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CONSUMERS ATTITUDE TOWARDS ETHICAL ISSUES  
IN TEXTILE INDUSTRY

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

The document length is 7007 words from the introduction to the end of conclusion.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of the research is to get knowledge about if consumers attitude towards ethical issues in textile industry.

In this thesis author writes about the theory on topic of the ethical issues in textile industry . This includes the working conditions for the workers of the textile industries, child labour, consumerism and waste and consumers attitude. A short review on what has been done so far for a more sustainable future is included in this thesis as well.

To answer the research questions and the aim of the thesis, a questionnaire was send to multiple groups on Facebook. According to the results from the questionnaire, the young females are concerned about the ethical issues in the textile industry and reads about the issues in the textile industry.

Key words: ethical issues, consumer attitude, textile industry

## **INTRODUCTION**

Ethical issues in the clothing industry have been talked about for many years ago. Evidences from 1996 showed that a small child was sewing Nike soccer ball together. (Boje, Khan, Dawood 2010)

When a person feels in a specific way, either negative or positive about a product, it is generalized with that persons' consumer attitude. (Currie 2017) In today's world, there is many different brands to choose from, if one brand according to the consumer does not live up to what they are expecting from them, then they will just go to another brand that does live up to their standards.

Why the author decided to write about ethical issues in the textile industry is, because even if the world has become more global with the help of internet, people still do not know enough of what is going on when manufacturing clothes in poorer countries. The world is becoming more polluted and actions need to be done to try makes a more sustainable future. More consumers' needs to get information about what is actually happening in the factories and what is needed to make clothes. The research problem is if consumers actually do know what problems there are in the clothing factories and what kind of attitude they have towards them.

The aim of the research is to get knowledge about if consumers attitude towards ethical issues in textile industry. The clothes that consumers are buying are made by people in factories. The factories may be creating workplaces. But there is concerns about factories working conditions and its social consequences. (Giesen 2008) These factories that may not pay according to minimum wage. (Armstrong 2017) Why it is important to talk about the ethical issues in the textile industry is, because the clothes that consumers are consuming may have a bad impact on the environment, because of strong chemicals has been used. (Giesen 2008) The conditions of the factories are not probably build, which can lead to that the factories collapse and kills people, for example 2013 a factory collapsed in Bangladesh and killed about 1 100 factory workers and hundred of people were injured. (Conca 2015)

The main research questions:

Q1: “What do consumers consider to be unethical in textile industry?”

Q2: “Do consumers consider themselves to be aware of the ethical issues in textile industry?”

The target group for this research are consumers in the age range 18 - 35. The questionnaire that was used for the research was created in Google forms . The author made a questionnaire with 13 questions, which the author then send to multiple groups on Facebook. The questionnaire was open for one weeks, between 14 December and 21 December 2018. All in all, 166 responses was gathered and 116 was in the target group. Responses was gathered from Finland, Sweden and Estonia. The author decided to use the quantitative method, because this way, the author will get a broader understanding on consumers attitude towards the ethical issues in the textile industry.

Chapter 1 of the thesis the author will go throug the theoretical part of the thesis. Ethical issues in the textile industry – working conditions at the factories, the use of child labor, consumerism, what kind of environmental impact the textile industry have. The author continues with consumers attitude toward ethcial clothing and what has been done so far for a more sustainable future.

Chapter 2 consist of the methodology that has been used for the research that has been conducted in this thesis. The aim and research problem will also be presented in this chapter.

Chapter 3 will present the results from the research. In this chapter discussion, analyses and suggestions will be given based on the research results.

# **1. ETHICAL ISSUES IN THE CLOTHING INDUSTRY**

In this chapter, the author will present the relevant literature of the theoretical background of the thesis.

Even if more ethical clothing brands are created, there is still a problem about ethical questions in the textile industry. Ethics is about that people should act in a good way with each other and not causing harm to each other. (Elliott 2009) Issues about ethical issues in the clothing industry have been talked about some time already in the media. Workers are not being paid according to the minimum wage. (Armstrong 2017) Which may cause that they are not able to live on their wages.

Nowadays, the internet has helped consumers to get more information about the clothing companies. Information and pictures are being spread much faster than before. This is why consumers have become more aware of the ethical issues that the clothing industry has. Ethical consumerism is increasing, becoming a bigger force of the market. (Bruce, Moore, Birtwistle 2004)

## **1.1. Working conditions and use of child labor**

Most of the workers in the factories are women this is because almost no previous skills are needed in the textile industry jobs in developing countries and as well in developed countries. (Gardetti, Torres 2013) Companies use cheap labor work and raw material from cheaper countries, for example China and India. Even if these factories may be creating workplaces, it still has some concerns about its working conditions and its social consequences. (Giesen 2008) The women working at the factories have a hard time protecting themselves from abuse and sexual harassments, and have a hard time to say about it to anybody, because they are afraid to lose their job. (ibid.) Workers are not being paid according to the minimum wage. (Armstrong 2017) Worst cases, they are not even able to live on their wages. Some days it may happen that the workers may come early in the morning to work, but do not know when they

are getting off work. Some factories can have poor lightning, ventilation is poor and it is crowded. (Nielsen 2005) Because the factories are crowded and they have poor ventilation inside the factories can become hot, which can cause to workers fainting. Because of these long days workers are not feeling well and faints. The factories are full of workers, which makes that the workers are working close to each other and not much room of moving around is possible. The tempo of the work is fast, a certain amount of products of clothes need to be done, which can make that the workers can feel stressed. The factories are different, but for example the factory in Buram if the worker wants to have the sunday off, they need to take the work with them home. (Kärnstrand, Andersson Åkerblom 2017) When the work condition is stressful, it happens that in the end workers are not able to work anymore, because their body can not handle the stress anymore.

The consumers are putting a lot of pressure on the suppliers when the consumers wants to keep up with the fast changing fashion and the clothing brands wants to keep up with the consumers demand. The workers at the factories may carry different tasks at the same time, which can lead to different work-related health problems. (Metgud, Khatri, Mokashi, Saha 2008) The workers may not know their rights and can be either too afraid to say that they are not treated right or they may just not know their rights. The conditions of the factories are not probably build, which can lead to that the factories collapse and kills people, for example 2013 a factory collapsed in Bangladesh and killed about 1 100 factory workers and hundred of people were injured. (Conca 2015) Movements like ”Turn Around H&M” started in May 2018. (Clean Clothes Campaign 2018) The movement way created, because about five years ago, H&M Hennes & Mauritz promised to pay sufficient salary to all the workers in the production chain by the end of 2018, but this has not happened. (ibid.) The world being more global today, consumers are more aware of what is happening in the world.

According to Kärnstrand and Andersson Åkerblom (2017) child labor is still being used in factories in countries like Burma. Children are faking their ages, that their are able to get a job from the factories and get money to support their families. Even when there is laws about how much children are allowed to work, depending on the children’s ages, but because the children are faking their ages it is hard to follow how old they actually are. (Kärnstrand, Andersson Åkerblom 2017) Children that are working in the factories do not know their rights



and the bosses of the factories can use this in their advantages. Already in 1996 evidence of a child sewing Nike's football together spread across the world. (Boje, Khan, Dawood 2010)

## **1.2. Environment impact and consumersim**

The use of wool, cotton and natural fibers are materials that has been used already for many years in the clothing industry. Man-made fibers like polyester, polyamid and acrylics are a invention that came up in the 20th century. (Giesen 2008) As the population has grown, so have the demand for textile. To keep up with the demand for fibers to make clothes, the people have come up with man-made fibers instead. The man-made fibers are faster and easier to make than for example wool and cotton, but the impact they have on the earth is big, but to produce man-made fibers it requires water, emissions and energy. James Conca wrote in 2015 that the clothing industry is the second biggest polluter in the world. (Conca 2015) Choosing the clothes wisely, for example choosing clothes that are made of linen or wool, they are more expensive than the clothes that are made of man-made fibers. Buying more eco-friendly clothes and buying their more rarely would in some degree help the environmental impact that the textil industry has. The use of toxic chemicals and the use of energy, these two can be considered as the ones that have the biggest impact on the environment. (Giesen 2008)

The consumerism that is going on at the moment have a big impact on the planet. The population on this earth has been growing rapidly for many years, which means that consuming of goods have been growing as well. In the long run the earth can not handle the consumerism and a more sustainable meaning needs to be taken into action. Fast fashion companies are changing their products fast, because the fashion is changing fast and the companies wants to keep up with the consumers demand. People are buying more than ever, but using the products less than ever before throwing them away. (Nature Climate Change 2018) In 2025, it will be compulsory to have a separate collection of the textile waste in European Union. (Suomen Tekstiili & Muoti ry 2018) Fast fashion brands changes their collections on a fast phase, with new products launching every week. (Ahlbom, Söderbergh 2018) In today's sociaty, there is a hard competition between the companies with many companies competing with each other. The companies wants that the consumers chooses their products over their competitors. (ibis.)

