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**Abstract**

This study looks at a topic that’s becoming increasingly more relevant, with the millennial generation becoming a large consumer group in the marketplace. The research gathered in this study helps further limited knowledge on millennial’s buying behaviours and attitudes towards conscientious consumption. Overall ten semi-structured interviews took place with participants who can be categorised as millennials. From these interviews and relevant literature one conclusion that can be drawn is that there is a sense of conscientious consumption among millennials, but for more extensive conclusions to drawn there needs to be more in-depth research into the area. This study adds a foundation for more research into this area to be carried out; with there being limited studies available currently.

**Introduction**

The term conscientious consumption refers to a social movement that emerged in the late 1980’s around growing concerns for the environment and ethical treatment of workers. The term defines the idea of a consumer that makes purchasing decisions with consideration to the processes behind a product and what effect these processes are having on the environment and the wellbeing of others. Millennials can be classed as anyone who was born between the years 1981-1997 (Fry, 2016). This group can be further characterised as being more affluent, better educated and more ethnically diverse than any previous generation (Howe and Strauss, 2000). The Purpose of the study is to describe, explain and research the conscientious consumption behaviour of millennials and to understand the forces behind the behaviour. This topic is particularly interesting to marketers as there are very limited studies on millennials consumption and so further exploration is needed to expand our knowledge. There are however a few issues when looking at millennials, one being that there is no universally accepted age range that defines the group, meaning that studies are based on authors own personal interpretation of a millennial. Another issue is that there isn’t a vast wealth of knowledge on millennials, meaning defining features and traits of this generation are still up for debate.

**Literature Review**

Although research on millennials is limited there are studies already looking at the generation in some detail. The generation is the first to have access to modern technology such as the Internet and smart phones, meaning that millennials are connected technically, socially and professionally (Thompson, 2016). As the generation has grown up with modern technology they can also lever technology very easily and rapidly (Thompson, 2016) which makes them unique from any other generation. From a business perspective millennials want businesses to focus on people, products and purpose more than profits (Deloitte, 2016) showing that there is a change of values from generations before. Another study shows that millennials are more reluctant to spend money, resulting in a ‘sharing economy’ (Goldman Sachs, 2016) where items are borrowed rather than brought outright. These examples show that millennials attitudes are different to any other generation and this study seeks to discover their attitudes towards the idea of conscientious consumption.

One study looking at millennials purchasing decisions shows that 59% of millennials will stop buying a brands product if they believe the company is unethical (Strailey, 2015). This study highlights that the majority of the group are inclined to use alternative products to an unethical one due to their moral standing on the issue of ethics. This study is furthered by the figure that states 47% of millennials would actually pay more for a ‘green’ product (Smith, 2010). These figures show that there is an invested interest from millennials to choose products that are ethical to the point where nearly half would actually pay more for a product that is perceived as ethical. Whether or not a product is considered ethical is based upon the consumer’s personal opinion, which can be influenced by factors other than the actual ethical nature of the product.

Businesses have noticed the trend towards consumers buying ethical and environmentally friendly products and as a result ethicality and environmental consideration have evolved into unique selling points of products. As shown in the figure above, millennials are willing to pay a higher price for an ethical product and so there is money to be made from this new unique selling point. Another figure states that green products now account for almost 10% of new products entering the market (Smith, 2010). This figure furthers the idea that people are realising the monetary potential of creating a product that consumers believe is ‘green’. Environmentally friendly business strategies can contribute to a competitive advantage (Sharma et al., 2008) in the current market as more businesses realise the values that millennials have and are consequently targeting these values. This trend of using ethical values as a marketing tool has led to the birth of ‘greenwashing’. This term refers to the way businesses fabricate environmental claims in order to gain market share (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). Businesses can use greenwashing to appeal to millennial consumers ethical values and boost sales based on fabricated information.

