**Title of work: Are millennials purchasing decisions affected by brand influence and their approach towards conscientious consumption?**

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**Executive Summary**

This purpose of this report was to add to existing millennial consumer research in the field of conscientious consumption. More specifically whether brand influence and their approach towards conscientious consumption can affect millennials purchasing decisions. Both existing literature and semi-structured interviews were analysed to ascertain the research findings.

Results found that millennials purchasing decisions are greatly influenced by digital technologies, which fits with current literature discussions surrounding their generational traits and differences.  Furthermore, that millennials lifestyle status largely influences their purchasing decisions, explicitly regarding attempts to consume sustainably.

The report highlights many findings that correlate with existing academic and practitioner literature.  Most importantly that millennials conscientious consumption behavior is largely influenced by lifestyle status and exposure to digital technologies and their representation of sustainable brands.

The implications of this research widely impact both academics and practitioners. Academics must understand the imperative of acknowledging traditional purchasing criteria and how these override any millennial- sourced purchasing decisions towards sustainable purchasing choices. Future research could be conducted into how this might be changed for the millennial market.  Practitioner research findings could be used to understand and adapt product offerings appropriate to the millennial market within the conscientious consumption field.

# Introduction

This study has been conducted to add to existing millennial consumer research, specifically relating to the study field of ‘Conscientious Consumption (CC)’. It will review existing literature on millennials, CC and links between the two. Following on from this, the study has explored literature regarding whether millennials purchasing decisions are affected by brand influence and their approach towards CC. This is because literature identified these areas as key issues. Furthermore, research from semi-structured interviews was collected.

These are both important contemporary issues in marketing which is receiving much interest from academics and practitioners. The increasing importance of millennials is apparent through rising interest from companies who see them as active young consumers (Nowak et al, as cited In Ng and Mcginnis Johnson, 2015). CC is a growing concern for consumers and brands due to rising social pressures; marketers must **s**uccinctlyaddress this and cater their marketing strategies accordingly.

However there are considerable issues for exploring these contemporary issues; generally being that previous literature is limited. Limitations of this study include the small sample size and the convenience sampling strategy used, which both lack generalisability and could impact results.

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# Literature Review

This review firstly draws together existing literature on millennials and conscientious consumption, and secondly whether brand influence affects millennials purchasing decisions.

## Millennials

Definitions of millennials are highly debated amongst practitioners and academics. However for the purpose of this study it shall embody the following definition:

“Millennials are defined as persons born between 1981and 2000, or those who are between the ages of 16 and 35 in 2016” (Mobolade, 2016). Millennials primary defining characteristics are that they are the first generational cohort that has grown up in a world surrounded by digital media (Mobolade, 2016 and Raines, 2002). Mcgrath (2016) comments how they make up 49% of the online population, for the largest share of internet users (usually aged 16-64) highlighting their extensive presence in the digital age. The United Nations (2012) published their view that they are going to be the reason behind societal change; requiring better needs targeting through their innovation.

There are some differences in millennial current literature. Mastrolia and Willitis (2013) argue that practitioner literature identifies millennials as being very unique from previous generation. Encompassing the practitioner view, the following traits can be used to describe Millennials:

* Influential to wider society
* Expectant of immediate information access, expect choice as a right
* Technologically savvy, leaders in media/ social media consumption
* Open to social changes and diversity

(Howe and Strauss, 2000, Young and Hinesly, 2012 and Lantos, 2014)

Whereas the following academic literature highlights some similarities in defining traits, but there are some differences. The academic group Mintel reported that British millennials have grown up in a world of globalisation, which has changed their priorities and attitudes from previous generations, which was influenced by the rapid technological change (Mitskavets, 2015). In their report titled ‘Lifestyles of Millennials ’ they argued millennials key defining characteristics that marketers must acknowledge are that they are significantly optimistic, highly ethnical and racially diverse and finally that their living/work status highly influences their consumer spending habits. Despite trends defining them positively, Myers and Sadaghinani (2010) recognise that a more cynical literature approach is adopted by some academics, which stereotype millennials as being lazy and disloyal.

However it is argued that much academic literature generally finds little evidence for such defining generational differences. Higher valued literature comes from Levenson (2000) who uses an economic approach to assess differences. He found that although generational change can appear sudden in popular press, it is more steady and incremental. He also comments that evidence is unrepresentative in demonstrating fundamental generational differences when considering life cycle stages. This is supported by Ng and McGinnis Johnson (2015) as they argued academics believe that social change and shared events are more important than defining generational boundaries.