The worldview may be distracted for the consumers, because consumers are more interested to find the latest version of a product or totally new innovations than finding solutions to actually help the earth for a more sustainable future. The “Made in” labels that is put on clothes is something consumers may not put a lot of thought to. (Kashyap 2017) The way how companies are advertising to the consumers are restriction the consumers choices. The companies wants to give the consumers many options of products that they may need or want, but this is not giving the consumer the option for a more sustainable option. Consumers may think when they see an advertisement that they actually need that product, then they buy it and relises that they do not need it.

Advertisements are everywhere, when we walk in the park we see advertisements on the benches, when we are watching a movie we can see product placements. This way consumers are exposed to advertisements many times per day and may find products to consume that they do not actually need. Fast fashion gives the opportunity for consumers to buy clothes for a cheaper price, fashion magazines showing the latest trends and what is the ”most have” for the season. (Claudio 2007) Because the clothing industry is big, there is a lot of waste going in to our environment. There is ecological problems when making clothes, these are water, energy and waste. The production on man-made fibers, even if they are made in cheaper countries like China, the polluted water is released the in the water, it still will be able to flow at some point to other parts of the world. Concerns about what the climate change has for an impact on the water supply (Vörösmarty, Green, Salisbury, Lammers 2000) While the population is increasing, the resources is decreasing.

A few components listed below that are considered as waste when making clothes:

- Waste
- Energy
- Emissions

One of the biggest polluter of the seawater is the textile industry. (Kant 2012) To do clothes, a lot of water is needed during the different stages when making clothes. Already by producing man-made fibers, like polyester, a lot amount of water is required. The water is then released into the water, which makes that the water is getting polluted. The chemicals and dyes that are used in

making clothes has been under concerns, because of the impact it has on the environment. (Chen, Burns 2006) The chemicals that are being used for coloring the clothes are harmful for the water and to get the desired color of the clothes it can be colored many times. When the water is getting polluted means that the sealife are not able to either live there or then the sea life gets polluted themselves.

One of the biggest problems in the process of making clothes is the use of non-renewable energy resources. (Giesen 2008) As non-renewable resources includes oil, gas and coal. When the amount of people have been growing rapidly during the years, meaning that more clothes are needed for them to consume. When man-made fibers are made with the help of non-renewable resources and after a while the consumers throw away their clothes, which are a burden on the earth, because once the non-renewable have been used, you can not get it back.

Transporting the products to the destinations pollutes the earth, clothes that are being produced in for example Asia, has to be shipped through the world to many countries, especially when the clothing brand is cooperating in many different countries. Man-made fibers have higher emissions than natural fibers, because to make man-made fibers fossil fuel is needed in the making. (Nature Climate Change 2018) To reduce emissions, consumers needs to be able to recycle their clothes, because if consumers are able to bring their old clothes for recycling, the emissions will be less than when making new clothes that are made of man-made fibers. The companies are producing 20 garments per person every year, which has a huge burden on the earth. (ibid.) Every year the demand of clothes has grown, because the amount of people has increased.

### **1.3. Consumer attitude**

When a person feels in a specific way, either negative or positive about a product, it is generalized with that persons' consumer attitude. (Currie 2017) The consumer attitude pleases a personal reason, that has an impact of thee consumers consumption habit. (Dean 2010) The attitude towards a brand that the consumer have, can shape from the consumers personal experience that they have had with the company. Daniel Katz prospered the functional theory of attitude. (ibid.)

It is divided in four different function:

- Utilitarian function
- Value-expressive function
- Ego-defensive function
- Knowledge function

The utilitarian function is where the consumer will base their decision on what will make them the most happy. (Dean 2010) The value-expressive function is when a consumer will base their attitude towards a product on self-concept. (ibid.) The ego-defensive function is when a consumer senses from a product while using it, that it compromises their self-image. (ibid.) The knowledge function is about consumers being careful to create structure about their attitudes they have towards a product. (ibid.) There is possibility to change the consumers attitude towards a company. (Moore 2017) There is different ways. One example is by linking the company to an event that consumers admires or respects. (ibid.)

Pollari (2016) found out in a study that the younger female consumers have a positive attitude for ethically made clothes. For a person to be ethical consumer in today's society, they need to understand that consumption is just not only about the economical relations, but also about the social and political relation. (Cole 2018) For the companies to be more transparent in their production line, consumers will be able to actually see the process of the products. Fast fashion brands are selling their clothes for a affordable price, which are made by humans who gets paid barely so that the manage. (Anastasia 2017) By choosing eco-labeled products or products that are made of recycled materials. To choose to consume only what is needed and not always what in wanted, by repairing clothes that got a hole or by trading and sharing clothes the footprint on the earth would be smaller. According to a study made by Ahlbom and Söderbergh (2018) a distinguished gap between consumers that they mostly consume fast fashion, even if they at the same time thinks that they are conscious consumers. People nowadays thinks that ethical issues are a problem and do think about the issues that are in the textile industry, but in most cases these thought are different that their actions. There is news about the ethical issues in the textile industry that the consumers are able to read about, but because all of that is happening far away and the consumers practically can not see the

working conditions that the workers are working in, the consumers are not able to internalize the problems the same way as if it would happen close to them. Clothing companies are insufficient about telling what factories are producing their clothes. By telling openly about the factories and being transparent in the supply chain, clothing companies will gain the consumers trust. More and more clothing companies are starting to openly writing about where they are producing their clothes, these are for example Fruit of the Loom, H&M Group and Target USA. (Kashyap 2018)

#### **1.4. Changes in the clothing industry for a more sustainable future**

As the clothes life cycle becomes shorter and shorter, the amount of clothes that can be recycled or disposed has increased a lot. (Hawley 2011) Some companies in the clothing industry have taken action to change the way on how to create a more sustainable future. The more companies starts to take an action, and more bigger companies an impact can be seen. Even if some work has been done to create a more sustainable future, there is still way to go. What consumers do about their old clothes is up to them, but to recycle them, donate them to charity or sell them on second-hand markets are better than just throwing them away. Nowadays there is shops that consumers are able to bring they old clothes that they can sell them there, usually against payment. After a while, depending on how long time the consumer have paid for a space in the shop, the consumer gets their money what they have sold for. During the years designers have started to reuse old clothes, used old clothes and make them in to new clothes.