One study shows that millennial consumers will practice environmentally conscious behaviour only when they are reminded of the positive effects that their environmentally conscious activities will have (Adams, 2012). This figure highlights that millennials need prompting into buying environmentally friendly products through constant repetition of the positive impact it may bring. This is where companies can implement their use of greenwashing to remind millennials of the fabricated positives their products brings. Obviously not all ethical claims from companies are fabricated but the potential benefits of greenwashing are becoming apparent to businesses. One study found that millennials positively respond to recycling symbols, pictures of nature and words such as eco-friendly when purchasing a product (Adams, 2012). This is furthered by a study that found 90% of millennials regard a recycling symbol as denoting the product is eco-friendly (Smith, 2010). These figures show that creating a product that is perceived by millennials as environmentally friendly could be as easy as putting recycling symbol on the packaging. Millennials are inclined to purchase green products but there is a large gap between what millennial consumers think and what companies are actually doing (Smith, 2010). Overall it’s clear that businesses have manipulated the meaning of ethical and green products and that millennials are conscientious to an extent but are not conscientious enough to look through biased marketing campaigns and packaging to the real impacts that the company is having.

One study looking at millennials stats that 85% are influenced by brands social responsibility efforts when it comes to purchasing and recommending products (WARC, 2016). This highlights the significance of social responsibility when it comes to targeting millennials, meaning that companies without sufficient social responsibly may be at a disadvantage. Another study furthers the point by adding that millennials want brands that identify with their core values, no matter what category the product is in (Adams, 2012). This shows that millennials are a particularly hard segment of the market to effectively target, as company values have to be altered to be in line with that of the millennials. These figures show that there is a conscious effort from millennials to align themselves with brands that are socially responsible but whether or not this is because of a genuine concern for social and ethical issues isn’t clear.

One defining characteristic of the millennial generation is their use of social media. As highlighted by the figure that states around 90% of millennials use social media in some form (WARC, 2016). The millennial generation was the first to have access to social media and this access defines them from any previous generation. Social media allows users to spread news and connect with vast networks of people around the world. With no previous generation being exposed to information to the same extent it’s possible to imply that millennials opinions and beliefs could be shaped by their online access. Social media enables users to share and express their opinions on ethical issues, giving users more information on matters than they would previously. One study found that media can promote and inhibit social change, of which values and attitudes towards environment are changing (Dispensa & Brulle, 2003). A study based in Hong Kong supports this by adding that millennials significant peer networks might cultivate and reinforce the idea that environmentally conscious behaviour is the ‘norm’ (Lee, 2008). This creation of ethical products becoming the norm through the platform of social media may be a factor behind why millennials are stating that they are influenced by a brands social responsibility.

Aside from the growing trend of ethical products becoming the norm they also have a high perceived status value (Allison, 2009). This status value has been created though the conception that consumption of ethical products makes an individual more educated and aware of the environmental problems our generation is facing. Consumption of organic and whole foods has been seen as an activity that signifies the consumer is from an elite class (Allison, 2009). This elite class is perceived to have superior taste and awareness of ethical problems. These ideas show how ethical products are not only being consumed for ethical reasons but perhaps in order to gain status amongst peers. With around 90% of millennials being a user of social media they have the perfect platform to showcase their ethical consumption to a wide audience. This idea that millennials are buying ethical products in order to gain status can be referred to the social desirability effect. This effect is where people act differently in order to become what they perceive as socially desirable. The usage of social media may have amplified the issues surrounding ethical issues to the point where millennials are using ethical products as a tool to gain perceived status. This argument shows that there is a certain degree of conscientious consumption amongst millennials but perhaps not for the correct reasons.

**Data Collection**

The interview process involved asking 10 different participants a set interview guide (Appendix A) with their personal data being recorded in a table (Appendix B). The interview was designed to be semi structured so that data collected would be qualitative as well as quantitative. Having a semi structured design allowed me to probe deeper into some questions and gain more relevant information. Before the interview took place the interviewees were given an information sheet (Appendix C) to read, highlighting the purpose of the study whilst also answering other questions they may have had. They were then given a consent form (Appendix D) to sign, which helped to reinforce the anonymity of the study. Getting interviewees to sign the consent form meant that I could be certain they were informed properly and ready to answer the questions. The one criteria of the study was that the interviewees had to be of the millennial generation so I had to target people who I thought were in the 19- 35-age bracket. I also wanted to get a good balance between males and females in my study, which was almost achieved with 4 females and 6 males being interviewed. I approached a few friends in Cowley to take part in the study, as there was already an established rapport between us, which I thought could lead to more honest answers. Of the remaining 5 interviews, 3 took place at Wheatley Campus and 2 took place at the Headington campus. I wanted to get a broad range of ages across the millennial generation in order to build a representative study but I was limited to an age range of 19-30. The interviews ranged in time from 3 minutes 40 seconds to 6 minutes 30 seconds due to some interviewees being more interactive than other. All interviews were recorded so that accurate transcripts could be written (Appendix E-N).