## Conscientious consumption

CC is challenging to define, as there are academic debates over what it constitutes. However it is often used as a synonym for ethical, sustainable or green consumption. For the purpose of this study it shall use The Global Development Research Centre’s (2016) definition of sustainable consumption (SC):

“The consumption of goods and services that have minimal impact upon the environment, are socially equitable and economically viable whilst meeting the basic needs of humans worldwide. Sustainable consumption targets everyone, across all sectors and all nations, from the individual to governments and multinational conglomerates”.

There is scarce literature surrounding CC, as Reisch et al (2016) believe that it is still in its infancy as an evolving field of research. However literature is put forward by Fuchs and Lorek (2005) (as cited in Geels et al, 2015), who argue that SC is characterized by adopting green technologies and changing lifestyle choices. SC is about a change in society, which is more conscious, specifically towards consumption choices (Carrigan et al, as cited in Auger and Devinney, 2008: Crane and Matten, 2005).

## CC in practice

Examples in practice would include ethical policies e.g. not exploiting children for work. Support for ethical corporate behaviour comes from Rogers (1998) who found that 57% of consumers would stop buying from companies whose products were made by employed children. Another example in practice would be adopting sustainable environmental practices e.g. recycling. Porter’s hypothesis supports its use in business practices as it states “stringent environmental regulation has a positive impact on an industry’s competitiveness” (Porter 1991 as cited in Ziesmer, 2013, p.194).

## Why is it an issue?

CC is a growing issue for marketers as it hugely affects consumers purchasing decisions and the brands they choose. This is supported by the Natural Marketing Institute, who found growing concerns in regards to a company’s environmental impact. 58% of consumers consider this when purchasing goods/services, actively choosing brands that practice sustainable habits (Rogers, 2016). The effectiveness of the use of CC by companies is questioned by Muldoon (2006). Who argues that critics claim that environmental CC has negligible effects, due to the fact it ignores wider issues such as how brands adopt it purely as a marketing technique.