Through the years, it has become more popular that consumers can bring their old clothes and shoes to different brands so that they can recycle them. To take a couple of examples, the Swedish sporting company Stadium have a re:activate program where customers can bring their old clothes and shoes to the store to get them recycled in a proper way. This way the old products are given a new life by reusing the products for something else, or given to people in need, depending on the condition of the product. By bringing the old clothes for recycling, the consumer is able to save the resources of the planet by extending the life of the clothes that has already been made. (Stadium, 2018) The Swedish clothing company H&M Hennes & Mauritz has a recycling program where customers are able to bring their old clothes for recycling. After the consumers have brought their old clothes for recycling, the clothes are send to a company named I:CO, who then sorts the the clothes after they have received them from H&M Hennes

& Mauritz. Depending on the condition of the clothes, they are used to different purposes. The clothes are being reworn, reused and recycled. The clothes that are being reworn are clothes that are in good condition and are being sold at a second hand store. The clothes that are being reused, are clothes that are being reused to other products. The clothes that are not able to be reused or reworn are being recycled to fiber that can be used in isolation (H&M 2018)

For the consumers to be able to recycle their old clothes in a proper way makes that there will be less waste. The companies have come to an understanding that by recycling clothes, will help for a better sustainable future. By recycling clothes creates new kind of workplaces, for example new workforce in recycling and sorting the clothes is needed. hopefully by recycling clothes the man-made fibers like polyester, polyamid and acrylics is not needed as much as it has been needed since 20th century.

Global Change Awards is an innovation challenge where people are able to bring up their ideas about innovations to make a more sustainable future in the clothing industry. (Global Change Awards 2018) For example in 2017 a group of people came up with the idea of grape leather, which is making vegetal leather of leftovers from the winemaking. The group won 300 000 euro to support their innovation. (ibid.)

The clothing brands have been trying to eliminate child labor in the factories that they uses, for example H&M Hennes & Mauritz has taken risk analysis in the factories that they do cooperation with, where they found children working, the children was let off. (Kärnstrand, Andersson Åkerblom 2017) Actions have been taken to eliminate child labor in the factories. The children needs money to support their families. But how long children are going to stay away from the factories and how often the risk analysis are made in factories are unsure.

The factories that the textil workers are working at the moment needs to get under better research and actions needs to be make if the factory is considered unsafe. Life has already been lost to factories collapsing, because they have not taken it serious when they got noted that the factories are unsafe and can collapse at any time. It is very important that the workers safety and well-being is taken seriously. Workers are working in poor conditions, in a fast phase environment where a certain amount of work needs to be done during the day. Which means that workers are getting stressed and falling ill. Actions in the workers well-being and building a more safe environment is needed. At the moment workers are getting poorly paid, that they

are not able to live on their wages. Promises about workers who are working in the factories shall get better paid have been made, but when this is taken in to action is unsure.

Clothing brands have started to be more aware of what kind of material they use in their clothes, for example H&M Hennes & Mauritz have their own "conscious" green label, which indicates that they have used recycled or organic materials in their product, even collections are done by recycled materials. Worldwide known label like European eco-labels is a label that encourages a more sustainable consumption and sustainable production. (Giesen 2008) It is created, because it wants to promote a more environmental kinder way for the businesses to promote their products and services, this way businesses are able to take an action in a more sustainable future. The label International Oeko-Tex Association is an association that does testing in the textil industry, that the clothes are made safely. (International Oeko-Tex Association 2018)

ILO (International Labour Organization) have regulations and standards that is working as a framework on what is considered to be a good work environment. (Ilo 2018) Working environment consist of physical, mental and social factors. (Arbetslivskoll 2018) The physical factor is about that for example that the lighning and ventilation is correct. The mental factors is about for example how stressful the work is, if the work is too stressful because of too much work all the time it is considered to be bad mental working environment. (Arbetslivskoll 2018) The social factors is about for example that the relationship between the workers are good. For the working conditions to be good, the work become more enjoyable. To have standard working hours, holidays, daily rest and weekly rest is important for the workers health. For a worker to be able to recover from the last days work, the worker will be more productive and healthy, both physically and mentally. Balance between the work and personal life will make the workers feel more contented of their life. (Poh 2017) Creating a positive working environment, the workers are feeling better to come to work, as well as motivating them. (ibid.) The workers should be paid at least the minimum wage that is applied in the country. At the moment the textile factory workers are being exposed to chemicals, which they are supposed to be protected from so that they do not get any health problems. The working environment should be safe and not harm the worker. A worker should not be afraid of being at their workplace, not afraid of the workplace collapsing on them, afraid of injured at the workplace or getting harmed by the managers. Workers should not be afraid to tell if they are getting sexually harassed by co-workers or by managers. To have a open communication and that workers feels that what

they are saying actually matters to the managers, this makes the workers to feel that they are part of the organization. (ibid.) The workers should not be discriminated because of the workers gender, age or race. By making employees feel that their work matter, that they are safe, makes that the workers are being more productive.



## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter, the author presents the methodology that is used for this thesis. For this research, the author used the quantitative methods for getting the answers for the research questions. Quantitative methods were chosen for this research, because with this method the author will get a broader understanding on how the ethical issues in the textile industry affects the consumer behaviour. The questionnaire that was used for the research was created in Google forms and 13 questions were asked. The questionnaire was send to multiple groups on Facebook. The questionnaire was open for one weeks, between 14 December and 21 December 2018.

All in all, 166 responses were gathered, thus 116 responses was from the target group. Samples were gathered from Finland, Sweden, and Estonia. As the target group were the younger generation, age groups 18 – 25 and 26 – 35, which were the group that responded the most of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire is structured as following:

- Demographic questions
- Consumption habits
- Consumers attitude towards the ethical issues

After closing the questionnaire, the author started to organize the data by what the goal of the research, which in this case is to find out the attitude consumers have toward the ethical issues in the textile industry. After this the author started to organize it according to genders and countries. In this research the target group was younger generation, age groups 18 – 35. 116 responses that fitted in the target group was received.

### 3. RESEARCH

In this chapter the results from the research is presented. The research questions were conducted in different parts, the demographical questions, consumption habits and their attitudes towards ethical issues.

#### 3.1 Research results

Figure 1 illustrates that the majority of the respondes were males. 59 percent were males and 41 percent were females.

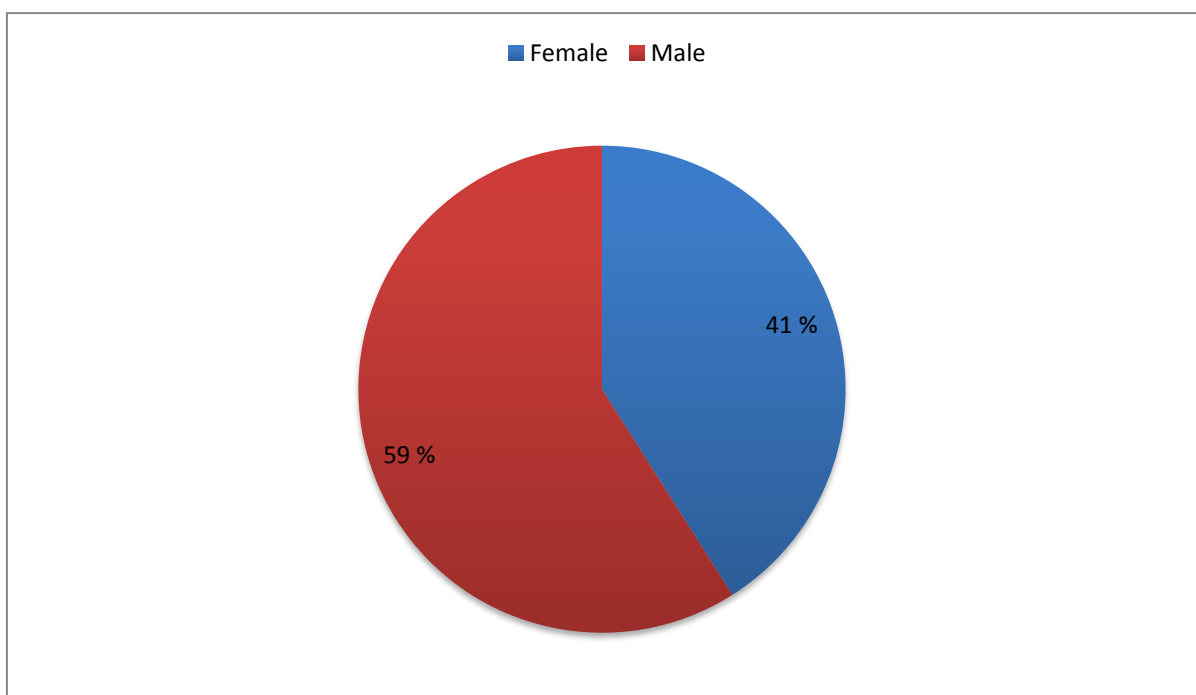


Figure 1. Gender.

