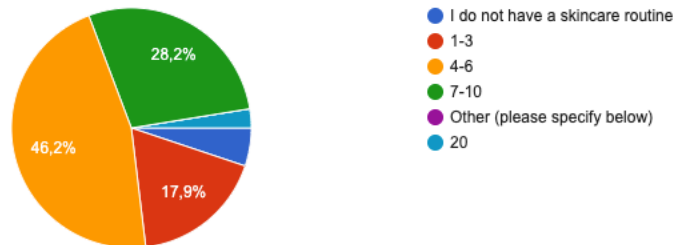
30 vastausta



### Group 3

On average, I use \_\_\_ minutes on my daily (morning and night combined) skincare routine

39 vastausta



Do you buy skincare products that are targeted towards your age group? Select one that applies best

39 vastausta

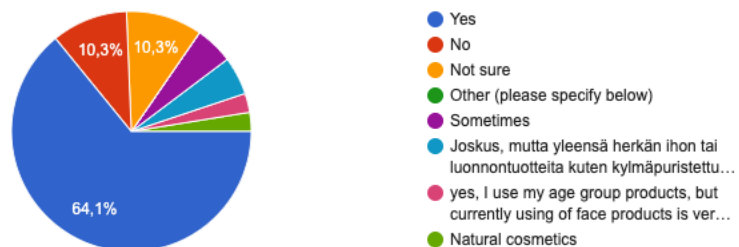


Figure 6 shows the collective data of skincare routines and use of specific products from all groups  
 Source: Leino (2021), Online questionnaire

## Appendix 5. Alternation Levels Between Brands of All Groups

### Group 1

In your opinion, do you alternate between brands? Select one that applies best

30 vastausta



### Group 2

In your opinion, do you alternate between brands? Select one that applies best

30 vastausta



### Group 3

In your opinion, do you alternate between brands? Select one that applies best

39 vastausta



Figure 7 shows the collective data of alternating between brands from all groups

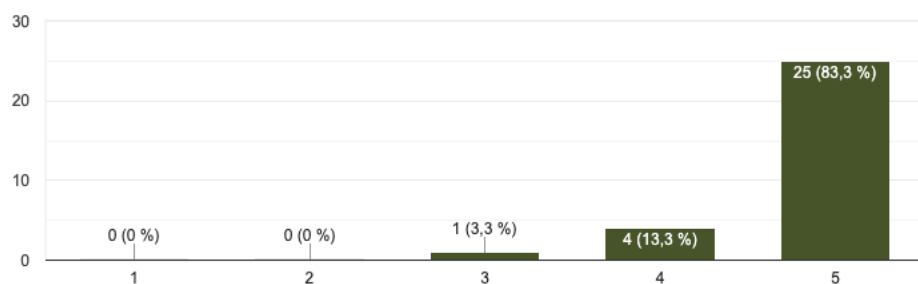
Source: Leino (2021), Online questionnaire

## Appendix 6. Satisfaction Variables in Skincare Brands of All Groups

### Group 1

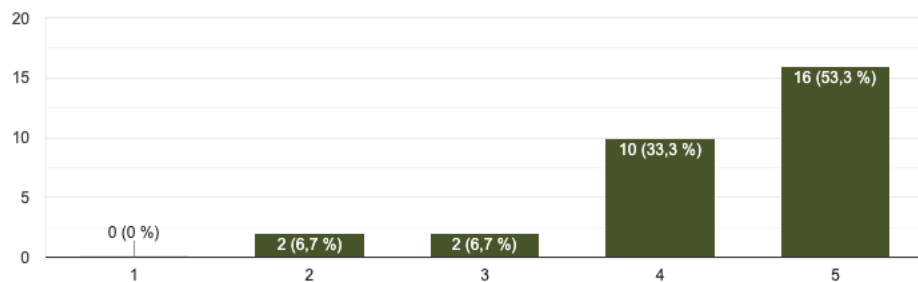
If you are satisfied with a product from a certain brand, how likely would you repurchase from them again?