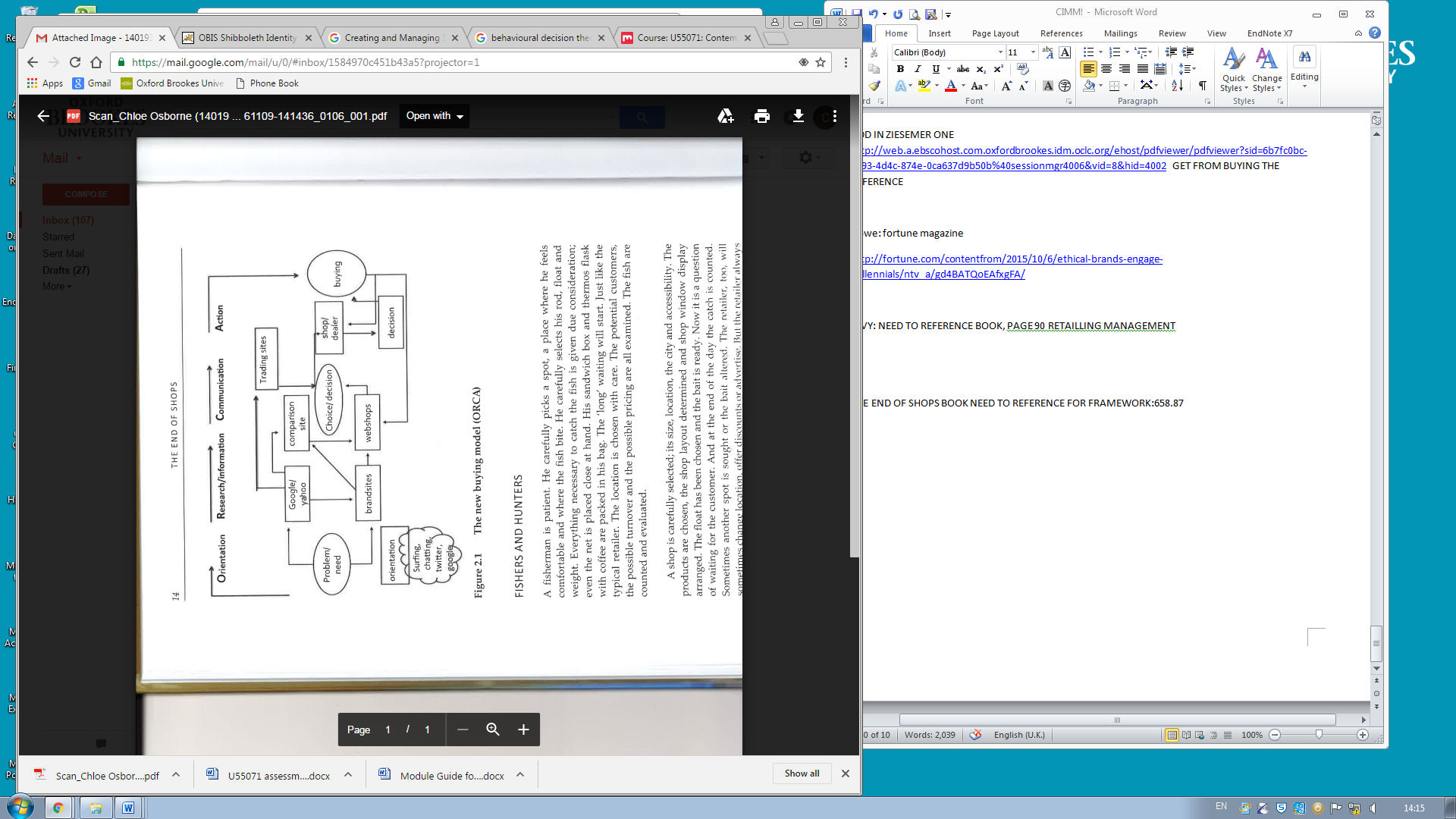
## Consumers, brands and purchasing

## CC is important for brands as it means that consumers wish to promote ethical practices through their purchasing decisions (Uuistalo and Oksanen, 2004, p. 215). Which means that brands must adopt this to be recognised in a customer’s purchasing decision process. Levy et al 2014 defines this as “the steps customers go through when buying a product or service”. Before making any sort of purchasing decision, customers conjointly consider many attributes (Mahele el al, 2015, p.3042). This can vary from traditional criteria e.g. quality, price, to the increasing awareness of sustainability issues e.g. environmentally sourced goods. De Pesmacker et al (2005) (as cited in Mahele el al, 2015, pg.3040) state that price is always one of the most influential purchasing criteria.

Auger and Devinney (2007) recognise supporting academic research on ethical consumerism and how when customers make their purchasing decisions, they take ethical issues into account. However they also argue that there is an attitude/behaviour gap; between what consumers say “about the importance of ethical issues” to what they practice in end purchase decisions. They argue that consumers are not prepared to sacrifice key features over socially sensitive features.

Below is Molennaar’s (2013) framework for consumer decision-making process. It effectively outlines the role brands can play in this, whilst drawing on the rise of digital influences on the buying process.

Figure 1. Consumer Decisions Making Process Framework

(Molenaar, 2013, p.14)

This models applicability to the millennial generation is hugely apparent through its recognition of digital platforms and the influence that these will have on purchasing decisions.

## Millennials, Conscientious Consumption and Brands

As these are developing research fields, there is little academic research on the link between the two. With an even bigger gap in literature about how brands can affect millennials. However, Howe (2015) reported for Fortune that in a survey by the Boston Consulting Group it was concluded that half of millennials surveyed purposely choose ethical brands. It also found that millennials are twice as likely to go organic and pay price premiums for eco/socially conscious brands. However it is important to note this study was conducted in the US (like most CC research) so there may be some differences for UK millennials.

*“…balance the increasing reliance on and relentless depletion of finite resources with the need to give people the choices they consider a right”*

(Watkins, Aitken and Mather, 2015. p.1).

This statement can relate the two concepts as it effectively demonstrates how there is a growing importance of CC, combined with the current generational traits of millennials, e.g. choices as rights. Findings based on UK Millennials by Mcgrath (2015) found compelling evidence that suggested over a fifth of them believe brands should focus on producing eco-friendly products. This is significant for brands, as there is demand for sustainable products and millennials are a highly influential generation who are influencing the “buying decisions of other demographic cohorts” (Solomon, 2015). However Mitskavets (2015) reported that millennials consumer spending habits are highly dependent on life/work status, which suggests that their purchasing habits towards brands that are sustainable could be situational dependent and needs exploring e.g. based on price.

Overall it can be concluded that although literature has identified links between millennials purchasing decisions and CC. However the proposed link needs exploring, especially towards how a brands approach can influence such decisions.

# Data Collection

This section aim is to outline and justify the methodology used for this study. It will discuss how the data was collected, techniques used and any considerations taken towards ethics. It is important to include as it highlights theviability of the study.

## Procedure

Initially, research was gathered from multiple academic journals and practitioner press online to form the literature review. From this data collection and highlighted key issues, the research question for the purpose of this study was derived: Are millennials purchasing decisions affected by brand influence and their approach towards CC?

The research adopted a semi structured interview approach towards its primary data collection. It was chosen as it is commonly known for its applicability to research questions (Harrell and Bradley, 2009).It is the most effective technique through its ability to probe, which can gain depth and understanding.