Source Author's research.

As shown in Figure 2 the most responses came from Finland – 67 percent. 24 percent of respondents were from Sweden and 9 percent were from Estonia.

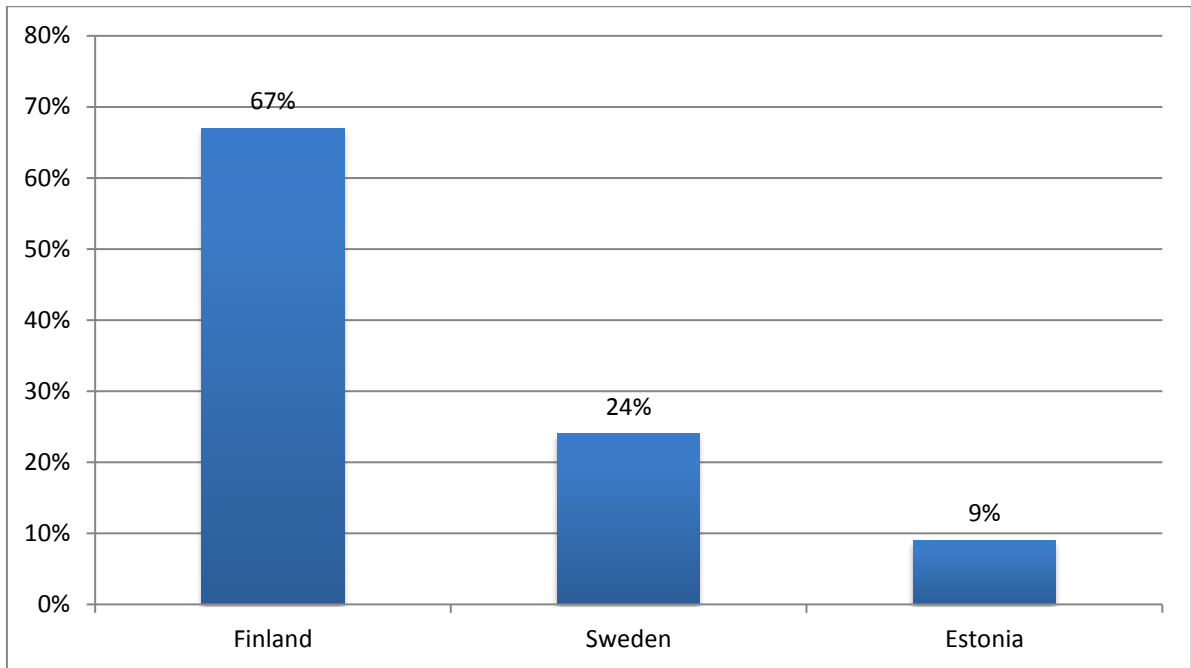


Figure 2. Country.  
Source: Author's research.

Figure 3 illustrates the willingness of the consumers to pay more for a product that is ethically produced. 71 percent responded that they are willing to pay more for ethical products and 29 percent responded that they are not willing to pay more for a product, even if they knew that it is ethically produced.

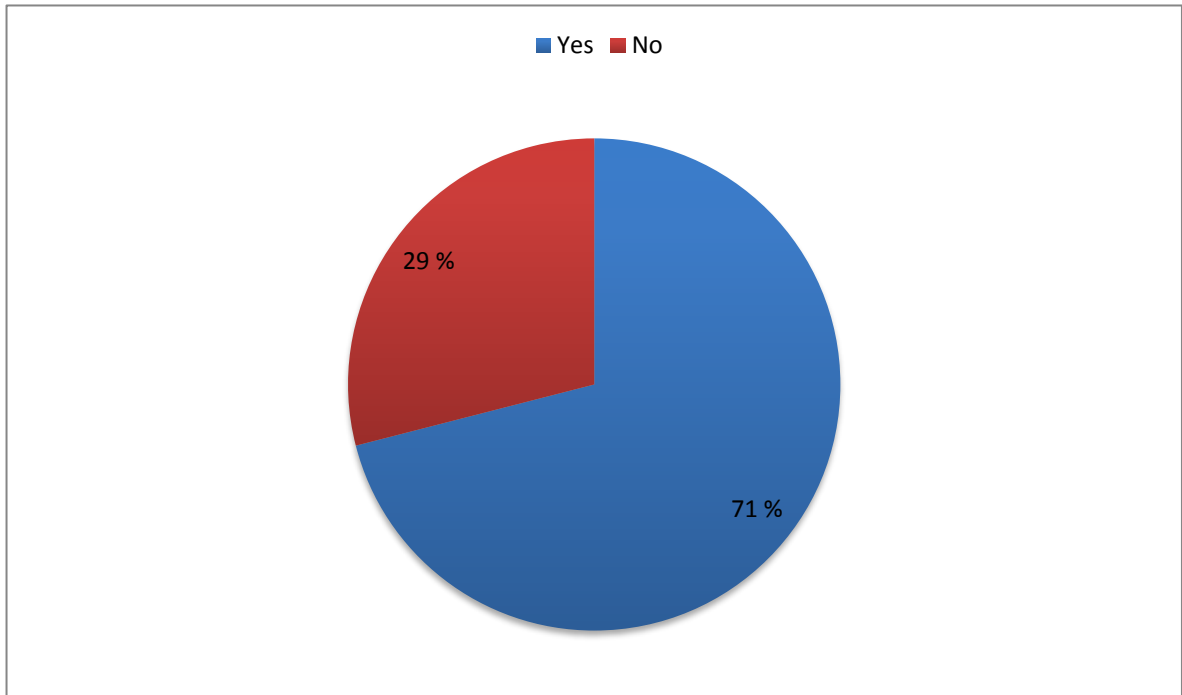


Figure 3. Willingness to buy ethically made products.

Source: Author's research.

As seen in Figure 4, there is a major difference in if consumers would buy clothes that are made under unethical / unsafe working conditions. 81 percent responded that they would not buy clothes from a company if they knew that they are made under unethical / unsafe working conditions. 19 percent responded that they would buy clothes that are made under unethical / unsafe working conditions.