30 vastausta



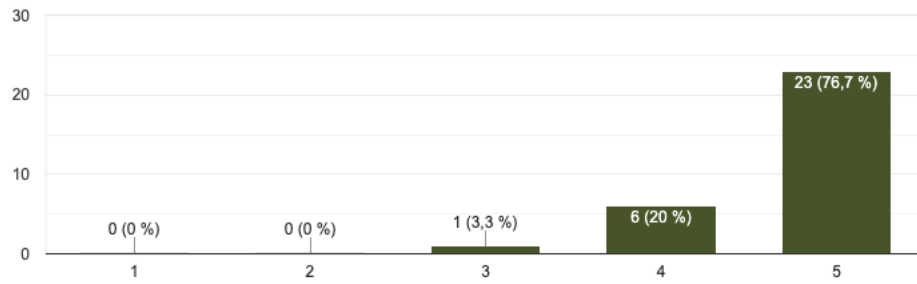
If you are satisfied with a product from a certain brand, how likely would you try their other products?

30 vastausta



If you are satisfied with a product from a certain brand, how likely would you recommend their products to your friends / family?

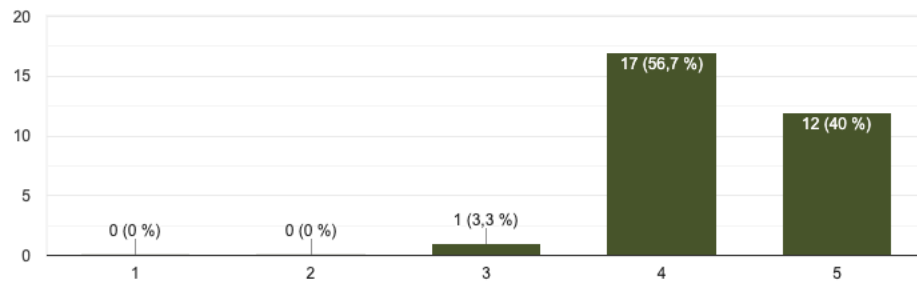
30 vastausta



## Group 2

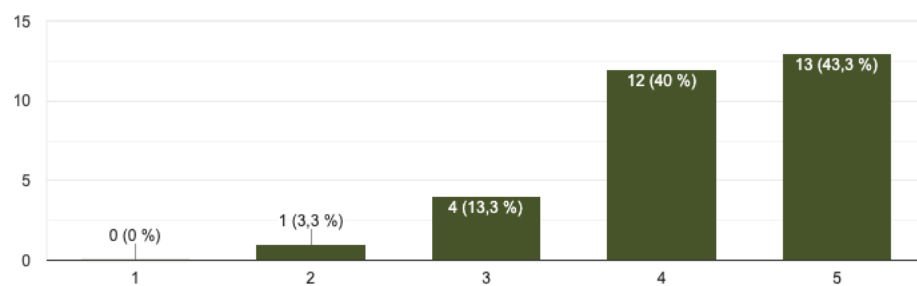
If you are satisfied with a product from a certain brand, how likely would you repurchase from them again?

30 vastausta



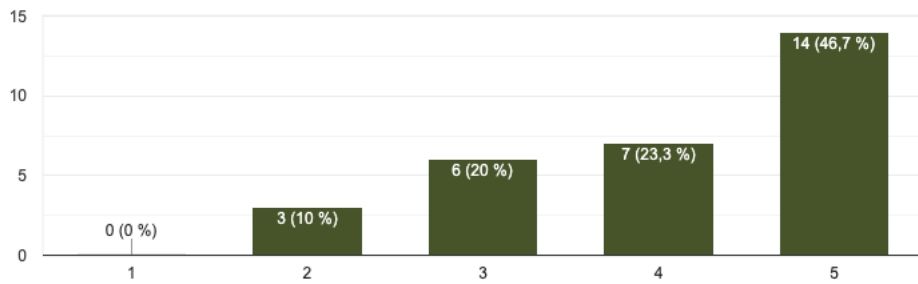
If you are satisfied with a product from a certain brand, how likely would you try their other products?

30 vastausta



If you are satisfied with a product from a certain brand, how likely would you recommend their products to your friends / family?