Within this study 6 voluntary interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. The participants were all approached through the convenience sampling strategy. Donley (2012) comments that although a major disadvantage of this sampling strategy is that generalisability is questionable, it still allows for gaining knowledge. Participants were those who fitted the purposed definition of millennials who were easily accessible.

The interviews were conducted at a time that was allocated through consensual discussion; examples of timings can be seen in appendix three and four. The locations of these participants were conducted in a quiet environment so they could feel at ease. Upon arrival, participants were given an information sheet and ethics form to read and sign. Participants were required to provide information for a background profile and were briefed over chosen definitions. The interviews were designed to last 10-15 minutes; probe questions were used for duration and gaining knowledge purposes. The data was captured through recording answers on a password secured word document, a sufficient method for ensuring privacy.

## Ethics

The study’s methodology aims to comply with standards research practices. The ethics consent form is effective in addressing any issues and agreement. As there were no cultural variances between my participants, this could be argued to be a significant weakness of my approach. Therefore, meaning that future research would need to consider this.

# Findings

This section outlines interview findings and analyses the apparent themes. It also aims to assess any similarities or difference to previous literature.

A significant finding from the interviews was the reported influence of digital technologies on millennials knowledge of brand practices and their approach towards CC. Participants knowledge derived from online newspapers and social media, with many answers relating to negative business practices. This suggests that participants are more susceptible to media publishes that criticize brand approaches towards CC. Due to the fact most participants reported they would stop going to a brand if they aware of bad practices, the impact that these platforms have on purchasing decisions were detrimental. There are a number of similarities between the results and previous literature. Supporting the literature around millennial traits, this trend acknowledges millennials as large social media consumers and as a significant percentage of internet users. This can be supported by Molennar’s (2013) framework. The findings match the model’s representation about the increasing influence of digital technologies on consumer purchasing decisions. The findings develop this as they apply the role of brands; outlining that millennials are hugely influenced by digital platforms discussion regarding a brand’s approach towards CC.

Secondly, another theme consistently emerged throughout participants; they lacked knowledge regarding retail brand practices towards CC unless time was spent actually researching them. Which meant that they were unsure if they had purchased products from brands who were ethical or not. This trend contradicts Auger and Devinney (2007) literature regarding customers purposely considering ethical issues when making purchasing decisions. This literature cannot be applied to this study’s results simply because millennials were unable to differentiate brands that adopted ethical practices from those who don’t, showing how they do not have the ability make such an informed decision in choosing ethical brands. The literature by Howe (2015) can be further used to criticise findings. Due to this lack of knowledge, it is unlikely that it can be generalised that one fifth of millennials are more likely to choose ethical brands, when applied to the retail market.

Out of the brands participants were able to identify ethical or sustainable, they recognised how they strongly push this claim. Findings were consistent in recognising that millennials are consciously aware of heavy marketing campaigns adopted by brands that portray their USP and differentiation based on their ethical/sustainable approach. Some participants were able to recognise that some brands adopt this for publicity purposes. However findings were inconsistent to this and more research on this is needed if it was to support the literature proposed by Muldoon (2006) that CC is adopted as a marketing technique.

The influence of a participant’s work/life style status had the biggest impact on their purchasing decisions. This supports the literature purposed by Mintel (2015) in their ‘Lifestyles of Millennials’ report. From this study, results showed that the biggest driver behind millennials purchasing decisions was price. Results correlate with De Pelsmacker et al’s (2005) literature that price is the most important criteria consumers consider.

This correlates with CC as it brings with it major implications which are represented through the results. With green goods typically costing up to 50% more than alternatives (The Telegraph, 2010), the trend emerged that due to their lifestyle status and financial stability, millennials choose not to purchase from brands who they know to practice CC. As they consider these to be more expensive. The findings and their relation to CC can be used in conjunction with Mahele (2015) and Auger and Devinney’s (2007) literature regarding the impact of product attributes and consumers purchasing decisions, that key product features cannot be sacrificed over those that would be deemed ethical. However it is important to note that many of the participants outlined a desire to buy ethical or sustainable products if they were financially able to. This could be argued to be a major influence on the attitude/behaviour gap suggested by Auger and Devinney (2007), between consumer opinions towards CC and what they actually practice at end purchase decisions. However due to the cultural similarities of participants typically coming fromlower income brackets future results may vary if cultural variances were taken into account. Which means that larger samples with higher cultural variances should be used in future research for greater representativeness.

When participants were asked to rate a sample of brands in order of how effectively they believed they approached CC, results varied so a general trend was hard to distinguish. See below:

Figure 2.