**Findings and discussion**

The findings of my interviews resulted in the emergence of some trends and themes some of which are complimentary of the literature already published in the area. Some of the results were contradictory of the findings found in the literature review meaning that there are some inconsistencies in our understanding of millennials as conscientious consumers. This perhaps highlights the lack of understanding there is on this particular subject and evidence that more research needs to come forward in order to formulate accurate generalisations on the generation.

The first question of the interview asked participants whether or not they believed they were conscientious consumers or not. Six out of ten stated that to some degree that they were conscientious, with three answering they weren’t and one stating they were unsure. These results show that the majority of the group class themselves as conscientious consumers. There was also evidence that millennials consider themselves conscientious, which has been backed up to some extent by the 60% of millennials in this study, which also agree. Regarding the participants who didn’t agree they were conscientious and the one that was unsure, they all answered in a later question that they would pay more for an ethical product if the price wasn’t too much more than an unethical product (See question 4 Appendix A). This shows that millennials who do not identify themselves as conscientious consumers would still act conscientiously under the right circumstances.

One question that that produced some interesting findings was the question regarding what was the most important factor when buying a product. There was a 50/50 split in responses between quality and price. With 70% of participants being students it would be expected that money plays a very important factor in consumption habits. Interestingly 66% of the participants who work full time answered that quality is the most important factor, showing that a regular income may alter a participant’s view on what is most important. Another surprising correlation that developed in from this question was that the three youngest participants all said price was most important, compared to the three oldest participants stating quality was the most important. This could imply that millennials opinions change as they get older, making it hard to make generalisations of the whole group. Looking back at the literature one study found that millennials want to identify with brands that share the same values as them.

One study in the literature review stated that 47% of millennials would pay more for a ‘green’ product. A question in my study posed the same question with a varying response. Only 40% said they would pay more with another 50% saying they would spend more depending how much the price difference was. These results show that despite many wanting to pay more, the underlying theme of millennials being money conscious comes before being a conscientious consumer. With a study composed of 70% students it should be expected that results are altered by the group’s restricted financial power, perhaps highlighting one limitation of my study.

One question that produced contrasting data to that of the literature review was the question regarding a company’s social responsibility. In the literature review 85% of respondents said they were influenced by a company’s social responsibility whereas in my study 60% of respondents stated that a company’s social responsibility didn’t factor into whether or not they brought a product. This contrasting data shows that whilst millennials may take into consideration the social responsibility of companies there is little desire to actually act accordingly and align themselves with companies that do have good social responsibility.

Question 8 asked participants whether or not they have ever done any research on a products background to find out the true extent of how ethical or environmentally friendly the product was. Out of the participants only 2 claimed to have ever researched into a product before buying it, and these two could only remember researching a product once. This information supports the idea that millennials believe they are conscientious but do not actually consume conscientiously as they do not research into what they are buying. Without researching a products background millennials are susceptible to greenwashing, the idea that brands can market a product as green despite having limited positive environmental implications. Six out of the eight people who have never researched a product claim to buy at least one environmentally friendly product regularly meaning that while they think they are purchasing conscientiously there is a chance these products are just marketed as eco-friendly.

The last Question was formulated to follow up on the literature that suggested ethical and environmentally friendly products have a higher perceived value in society making them more attractive to buy. This literature offered one potential reason into why there may be a growing trend of conscientious consumption. The question asked participants whether or not they believed ethical and environmentally friendly products had a higher perceived value in society and if they were more attractive purchases. Of the ten participants 80% agreed with the statement, showing there was a general consensus between participants that these products do have a higher perceived value. This higher perceived value offers some insight into why millennials may be consuming ethical and environmentally friendly products. This idea is supported by question 2 which asked whether there were any real life events in recent history that had changed participant’s consumption habits. Only two participants could remember an event that had actually impacted their purchasing, perhaps showing that millennials aren’t that concerned with products negative impacts but rather their own image.