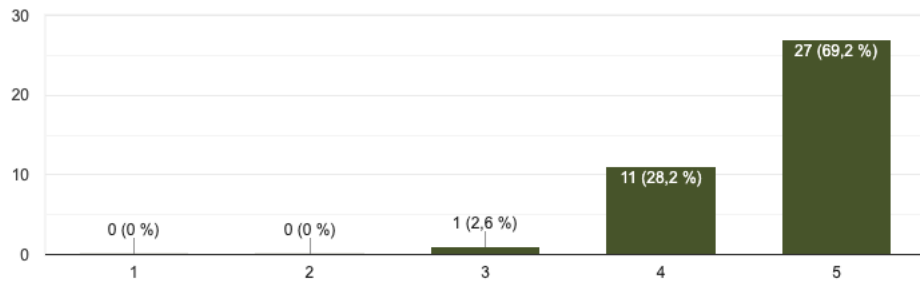
30 vastausta



### Group 3

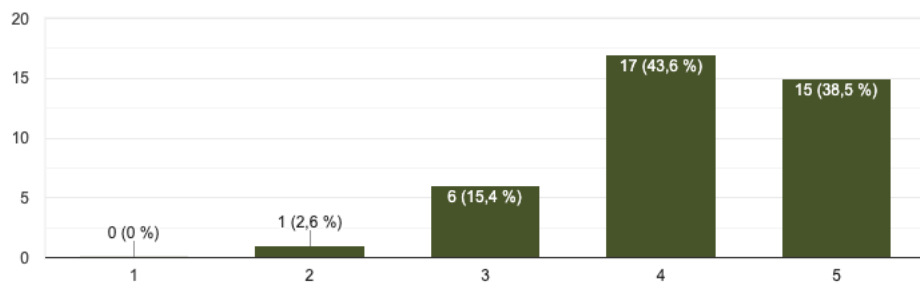
If you are satisfied with a product from a certain brand, how likely would you repurchase from them again?

39 vastausta



If you are satisfied with a product from a certain brand, how likely would you try their other products?

39 vastausta





If you are satisfied with a product from a certain brand, how likely would you recommend their products to your friends / family?

39 vastausta

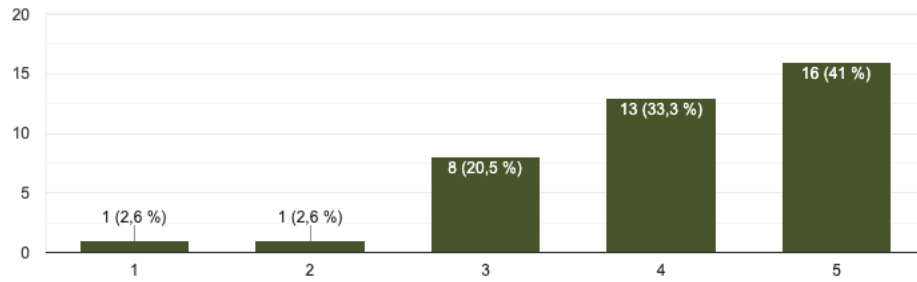


Figure 8 shows the collective data of different satisfaction variables in skincare brands from all groups

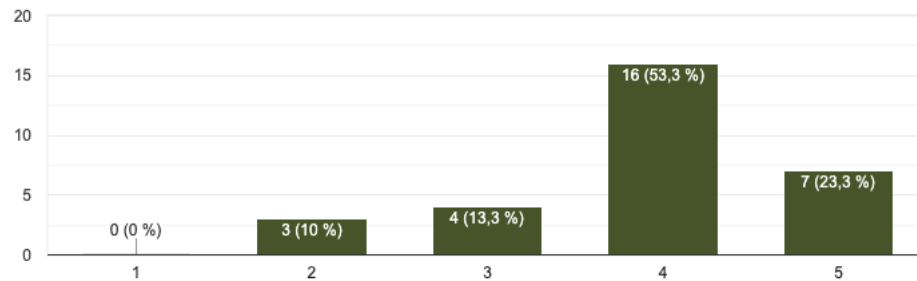
Source: Leino (2021), Online questionnaire

## Appendix 7. Importance of Different Factors in Skincare Products of All Groups

### Group 1

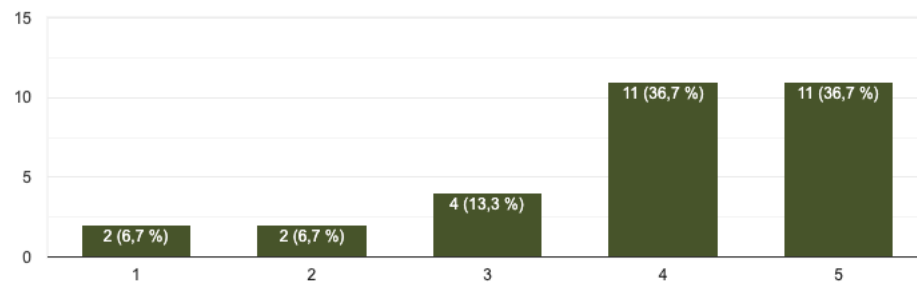
How important is the texture of skincare products to you?