Generally a pattern emerged that the majority of brands were ranked similarly between participants, with small score ranges. This suggests some indication about how a brand’s approach towards CC is viewed. However there was one major outlier in this: Brand E received the highest range possible, highlighting that there is a major difference in participant view’s towards this brand CC approach.

This highlights the difficulty in researching CC. As Reish et al (2016) argued it is an early research field, in which there are debates in literature about what it constitutes, making it opinion sensitive. These results can be applied to this literature as it provides some reasoning behind the differences in brand ranking per participant. Ranking is belief centred, as there is no set classification to use or critique each ranking against. For the nature of this study it would have been too hard to ascertain these belief variations before the interviews were conducted without breaking code or practices and research ethics.

The differences in scores may be explained through the emerging result trends. Participants knowledge of the brand may have varied based on the how much of an influence digital technologies has played in their knowledge of these brand practices. Although it has been identified that this plays a significant part, it may be participant dependent and more research is needed.

The variety in these results can be supported by secondary sources. Forbes reported Brand B as the world most sustainable company in 2016 (Dill, 2016), however they didn’t even make it on the Ethical Consumers top 10 ethical companies. It is important to understand when looking at these results that there are many different aspects that make up CC and further research into consumer’s opinion towards brand classification would be needed.

Overall many themes have been identified from the findings, which supports or contradicts existing literature. However it is important to acknowledge a key weakness: the small sample size. To improve these results, a greater sample size could be used to increase confidence in the trends identified and how they can be generalised to the whole millennial generation.

# Conclusion

In conclusion, the research has successfully met it aims of exploring millennials purchasing decisions and whether these are affected by brand influence and their approach towards CC.

One of the key findings identified a link between digital technologies and the impact this on millennials knowledge of brand approaches towards CC. This trend is important for academics as it aids support for literature on millennial traits, which can promote further research discussion. The implication of this on marketing professionals is abundant. The knowledge of this can be used to their advantage when strategically targeting millennials, meaning that they need to heavily adopt a digital presence if they wish to be recognised. Furthermore this knowledge can result in huge cost savings for professional through minimising the use of failed marketing techniques.

However the most influential finding was that millennials lifestyle status impacts their purchasing decisions the most and can override any attempts to have CC. This is important to academics as it supports existing literature. However despite this correlation, more research could be done to extend this knowledge. For example academics could focus on what could be used to influence a change in these significant criteria for millennials. Marketing professionals can use this to assess their product offering, knowing that they must always consider price. If marketers can offer products that are affordable and sustainable there are many benefits to be had.

Although this study has met it aims, it is important to refer back to the major weaknesses of this study. The small sample size is a major drawback of this study, which future research should include a larger sample size to increase confidence and generalisability.

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# Appendix One:

*Interview Guide*

Ask to read information sheet and if there are any questions.

Ask to sign consent form if agree.

Get interview profile information.

Remind of overall topic question: Are millennials purchasing decisions affected by brand influence and their approach towards conscientious consumption?

Give purposed definitions of millennials and secondly conscientious consumption.

Begin questions.

1. What is your current lifestyle/work status?
2. How would you describe an ethical/sustainable brand?
3. What brands do you see as having ethical/sustainable practices?
4. What brands do you see as not having ethical/sustainable practices?
5. Would you say that your knowledge about brand practices is influenced by digital technologies?
6. What is important to you when buying food?
7. Would you say you ever buy organic/fair/trade/local? If yes why is this important to you?
8. What is important to you when buying clothes?
9. Can expand from this and say if you have ever bought clothes from A brand that you know uses ethical/sustainable practices?
10. Looking at these 6 brands, can your rank them in order of how effectively they approach CC?

Brand A, Brand B, Brand C, Brand D, Brand E, Brand F

1. Are you more likely to buy into brands because of their attitude to CC?

# Appendix two:

## Interview Transcript Profile

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Participant No. | Date of Birth | Age | Gender | Home County |
| 1 | 06/06/1991 | 25 | Female | West Sussex |
| 2 | 12/12/1995 | 20 | Female | Kent |

# Appendix three:

## Interview transcript for participant one

Interviewer: Student

Interviewee: Millennial

Date: 12th November 2016

Interview setting: In quiet office.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for agreeing to take part in this research study. In a moment, I am going to give you an information sheet, which details everything you need to know.

Interviewee: Ok that is fine

Interviewer: Here it is, if you could take a moment to read it and if you have any questions please ask when you have finished reading it.

Interviewee: Thank you that information sheet was helpful, however I was wondering what you mean by a password secured word document?

Interviewer: Your answers will be stored on a word documents for analysis purposes, which is only accessible by me. I am the only person who knows the password.

Interviewee: Ok I understand.