One of the key themes emerging from the findings is that millennials are very money conscious and it’s this defining characteristic that impacts millennials the most when purchasing. There was no evidence showing that buying products from a good source is a high priority to millennials despite them being aware of the pros and cons. With money being an overriding factor behind their purchasing there is a limited amount of conscientious consumption with many answers being ‘depending on money’. Another theme emerging is that the participants in most cases didn’t actually consume contentiously unless it was convenient to do so. The results of question eight show that there’s little desire to obtain truthful information about products impacts, perhaps because it’s inconvenient to do.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion to the study, the millennial generation is very broad and it’s hard for generalisations to be made that are accurate to all. With ages ranging from 19-35 it is hard to make generalised statements that apply to everyone in that range. Other factors such as ethnic background and occupation could also change attitudes towards conscientious consumption. A wider study of the generation may show more insight, but with study of this size it’s hard to represent all the sub-segments of the millennial generation and formulate a conclusion that can be applied to everyone. There is however a knowledge and acceptance amongst millennials that consuming ethical and environmentally friendly products is better. This knowledge may be the result of the generation’s access to a wide range of resources such as social media, which gives them more information than any generation previously. This access to information has allowed the generation to formulate better informed values around the idea that products need to be sourced ethically and environmentally in order to protect our environment and the exploitation of others. While there is some degree of consideration for conscientious consumption my primary research shows that this behaviour isn’t practiced to a high enough level for the generation to be classed as a truly conscientious generation. Overall millennials are consuming conscientiously but there’s little evidence that there’s any genuine consideration for the environment or other people involved in their conscientious consumption, but rather a need to adapt to the norms of an environmentally aware generation.

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**APPENDIX A - INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Would you consider yourself a conscientious consumer?**