30 vastausta



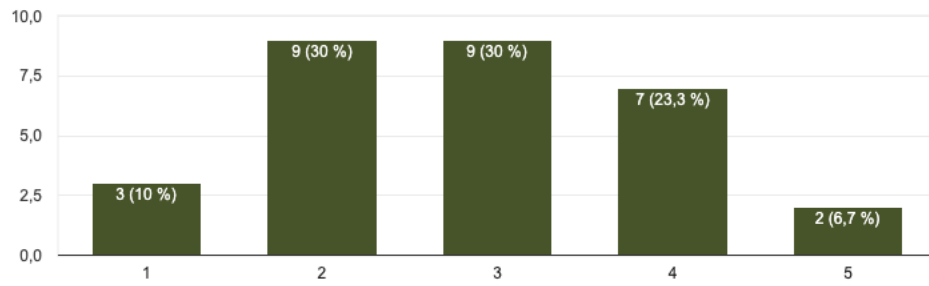
How important is the smell of skincare products to you?

30 vastausta



How important is the packaging (look) of skincare products to you?

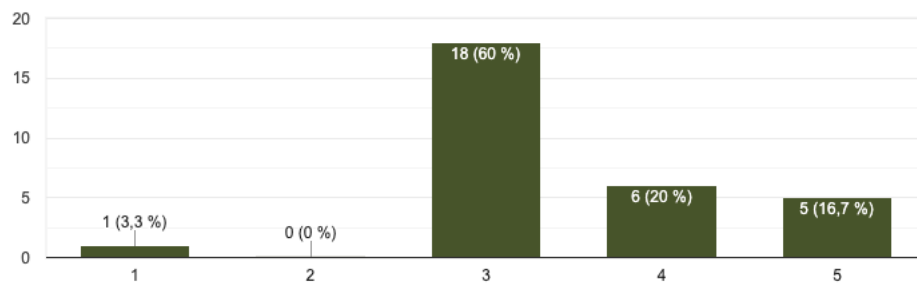
30 vastausta



## Group 2

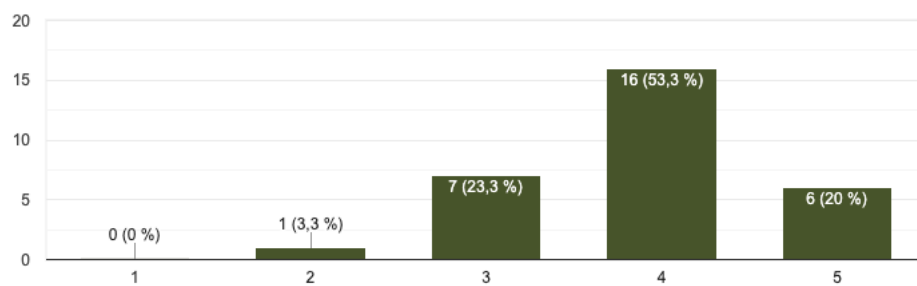
How important is the texture of skincare products to you?

30 vastausta



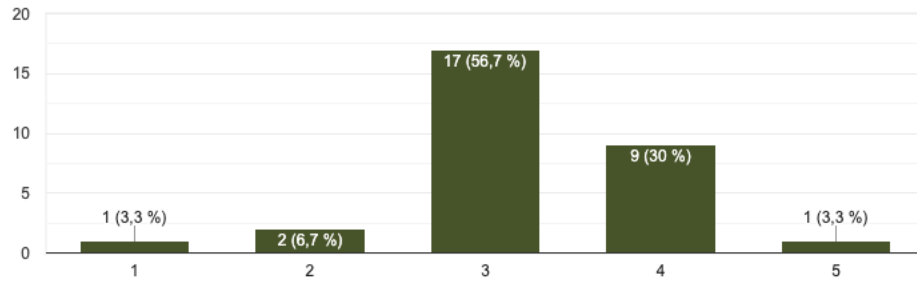
How important is the smell of skincare products to you?

30 vastausta



How important is the packaging (look) of skincare products to you?