Interviewer: I am now going to ask you for some information; this is to complete an interviewee profile. Firstly what is your DOB?

Interviewee: 6th June 1991. I am 25 years old.

Interviewer: What is your gender?

Interviewee: Female.

Interviewer: What is your home county?

Interviewee: Haywards Heath, West Sussex, United Kingdom.

Interviewer: Thank you. Now that you have given me this and read the information could I please ask you to read over the consent form and sign it you comply with what it is saying.

Interviewee: All signed, I agree with everything so far.

Interviewer: Thank you very much; before we begin the interview, I am going to read to you the definitions that have been chosen for the purpose of this study.

Interviewee: Yes ok go ahead.

Interviewer: Firstly I will read out the millennial definition, which for the purpose of this study is:

“Millennials are defined as persons born between 1981and 2000, or those who are between the ages of 16 and 35 in 2016”.

Do you have any questions about this?

Interviewee: No that fine I understand it all.

Interviewer: Brilliant, thank you. I’m now going to read out the definition for conscientious consumption. For the purpose of this study it has used the Global Development Research Centres definition for sustainable consumption. Which is: “The consumption of goods and services that have minimal impact upon the environment, are socially equitable and economically viable whilst meeting the basic needs of humans worldwide. Sustainable consumption targets everyone, across all sectors and all nations, from the individual to governments and multinational conglomerates”.

Any questions?

Interviewee: No I understand the definition.

Interviewer: Thank you. Before we begin with the question, I am going to remind you of my research question: Are millennials purchasing decisions affected by brand influence and their approach towards conscientious consumption?

Are you ready to begin with the questions?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: What is your current lifestyle/work status?

Interviewee: I am currently a part time employee in the care industry, previously I used to work in an office doing customer service and administration work. This changed as I went on maternity leave 16 months ago and now have one baby with another due next year.

Interviewer: How would you describe an ethical/sustainable brand?

Interviewee: I would explain them as a brand that takes an interest into their industry and how they approach issues such as ethics/environment. They take care in how their approach the marketing of the brand and what activities they do.

Interviewer: Thanks. What brands do you see as having ethical/sustainable practices?

Interviewee: I can give you some examples of brands I know that follow this. There is a skin care brand called \*\* who I use. I would be confident in saying that use al natural ingredients and are ethical as I am aware that they do not test on animals.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate and tell me another other brands?

Interviewee: Yes I can think of two others. \*\* is another health and beauty brand that I know is more well-known and is sold in many of the high street shops such as Superdrug. I would consider them as being sustainable as they only using natural ingredients; they heavily communicate this through their marketing and brand image. Also I know a homeopathic health company called \*\*\* who a family member of mine uses who I would consider sustainable as they use organic products which are much better for the environment.

Interviewer: To what extent would you say that these brands heavily market their ethical/sustainable approach?

Interviewee: \*\* do this as they have representatives who come and educate customers about the products which I see as them being sustainable and delivering a high quality service.

\* out of the three is the brand that I would say heavily communicates their sustainable approach. Much of their marketing is focused on this and how they portray their brand. \*\*\* themselves on the fact that their business is centred on being good to the environment which I would say they communicate through their marketing well.

Interviewer: What brands do you see as not having ethical/sustainable practices?

Interviewee: In my opinion I see \*\*\*\* as not being ethical, I remember a publicity scandal about how their products are made in third world countries and they staff were paid well under minimum wage. Also I am aware that designer fashion brands. e.g. \*\*\*\*\* as they use a lot of real fur and leather products which could be deemed unethical by certain people beliefs towards animal cruelty.

Interviewer: Would you say that your knowledge about brand practices is influenced by digital technologies?

Interviewee: I would say massively. Much of my knowledge about a brand and its ethical practices is shaped by online media papers and social media. Usually I become aware of a brand’s negative business practices when they are reported on newspapers or if I am browsing the web, especially if it is being discussed on social media.

Interviewer: What is important to you when buying food?

Interviewee: Honestly price. I would love to buy organic but looking at it from a price/cost point it is too high to be able to sustain buying it financially. If there is a good promotion I would. I usually buy products that are unbranded as this keeps overall costs down.

Interviewer: Would you say you ever buy organic/fair/trade/local? If yes why is this important to you?

Interviewee: I do buy fair trade tea and coffee and I will buy organic natural skin care products. I will buy organic food and skin products for my baby as I am more concerned about his sensitivity compared to adults who are much more accustomed to stuff that may be found on non-organic products.

Interviewer: What is important to you when buying clothes?

Interviewee: The most important thing to me is good value for money. I look for good quality for a reasonable price. I typically do not buy designer branded items, as I believe all you are paying for is the brand name and image. I shop at high street brands, like \*\*\*\*\*\* , who I believe is the best brand for clothes have they have a range of lines at varying prices. They have a good balance of quality and price.