**Why?**

**Are there any particular environmental or ethical issues that have impacted your purchasing decision recently?**

**What is the most important factor for you personally when deciding what product to buy?**

**Why is this most important?**

**Would you ever pay more for an ethical product over one that was known to be unethical?**

**Why would/wouldn’t you pay more?**

**What products, if any, do you make sure are environmentally friendly and ethical before you buy them?**

**Why are these most important?**

**Would you ever recommend a product that wasn’t environmentally friendly?**

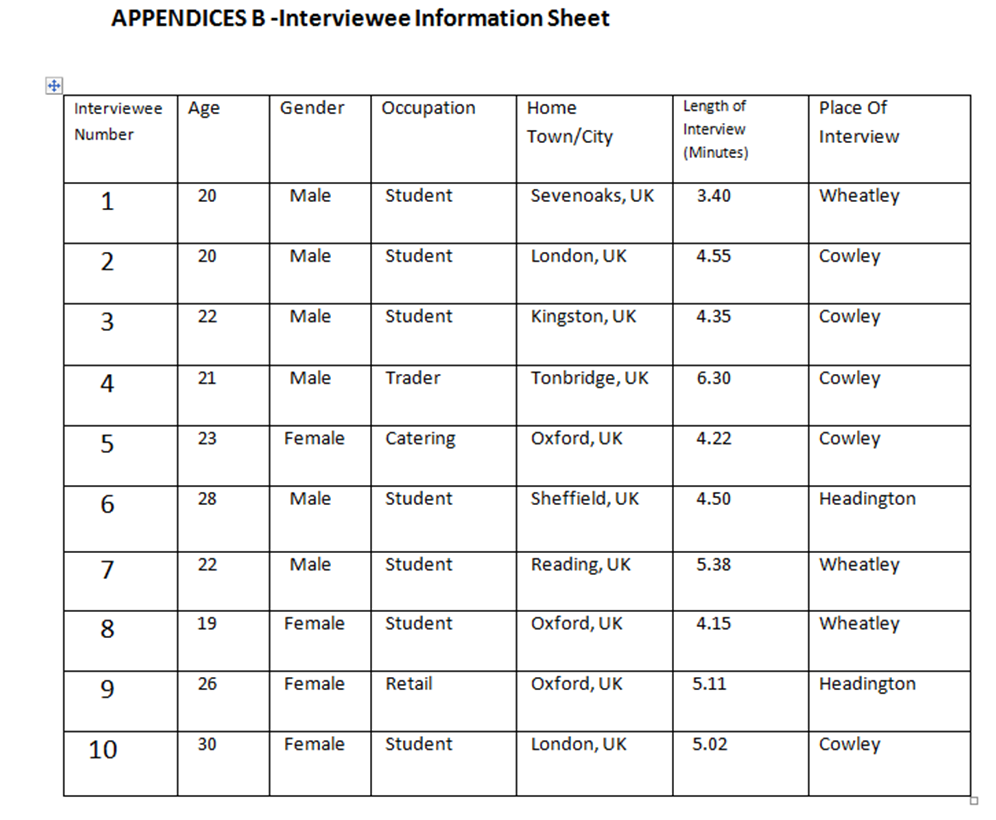
**Why would/wouldn’t you?**

**Does a company’s social responsibility policies factor into whether or not you will buy their products?**

**Have you ever researched a company’s ethical and environmental policies online before making a purchasing decision?**

**Do you think that social media has an impact on your purchasing decisions? In what way has it impacted you?**

**Would you agree or disagree that ethical and environmentally friendly products have a higher perceived value in society and are seen as more attractive purchases?**

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**APPENDIX C – Interviewee Information Sheet**

**The Conscientious Consumption Behaviour of Millennials**

You are being invited to take part in the above research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, please can you take time to read the following information so that you can understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

**What is the purpose of the study?**

This study is aimed at discovering to what extent millennials (19- 35 year olds) are conscientious consumers. With millennials becoming a large consumer group the study is focusing on their consumption behaviour with the overall goal to come to a conclusion on whether or not the generation is conscientious about their consumption.

**Why have I been invited to participate?**

You have been invited to take part because you are a part of the millennial generation. This study aims to collect primary data from millennials to form a justified argument around whether millennials are conscientious consumers. You will be part of a sample of 10 millennials. As this is a relatively small sample size, there may be implications for anonymity, however, the sample will be de-identified during the data handling and analysis stages of the research and all data/information will be stored confidentially.

**Do I have to take part?**

Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

**What will happen to me if I take part?**

You will be asked to participate in an interview for no longer than 15 mins. You will have the opportunity to see notes of your interview for clarity and to check any quotations that may be used.

**Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?**

All information collected about the individual will be kept strictly confidential and privacy and anonymity will be ensured in the storage and publication of the research material. Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

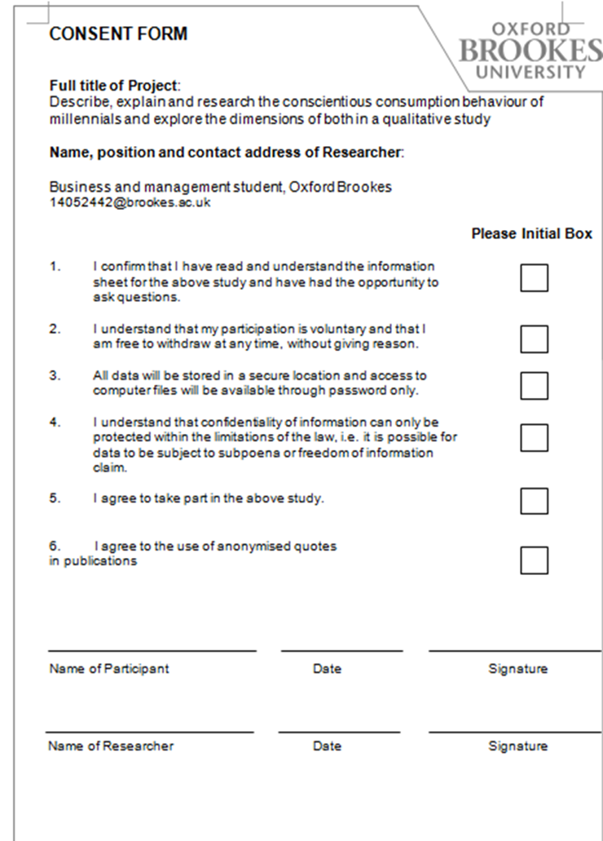
The research has been set by the Oxford Brookes Business and Marketing department to form part of my assessment for the module Contemporary Issues in Marketing Management. The module leader is Lindsey Williams and she can be contacted via email at lwilliams@brookes.ac.uk.