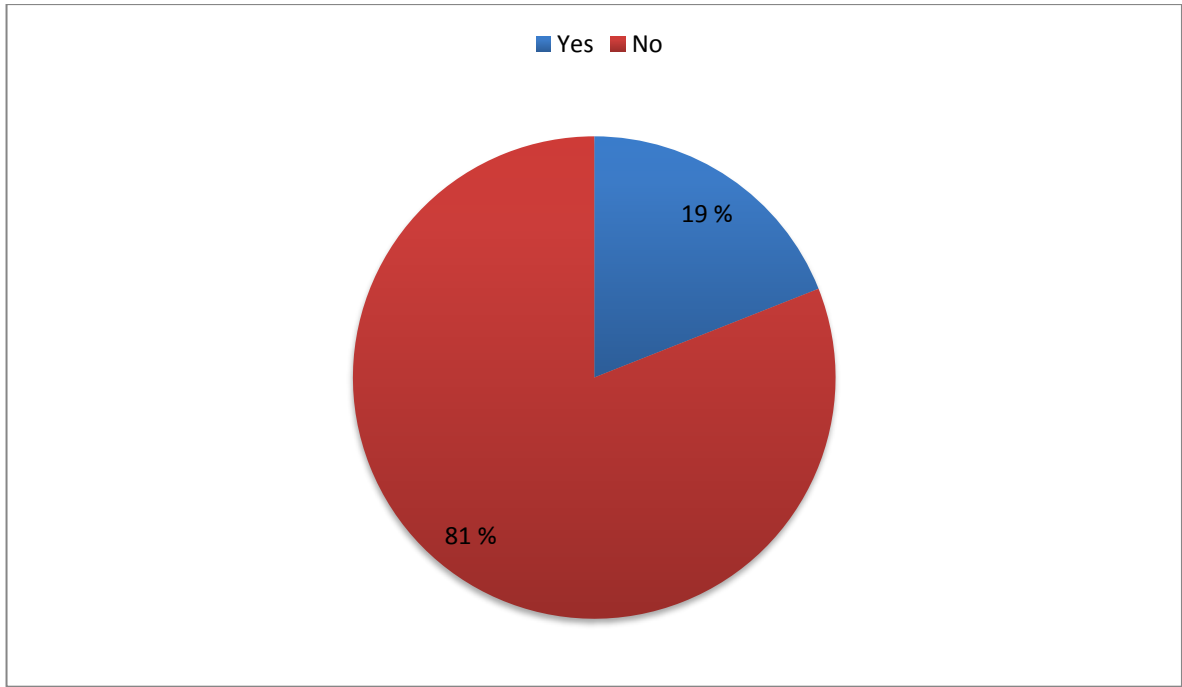


Figure 4. Buying clothes made under unethical/unsafe working conditions.

Source: Author's research.

Even if majority of consumers would not buy clothes that are made under unethical / unsafe working conditions, but Figure 5 illustrates what the most important feature consumers look in clothes when buying them is the quality of the clothes, 43 percent. 23 percent responded the price. 22 percent responded that the production had a small impact on the environment and 13 percent responded that the clothes were made under good working conditions.

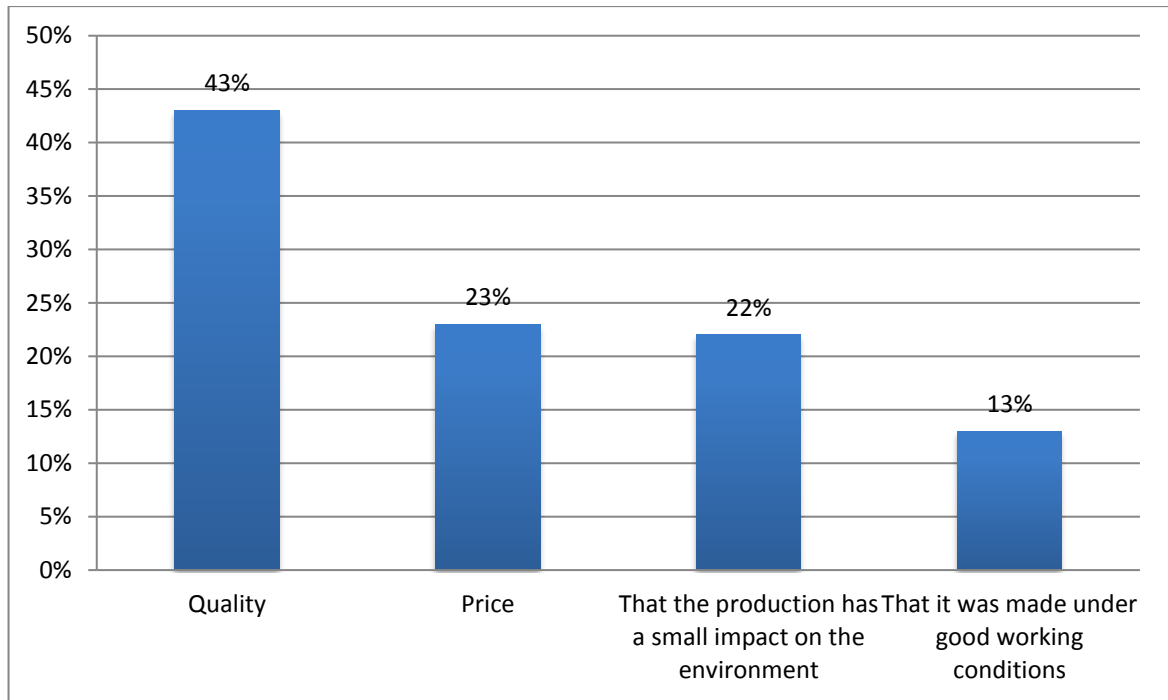


Figure 5. Most important feature before buying clothes.

Source: Author's research.

Figure 6 illustrates if consumers consider themselves as conscious consumers. Majority, 89 percent, were of the opinion that they do consider themselves as conscious consumer and 11 percent do not consider themselves as conscious consumer.

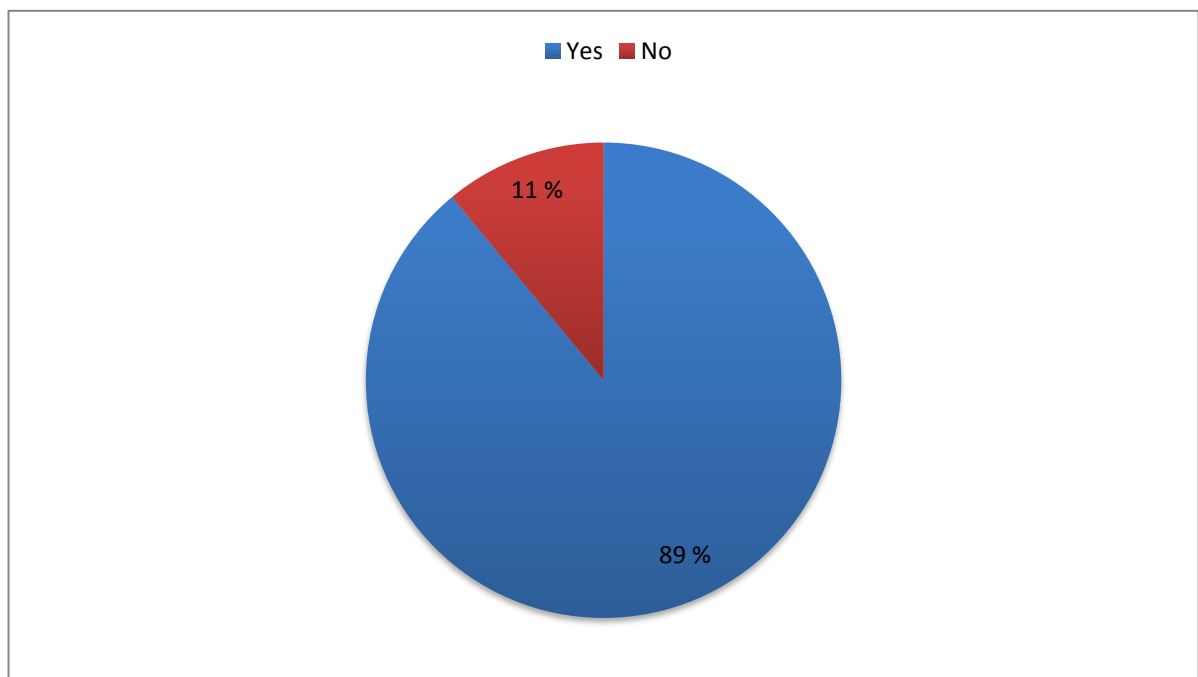


Figure 6. Conscious consumer.

Source: Author's research.

Figure 7 illustrates where the consumers get the news about ethical issues in the textile industry. Social media has become to be a bigger part of consumer's lives. (Fita 2011) Majority responded that they get their knowledge about ethical issues in textile industry from the social media – it can be some article some of their friends have shared or they are following some pages that talk about these issues and share articles. 24 percent responded that they get the news from television – for example from the news channels. 16 percent responded the news paper – by different articles that are written. 12 percent responded internet – by for example browsing through different web pages.