Interviewer: Can expand from this and say if you have ever bought clothes from A brand that you know uses ethical/sustainable practices?

Interviewee: For buying clothes, I find it harder to know what a brand practices actually are behind its marketed image and whether they have sustainable practices or not. I think you wouldn’t know unless you research it.

Interviewer: Looking at these 6 brands, can you rank them in order of how effectively they approach CC? Number 1 being the most ethical.

The companies are: Brand A, Brand B, Brand C, Brand D, Brand E, Brand F

Interviewee: Sure.

1. Brand C
2. Brand D
3. Brand E
4. Brand B
5. Brand F
6. Brand A

Interviewer: To what extent would you say you are more likely to buy into brands if you are aware of their approach towards CC?

Interviewee: I would like to say that I would always choose to purchase products at a brand that I knew was being ethical or sustainable. However I cannot ignore price. This is a significant determinant for me, which in my current situation overrules over choices. If I was aware that of a brands bad ethical practices, and there were similar priced alternatives at brands who I am aware are ethical, I would always choose the more ethical brand.

Interviewer: That is all the questions, thank you for your time and participation in this study.

# Appendix four:

## Transcript for Participant two

Interviewer: Student

Interviewee: Millennial

Date: 15th November 2016

Interview setting: Quiet space in Library

Interviewer: Hello, I would like to thank you for agreeing to take part in this research study. Shortly, I will be providing you with an information sheet that outlines everything you need to know about this study. Please read and ask any questions you may have.

Interviewee: Thank you. Yes that it fine I do not have any questions.

Interviewer: Thank you. If you could please sign the following ethics consent form if you have happy to continue with the study

Interviewee: Sure.

Interviewer: I am now going to ask you for some information so I can use this to create an interviewee profile. May I continue?

Interviewee: Yes, what do you need to know?

Interviewer: Firstly, What is your date of birth?

Interviewee: 12th December 1995. So I am 20 years old.

Interviewer: Thank you. What is your gender?

Interviewee: Female.

Interviewer: Where is your home county?

Interviewee: Sevenoaks, Kent.

Interviewer: Thank you. Now I am going to read to you the definition chosen for the purpose of this study. Firstly Millennials are defined as: persons born between 1981and 2000, or those who are between the ages of 16 and 35 in 2016”. Secondly Conscientious Consumption can be defined using the Global Development Research Centres definition for sustainable consumption. It is: “The consumption of goods and services that have minimal impact upon the environment, are socially equitable and economically viable whilst meeting the basic needs of humans worldwide. Sustainable consumption targets everyone, across all sectors and all nations, from the individual to governments and multinational conglomerates”. Any questions?

Interviewee: What is meant by conglomerates?

Interviewer: Conglomerates is typically large companies who own many smaller businesses.

Interviewee: Thank you, I understand now.

Interviewer: Thank you. I am just going to remind you of the study question, which is: Are millennials purchasing decisions affected by brand influence and their approach towards conscientious consumption? Are you read to begin with the questions?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: What is your current lifestyle or work status?

Interviewee: I am a student who works part time.

Interviewer: How would you describe an ethical/sustainable brand?

Interviewee: I would describe that as someone who is considerate of the environment and goes out of their way to ensure they are doing their bit for the environment and society. They use environmentally friendly products, do work for charity’s, recycling, focus on the earth and are ethical, for example they do not use animal testing.

Interviewer: What brands do you see as having ethical/sustainable practices?

Interviewee: From the top of my head I would say \* and \*\*. I also think Sainsbury’s could fall under this bracket.

Interviewer: How have these brands made you aware of their ethical/sustainable practices?

Interviewee: I would say through their marketing. They heavily portray their overall business approach and image on the fact that they are ethical and good for the environment etc.

Interviewer: What brands do you see as not having ethical/sustainable business practices?

Interviewee: I know the make-up brand \*\*\* test on animals so that is very unethical. I also know Nestle is very unethical as I know about the boycott that happened to their brand over their baby formula, I also read that they use child labour and are guilty of mislabelling their products.

Interviewer: What impact does seeing these brands as unethical/unsustainable have on you as a consumer? What about other consumers?

Interviewee: For me if I am aware of a brand being unethical I would try to not shop there. However sometimes if the price is right and there are no other suitable alternatives I would go there. In terms of other consumers I generally think they would have similar views. Also it is usually big well-known companies who are guilty of this and due to their size and name people will still continue to shop there.

Interviewer: Would you say that your knowledge about brand practices is influenced by digital technologies?