**Contact for Further Information**

If you should you require any further information, I can be contacted via email at 14052442@brookes.ac.uk. If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you should contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

**APPENDIX D – Consent form**

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**APPENDIX E -Interview 1 Transcript**

**Interviewer**: Would you consider yourself a conscientious consumer?

**Interviewee**: Yes, I don’t want to waste money so I always plan for the week what I’m going to buy to keep costs down.

**Interviewer**: Are there any particular environmental or ethical issues that have impacted your purchasing decisions recently?

**Interviewee**: Well I wouldn’t buy any real fur after I watched a documentary on the fur trade but apart from that not really.

**Interviewer**: What is the most important factor for you personally when deciding what product to buy?

**Interviewee**: Value for money is important for me.

**Interviewer:** Why is this most important?

**Interviewee**: I’m very money conscious so I like to make sure I’m not wasting my money.

**Interviewer**: Would you ever pay more for an ethical product over an unethical product?

**Interviewee**: I guess I would pay a little bit more but depends how much.

**Interviewer**: Why would you pay more?

**Interviewee**: I like to think I pull my weight environmentally so paying a little bit more would be fine.

**Interviewer:** Are there any products that you make sure are ethical and environmentally friendly before you buy them?

**Interviewee:** No not really I just buy what’s available at a reasonable price.

**Interviewer**: Would you ever recommend a product to a friend that wasn’t environmentally friendly?

**Interviewee**: Yeah I would if the product was good.

**Interviewer**: Does a company’s social responsibility factor into whether or not you buy their product?

**Interviewee**: No I don’t really care enough to not shop somewhere I like because of their environmental policies they have.

**Interviewer**: Have you ever researched a company’s ethical and environmental policies before buying their product?

**Interviewee**: No, I can’t think of a time I have.

**Interviewer**: Do you think social media has an impact on what sort of products you buy?

**Interviewee**: No, it doesn’t at all. I know what products I want so social media doesn’t impact me in that sense.

**Interviewer**: Would you agree or disagree that ethical and environmentally friendly products have a higher perceived value in society and are more attractive purchases?

I**nterviewee**: Yeah I’d say so.

**Interviewer**: Why would you agree with this?

**Interviewee:** I don’t know really it’s just seen as being more aware about the environment.

**APPENDIX F -Interview 2 Transcript**

**Interviewer**: Would you consider yourself a conscientious consumer?

**Interviewee**: Yes I would.

**Interviewer**: Are there any particular environmental or ethical issues that have impacted your purchasing decisions recently?

**Interviewee**: No there’s been nothing recently that has changed anything.

**Interviewer**: What is the most important factor for you personally when deciding what product to buy?

**Interviewee**: I’d say defiantly the cost.

**Interviewer**: Why is this most important?

**Interviewee**: I’m a student so money is quite tight and I have to be careful that I’m not spending money on things I don’t need.

**Interviewer**: Would you ever pay more for an ethical product over an unethical product?

**Interviewee**: No I wouldn’t, I can’t afford to at the moment.

**Interviewer**: Are there any products that you make sure are environmentally friendly and ethical before you buy them?

**Interviewee**: Yes I always make sure my eggs are free range but that’s only because I think they taste nicer than caged hen eggs.

**Interviewer**: Would you ever recommend a product to a friend that wasn’t environmentally friendly?

**Interviewee**: If I knew the company was doing really bad things down the line I wouldn’t recommend them.

**Interviewer**: Does a company’s social responsibility factor into whether or not you buy their product?

**Interviewee**: Yes to an extent, if I know they are doing really bad things or really good things I might change my mind.