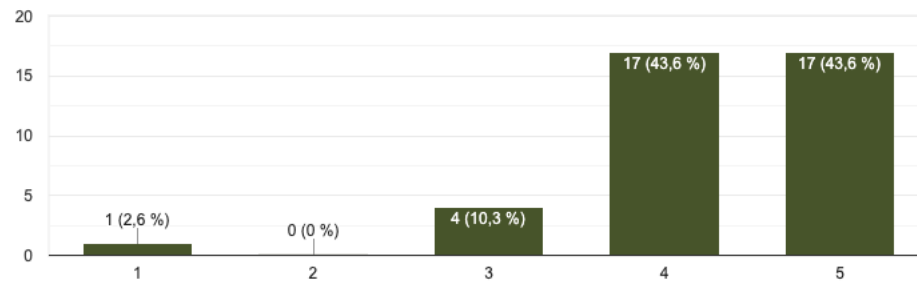
30 vastausta



### Group 3

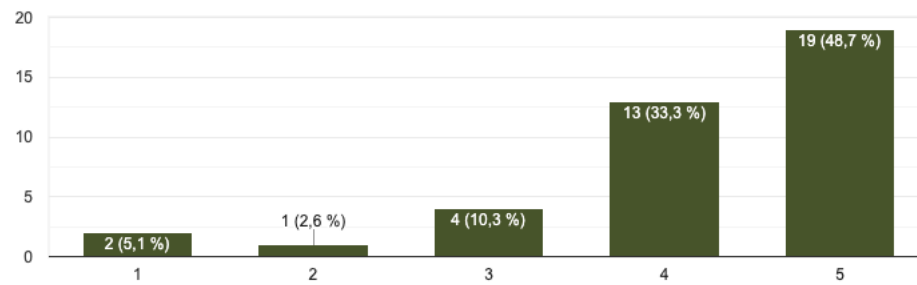
How important is the texture of skincare products to you?

39 vastausta



How important is the smell of skincare products to you?

39 vastausta



How important is the packaging (look) of skincare products to you?

39 vastausta

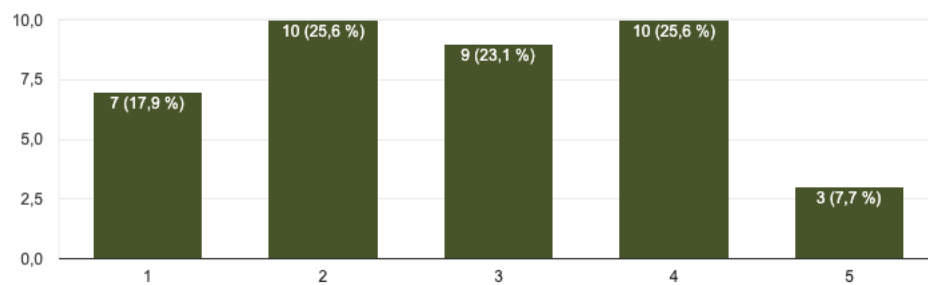


Figure 9 shows the collective data of the importance of different factors in skincare products from all groups

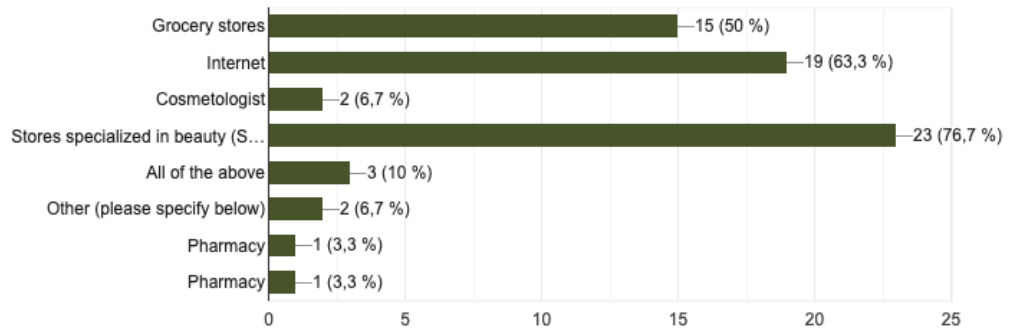
Source: Leino (2021), Online questionnaire