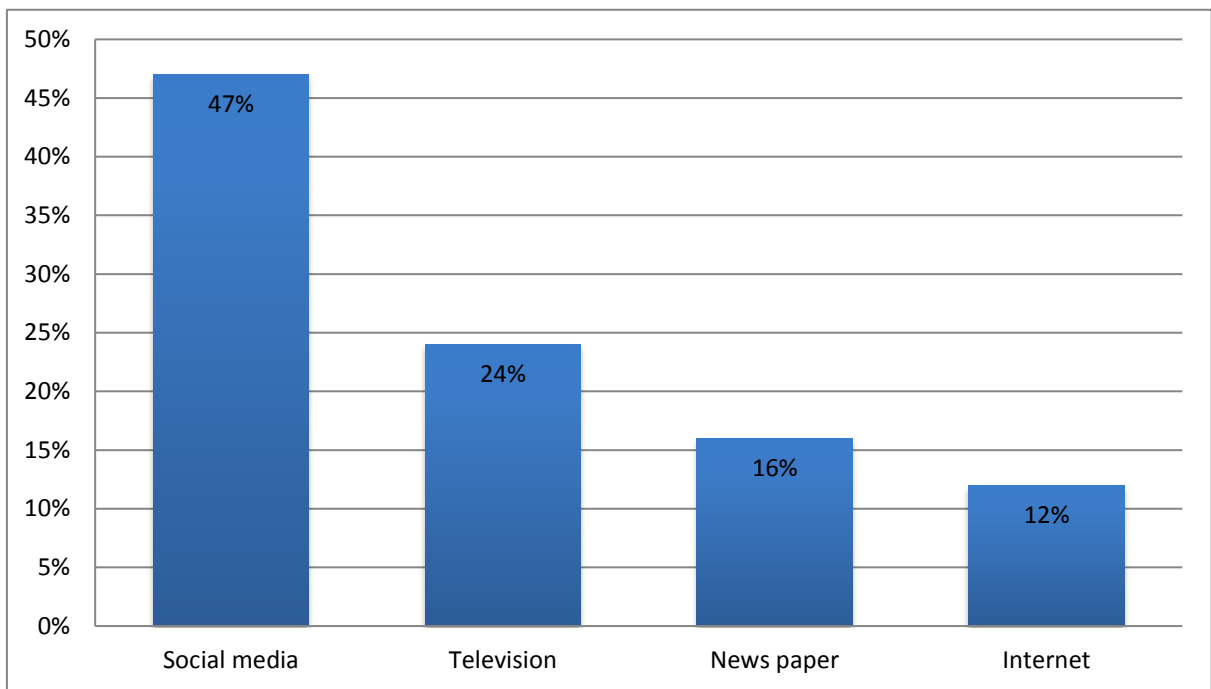


Figure 7. Getting knowledge about ethical issues from different media.

Source: Author's research.

Likert scale question was asked requiring consumers opinion on the importance of talking about ethical issues in textile industry and how aware they see themselves about the ethical issues in textile industry.

Figure 8 illustrates how important consumers think that it is to talk about ethical issues in the textile industry. Likert scale was used, where as scale 1 “Not at all important”, scale 2 “Slightly important”, scale 3 “Fairly important”, scale 4 “Important” and scale 5 “Very important” was implied. The Majority thinks that it is important to talk about the ethical issues – scale 4 - 5, with scales getting 51 percent and 30 percent accordingly. 12 percent that responded that it is moderately important. Minority of the respondents thinks that it is not important to talk about the issues, scale 1 – 2, 2 percent and 5 percent accordingly. The more the news would talk about the ethical issues in the textile industry, the better knowledge the consumers would get.

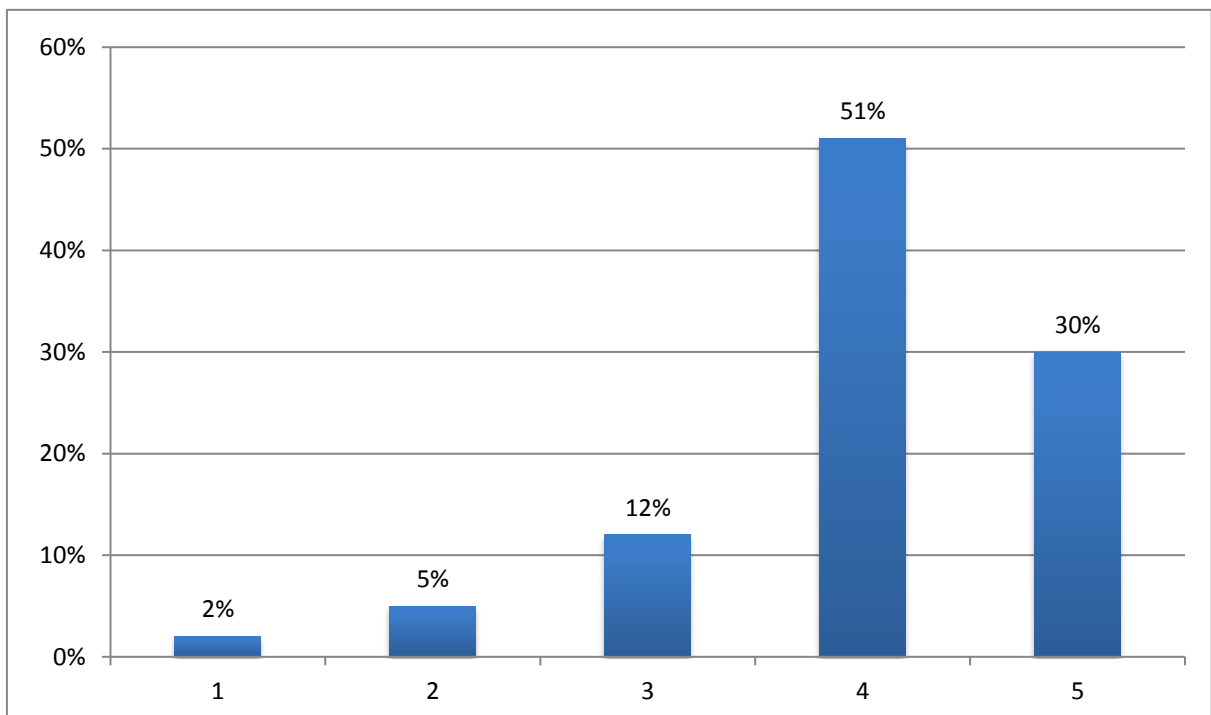


Figure 8. Importance of talking about ethical issues

Source: Author’s research

Figure 9 illustrates the awareness of the ethical issues in textile industry the consumers consider themselves. Numbers being 1 “Strongly disagree”, 2 “Disagree”, 3 “Nor agree or disagree”, 4 “Agree” and 5 “Strongly agree”. Majority that responded were of the opinion that they are aware of the ethical issues, scale 4 – 5, with 46 percent respective 21 percent. 22 percent responded that they nor agree or disagree that they are aware of the ethical issues. Minority of the respondents (scale 1 – 2) thinks that they are not aware of the ethical issues in textile industry, 3 percent and 9 percent accordingly.



Open questions about in which way do they think that they are aware or are not aware was asked. Respondents stated that even if there is not easy to find available information about the subject. The consumers that thinks that they are aware of the ethical issues in the textile industry, stated they actively search the information from internet and social media. The most likely thinking from where they are consuming or trying to buy less clothes. They want to know where the clothes are manufactured and know what kind of conditions the workers in the factories have. The consumers that do not consider themselves as being aware of the ethical issues are not searching for knowledge about the issues. Commonly consumers answered that they are not searching for information or that they do not care.