Interviewee: Hugely. Most of the brands that have been found out to have bad practices have widely published media about them in newspapers or on social media. It is hard for them to cover this up when it is so widely published all over the internet. As a media and communication student, I have learnt that you are more likely to remember negative media then positive media.

Interviewer: What about for the brands who you deemed as being ethical/sustainable?

Interviewee: I would say yes they would play some part. The internet and social media has helped to get their message out that they are priding themselves on being ethical, without this they may not have reached such a large audience with this message.

Interviewer: What is important to you when buying food?

Interviewee: Price is the most important for me. Being a student I like to get value for money and also something that is easy to cook.

Interviewer: Would you say you ever buy organic/fair trade/local food products? If yes why is this important to you?

Interviewee: Occasionally if it is not too expensive. I do like to know where my food comes from so I would prefer to buy food products from any of those categories if I was able to.

Interviewer: What is important to you when buying clothes?

Interviewee: For me it is the brand name. The clothes have to be attractive to me but I am guilty of only wearing branded clothes. I think this is because as a young person you want to confirm with what your peers are doing. Generally young people value each other based on the clothes there wear, what brand your wearing playing a huge part in this.

Interviewer: Can you expand from this and say if you have ever bought clothes that you know are from an ethical/sustainable brand?

Interviewee: I wouldn’t actually know if a clothes brand was ethical or sustainable or the top of my head. I would have to research this, as in my opinion I think it is harder to know this with clothes brands.

Interviewer: Looking at these 6 brands, can you rank them in order of how effectively they approach CC? 1 being the most ethical. They are: Brand A, Brand B, Brand C, Brand D, Brand E, Brand F

Interviewee: Sure.

1. Brand C

2. Brand D

3. Brand B

4. Brand E

5. Brand F

6. Brand A

Interviewer: Are you more likely to buy into brands because of their attitude to CC?

Interviewee: If I am aware of them and I can afford them then yes. However it really does depend on the product. For example if they are necessity products and there are little or no other alternatives. For example petrol companies will still have customers as people need this to get around, like for Brand A.

Interviewer: That is the end of the interview; there are no further questions. Thank you very much for your time and participation in this study.

# Appendix five:

## Information Sheet

**Millennials and Conscientious Consumption Information Sheet**

You have been asked to participate in the above study. The following information sheet is designed to provide the required information so that you can understand what is going to happen in the research and why it is being carried out.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the research is to bring together gaps in previous literature that have failed to identify a link between the two areas. It aims to gain a better understanding of millennials and their views towards conscientious consumption. Within this it aims to identify whether millennials purchasing decisions are affected by brand influence and their approach towards conscientious consumption. As part of this research I shall be collecting primary data to analysis this.

Why have you been invited?

You have been invited as you are classified as a millennial under the purposed definition for this study. This research aims to collect qualitative data from 6 semi-structured interviews, one being yours. Identity will be changed for data and analysis and all information stored will be confidential.

Participation

Your participation in this research is voluntary. It is important that you understand that you can withdraw at any time, without any given reason. If you wish to go forward with the research project you will be asked to sign a consent form.

Procedure

After reading this information sheet, you will be asked to sign the consent form and participate in a 10-15 minute long semi structured interview. Your answers will be recorded for the analysis purposes; you will be given the opportunity to look over the interview notes.

Confidentiality

All information will be strictly confidential and anonymity will be ensured. Data collected will be kept securely in paper and electronic form for 2 year period after completion.

Who is organising the research?

The research has been organised by Oxford Brookes University, which will be carried out by students as part of their module assessment.

Contact details

If you wish any further information, please contact myself on 07934665393 or email via [14019379@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:14019379@brookes.ac.uk). If you have any issues regarding the ethics of this research please contact the chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on [ethics@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@brookes.ac.uk)

Thank you for reading this information sheet.

Chloe Osborne

November 2016

# Appendix six:

## Ethics consent form

Below is the consent form that was given to participants to sign if they wish to continue with the study. It is important to include these as they can address issues with participation agreement and

Title of project:

Millennials and Conscientious Consumption

Are millennials purchasing decisions affected by brand influence and their approach towards conscientious consumption?

Name and address of Researcher:

Chloe Osborne

349 Cowley Road, OX4 2BP.

14019379@brookes.ac.uk

1. I agree that I have read and understood the provided information sheet and have cleared up any queries I have
2. I understand that my involvement is voluntary and I am leave at any given time with no required reason
3. I understand that confidentiality of information is only protected within limitations of the law. However the study has addressed confidentiality and anonymity issues.
4. I give my consent to taking part in the study

Name of Participant Date Signature

Name of Researcher Date Signature