## Appendix 8. Alternatives from Where to Buy Skincare Products of All Groups

### Group 1

Where do you purchase your skincare products from? Select all that apply

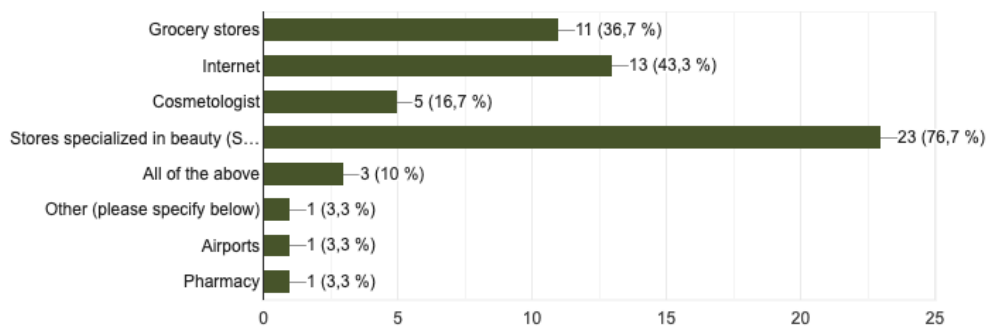
30 vastausta



### Group 2

Where do you purchase your skincare products from? Select all that apply

30 vastausta



### Group 3

Where do you purchase your skincare products from? Select all that apply

39 vastausta

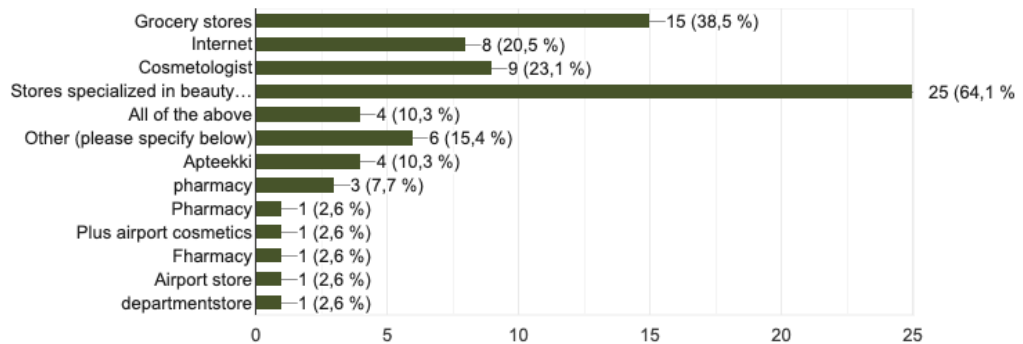
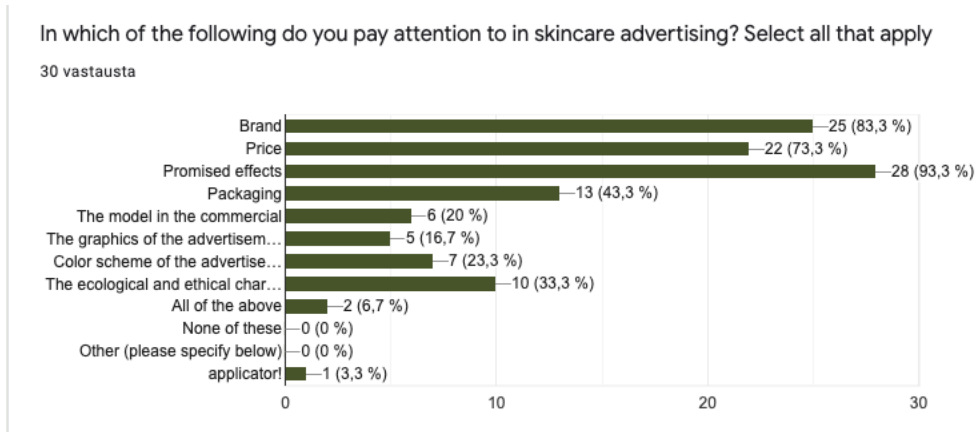


Figure 10 shows the collective data of alternatives from where to buy skincare products from all groups