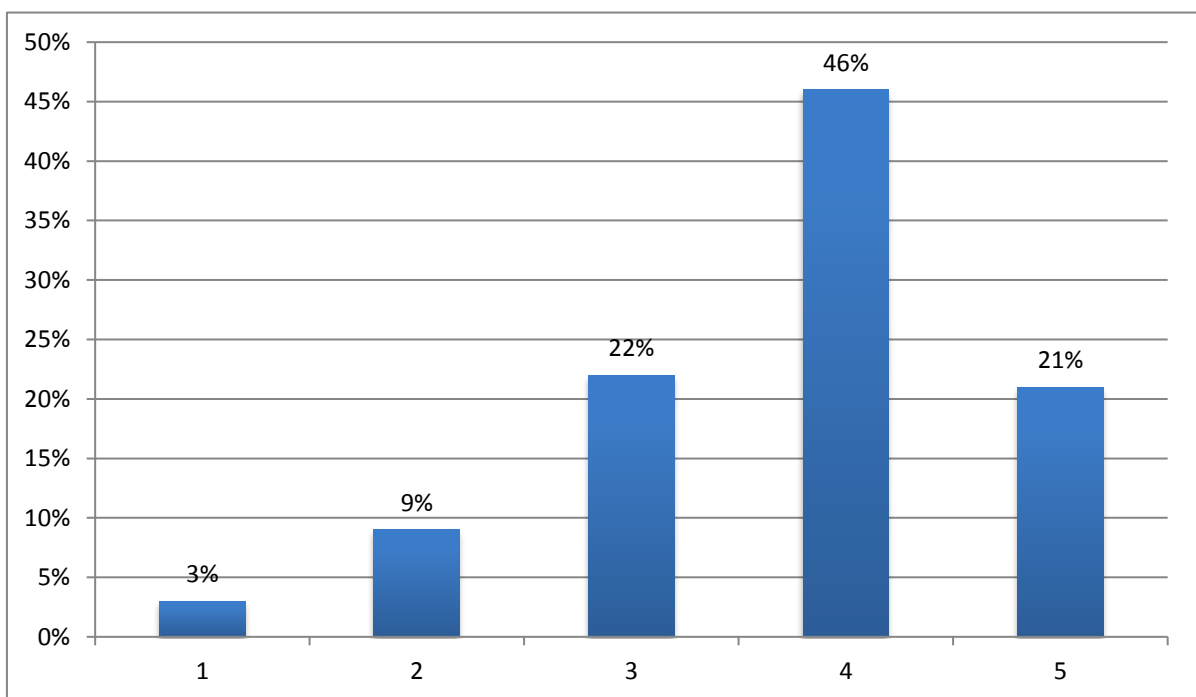


Figure 9. Awareness of the ethical issues in textile industry

Source: Author's research

Figure 10 presents if consumers considers the manufacturing process of the clothes to be transparent. 75 percent were of the opinion that the companies are not transparent enough in their manufacturing process and 25 percent were of the opinion that they are transparent. With the help of transparency companies can show both the employees and customers that they are not hiding anything from them. (Alton 2017) Even if the transparency is important to build trust of the consumers. (ibid.) Consumers does not see companies transparent enough, which

can build an mistrast between the company and the consumer.

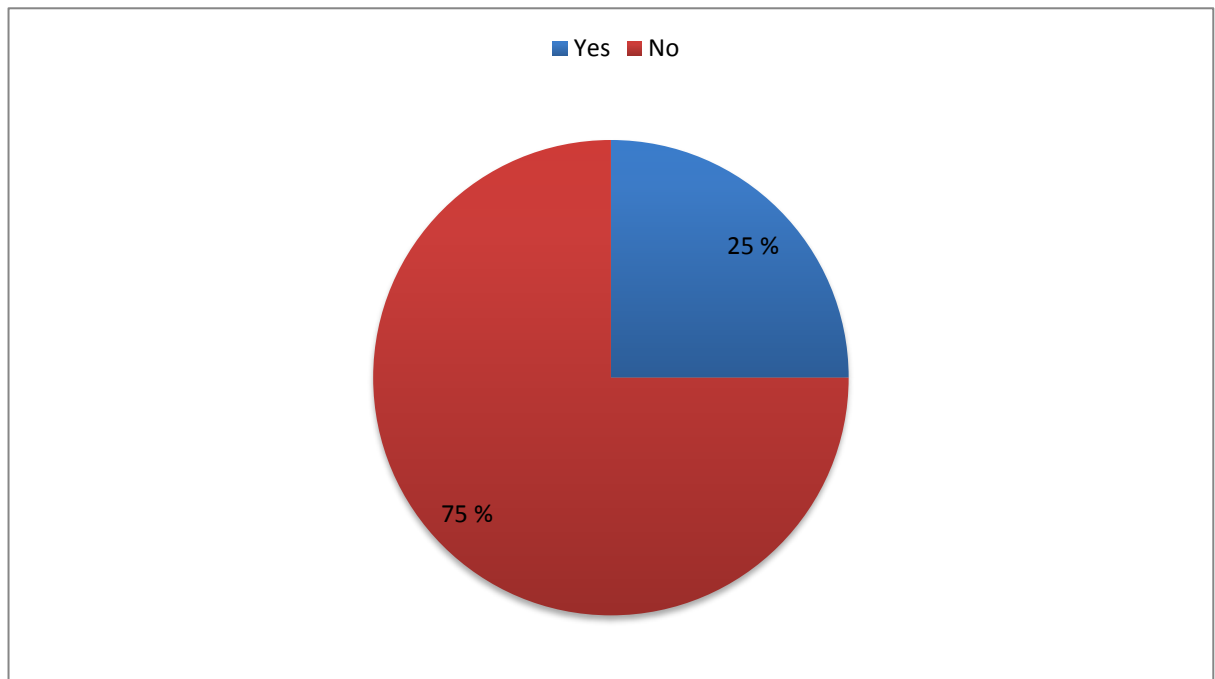


Figure 10. Transparency of the manufacturing process.

Source: Author's research.

As seen in Figure 11 consumers considers that is the most unethical in textile industry is the use of chemicals that have and bad impact on the environment - 29 percent. 28 percent responded the use of child labor. 25 percent responded the working conditions in the factories and 18 percent responded the use of cheap labor.

Mostly likely consumers preceive the use of chemicals that have a bad impact on the envrionment as the most unethical dimenstion in the textile industry, because of the bad impact it has on the envrionment.

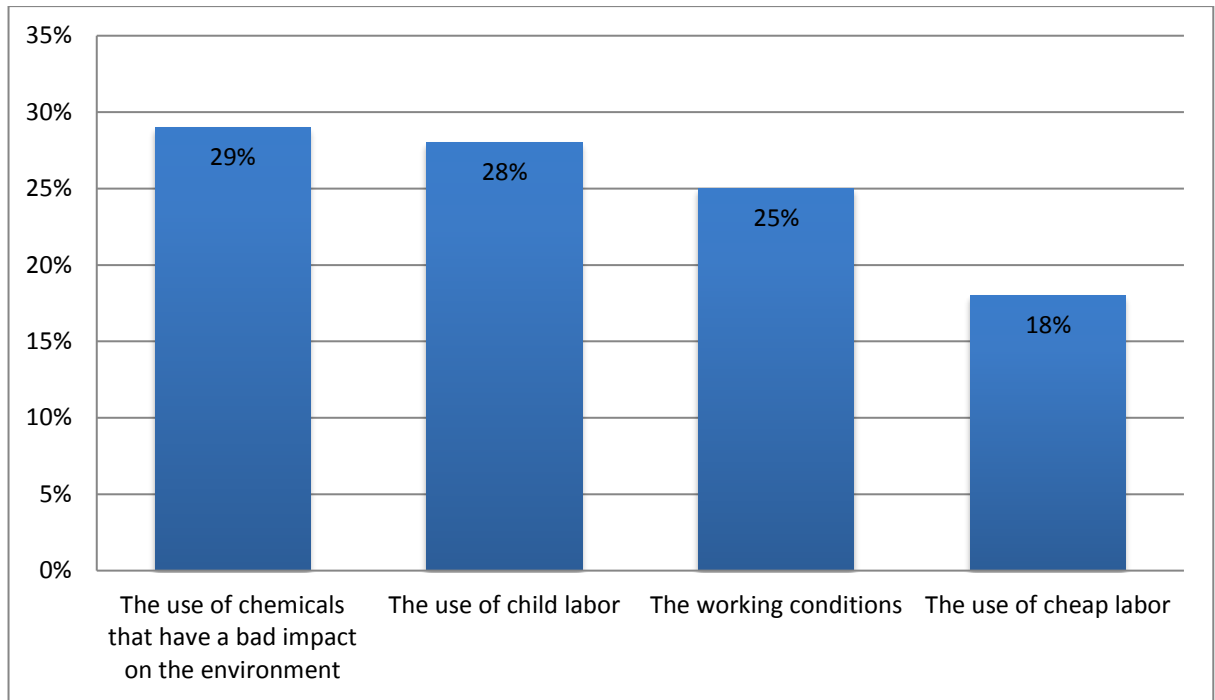


Figure 11. What consumers considers as unethical.