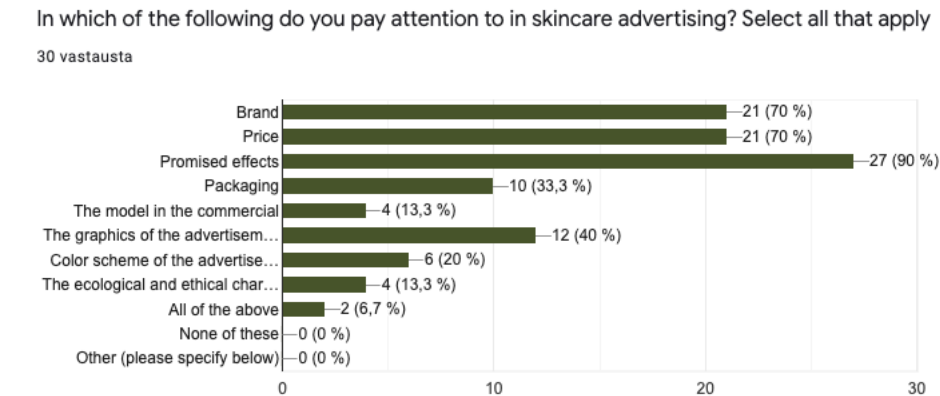
Source: Leino (2021), Online questionnaire

## Appendix 9. Aspects of Skincare Advertising of All Groups

### Group 1



### Group 2



### Group 3

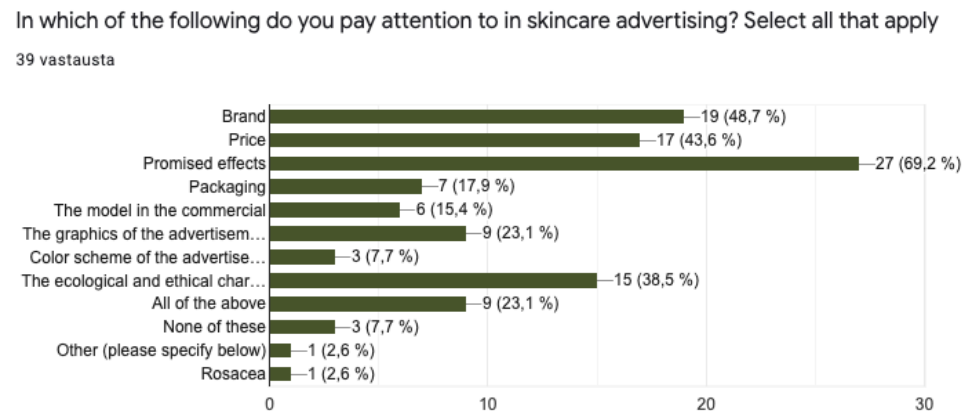


Figure 11 shows the collective data of different aspects in skincare advertising that the respondents pay attention to

Source: Leino (2021), Aspects of Skincare Advertising

## Appendix 10. What Skincare Means to Respondents of All Groups

### Group 1

Shortly in your own words, what does skincare mean to you?

24 vastausta

- Taking care of your skin in order to feel and look better
- Ihon hoitoa, myös pintaa syvempää ja ei kohdistu vain kasvojen ihoon
- Having a routine that helps my skin
- Keeping my skin moisturised, clear and healthy
- Skincare has been part of my daily life over 10 years. It keeps my skin young and clean, but I really enjoy doing it as a pamper routine.
- skincare makes me feel more confident in my own skin
- Taking care of my skin and keeping it clear and youthful. Its part of taking care of me
- Clearing my acne marks
- Makes me feel good

### Group 2

Shortly in your own words, what does skincare mean to you?

11 vastausta

- Maintaining beautiful youthful skin
- Effort well made
- Better looking skin, more self confidence
- I select skincare products on the basis of what my skin needs. Skincare enhances the natural balance of my skin's well-being.
- Self-care, youth preservation, protection from environmental stressors (sun, pollution etc.).
- A way to relax and maintain the upkeep of my skins condition
- I used to have bad skin when I was younger and it is still very sensitive. Skincare is a way to ensure I feel as confident as possible and keeping my skin clear
- It gives me time to wind down after a long day and relaxes me

### Group 3

Shortly in your own words, what does skincare mean to you?

37 vastausta

Must to do to keep your skin good and as possible as fresh looking
It needs to be easy and quick
it is more and more important when you are aging, and currently as having continuing eczema or something it is the most important thing for me
Daily routine and means a lot.
Healthy looks!
Well being
I need an easy method to make it routine, looking for wrinkle free and bright looking skin. A bit lazy tough, more could be done!
Moisturizer after sauna

Table 2 shows few of the comments said by the respondents  
Source: Leino (2021), What Does Skincare Mean to You?

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