Source: Author's research.

### 3.2. Discussion and analyses

In the research the author find out that the young females in the age range 18 to 35 are concerned about the ethical issues in the textile industry and reads about the issues than the males in the same age does. The young generation also seems to consider themselves being aware of the ethical issues in textile industry. Where the consumers were from did not matter in this case. The young consumers are familier to the ethical issues in the textile industry and thinks about what they are consuming and find out about what is happening about the ethical issues, by reading it on internet and on social media. Consumers think that it is important to talk about the ethical issues in the textile industry, this way more people will understand what is going on in the factories. Most of the respondents were of the opinion that the companies are not transparant enough in their manufacturing process. Clothing companies are insufficient about telling what factories are producing their clothes. By telling openly about the factories and being transparent in the supply chain, clothing companies will gain the consumers trust. Even if more and more companies have started to openly talk about their supply chain, there is still some way to go when people that responded in the questionnaire feels that the companies

are not transparent.

While the population is increasing, the resources are decreasing. By consuming less clothes and trying to consume quality clothes that can be worn more than just once, will be more friendly to this earth. Fast fashion brands sell their clothes for a cheap price. They are able to do so, because the production has been cheap. Due to increasing population, the demand of clothes has been increasing. This can put pressure on the factory workers, thus that they have to make clothes in a faster phase. If brands would focus on doing quality and ethical clothes instead of making same shirt in many different prints for a cheap price, in the research came up that consumers would be willing to pay more for a product if they knew that it was ethically produced. In the research came up that consumers think that the use of child labor, the working conditions are unsafe, the use of cheap labor and the use of chemicals that have a bad impact on the environment are equally considered as unethical. It is important to understand the story behind the clothes that we are wearing and not just blindly looking at the “Made in” -label. After all, there is a real human being that has been sewing them together, that maybe have not been treated right. Fast fashion brands offer their clothes for an affordable price, giving the consumers a lower barrier to buy their clothes. When clothes are made on a fast phase, it does not mean that the quality is good. The research shows that consumers want to buy quality products, which will last longer.

Respondents consider themselves as conscious consumers and actively searching for information about the subject, even if they think that it is hard to find information that is easily reachable. By companies trying to eliminate them in the factories, talking about a sustainability and actually keeping up to them, the companies would be considered more trustworthy.

Even if the research showed that young females are concerned about the ethical issues in the textile industry, there is still way to go. To discuss more openly about the ethical issues in the textile industry and companies being more transparent about their production, it would give a picture to the consumers about the company that they are trustworthy. Companies should come up with new ways to use less chemicals in their clothes, instead of using them so that they are harming the environment. The companies should also make more often risk analyses in the factories to eliminate the use of child labor and that the factories would be safe for the workers. Consumers are willing to look for information about ethically produced clothes. They are willing to pay

more for clothes that are ethically produced, companies should give the opportunity for consumers to consume ethically produced clothes and support it, making them more available for the consumers.

## CONCLUSION

The earth is not able to handle all the waste and energy that is used to produce new clothes for the sake of consumerism and that the consumers would buy clothes that they need and not what they want. By buying clothing that consumers just want, they may buy clothes that they either will wear a couple of times and then throw away it or then it will just lay in the wardrobe unused and then throw it away. Which may end up in the landfill, and releasing landfill gas. By choosing materials that last longer, which are made of quality materials, rather than man-made fibers, the cloth can last longer. The longer clothes last, the less often consumers need to buy new clothes. Companies have taken actions in creating a more sustainable future, for example that consumers are able to bring their old clothes for recycling to different clothing brands. Making clothes that are made of materials that are ecologically produced. For the consumers to become more aware of the ethical issues in textile industry and the burden that the textile industry has on the earth can never be talked enough about.

Even in the research the author found out that even if consumers are actively searching for information about the ethical issues textile industry and sustainability, consumers still feel that they can not find enough of information about the subject. Consumers think that it is hard to find information about the subject that is easily reachable. The more consumers would know about the ethical issues in the textile industry and the more would know what kind of affect it has on the earth, for example the chemicals used to make the clothes. The more consumers would know about the issues, the more consumers would be able to require alternatives of clothes. More companies who want to be ethical is entering the market, that want to show that they are transparent, choosing their factories carefully, where workers are treated right. Mostly clothing brands do not want to talk about their factories and what is happening there, in some cases they may not even know what is going on in the factories.

The young females seem to be more aware of the ethical issues in the textile industry, than the males are. Young females read about the issues in the media. They are thinking about what they are consuming and where the products are made. It is important to talk about the ethical issues in the textile industry and spread the knowledge among the consumers. It is important to understand the story behind the clothes that we are wearing. After all, there is a real human being that has been sewing them together, that maybe have not been treated right. Humans

who may be too afraid to speak up for them or do not know their rights. Especially the younger females have a positive attitude towards ethically made clothes.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1

### Ethical problems in the textile industry

Hello,

My name is Heidi Helskä and I'm studying international business administration at Tallinn University of Technology. I'm writing my bachelor thesis about ethical issues in the textile industry. The aim of this research for my thesis is to find out if ethical issues in the textile industry and consumers attitude towards them.

I would appreciate if you could take a few minutes of your time to answer the questions below for my research, the answers will be handled anonymously.

\*Obligatorisk

#### 1. Age \*

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-

#### 2. Gender \*

- Female
- Male

3. Where are you from? \*

Ditt svar \_\_\_\_\_

4. Are you willing to pay more for a product if you knew that it is ethically produced? \*

- Yes
- No

5. Would you buy clothes that you knew that was produced under unethical/unsafe working conditions? \*

- Yes
- No

6. What is the most important feature you look in clothes when buying them? \*

- That it is made of ecofriendly materials
- Quality
- That the production had a small impact on the environment
- That it was made under good working conditions
- Övrigt: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you consider yourself as a conscious consumer? \*

- Yes
- No

8. Where have you heard about ethical issues in textile industry? \*

- Internet
- Television
- Social media
- News paper
- Övrigt: \_\_\_\_\_

9. How important do you think that discussing about ethical issues in textile industry is? \*

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

10. I do consider myself to be aware of the ethical issues in textile industry \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

11 a. If you answered that you are aware of ethical issues in previous question (scale 4-5), in which way?

Ditt svar

---

11 b. If you answered no you do not think you are aware of the ethical issues (scale 1-2), why do you think this way?

Ditt svar

---

12. Do you consider that companies are enough transparent in their manufacturing process? \*

Yes

No

Övrigt: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Which of the following do you consider to be unethical? \*

The use of child labour

The working conditions are unsafe

The use of cheap labour

The use of chemicals that have a bad impact on the environment

The use of man-made fibers (eg. Polyester)

**Thank you very much for taking part of the research!**

SKICKA