**Interviewer:** Have you ever researched a company’s ethical and environmental policies before buying their product?

**Interviewee:** I don’t think I ever have but if a company hypes themselves up about being environmentally friendly I might do some research.

**Interviewer**: Do you think social media has an impact on what sort of products you buy?

**Interviewee**: Yeah, if there’s a lot of talk online about something there’s a better change ill buy it at some point.

**Interviewer:** Would you agree or disagree that ethical and environmentally friendly products have a higher perceived value in society and are more attractive purchases?

**Interviewee**: yeah I would agree with that.

**Interviewer**: Why would you agree with this?

**Interviewee**: People just consider them better quality so I guess they are more attractive.

**APPENDIX G -Interview 3 Transcript**

**Interviewer:** Would you consider yourself a conscientious consumer?

**Interviewee:** No I wouldn’t.

**Interviewer**: Are there any particular environmental or ethical issues that have impacted your purchasing decisions recently?

**Interviewee**: No not at all

**Interviewer:** What is the most important factor for you personally when deciding what product to buy?

**Interviewee:** For me personally the quality is the most important thing.

**Interviewer**: Why is this most important?

**Interviewee:** Well I like to know what I’m buying was well made and will last.

**Interviewer**: Would you ever pay more for an ethical product over an unethical product?

**Interviewee**: I think I would but it totally depends on the situation.

**Interviewer**: In what situation would you pay more?

**Interviewee**: If there was only a small difference in price like 50p or £1 it makes sense to go with the one from a good source.

**Interviewer**: Are there any products that you make sure are environmentally friendly and ethical before you buy them?

**Interviewee**: I usually buy good quality meat from the butchers and my eggs are always free range but other than that there’s nothing I make sure of.

**Interviewer**: Would you ever recommend a product to a friend that wasn’t environmentally friendly?

**Interviewee**: Probably not.

**Interviewer:** Does a company’s social responsibility factor into whether or not you buy their product?

**Interviewee**: To be honest I never usually look into things like that too much.

**Interviewer:** Have you ever researched a company’s ethical and environmental policies before buying their product?

**Interviewee**: No, I never have before.

**Interviewer**: Do you think social media has an impact on what sort of products you buy?

**Interviewee**: Defiantly yes, social media gives me a lot of information about products that I didn’t know anything about.

**Interviewer:** Would you agree or disagree that ethical and environmentally friendly products have a higher perceived value in society and are more attractive purchases?

**Interviewee**: I would agree yeah.

**Interviewer:** Why would you agree with this?

**Interviewee**: It’s quite popular to buy stuff like that at the moment. I guess it shows that you actually care about where it’s coming from.

**APPENDIX H-Interview Transcript 4**

**Interviewer:** Would you consider yourself a conscientious consumer?

**Interviewee**: Yes, in the sense that I think about things before I buy the product.

**Interviewer:** Are there any particular environmental or ethical issues that have impacted your purchasing decisions recently?

**Interviewee**: Not recently but a few years ago I stopped buying clothes from Primark when everyone thought they were using sweatshops.

**Interviewer**: What is the most important factor for you personally when deciding what product to buy?

**Interviewee**: I like to buy products that I know are made to a good standard and will last me a few years. With food I buy nice food that’s healthy and good quality.

**Interviewer**: Why is this most important?

**Interviewee**: it’s important for me to know that I’m buying good quality because I’ve had bad experiences in the past with cheap products that don’t last.

**Interviewer**: Would you ever pay more for an ethical product over an unethical product?

**Interviewee**: Yes, I would pay more. Knowing it comes from a good background does justify the slightly higher cost so I don’t mind paying it.

**Interviewer**: Are there any products that you make sure are environmentally friendly and ethical before you buy them?

**Interviewee**: Well I try to make sure all the meat I buy is free range. There is a difference in quality in my opinion so I always try to get the good stuff.

**Interviewer**: Would you ever recommend a product to a friend that wasn’t environmentally friendly?

**Interviewee**: I think it depends on the product. If it was something revolutionary that came from a dodgy company I think I’d still recommend it to my mates regardless.

**Interviewer**: Does a company’s social res**p**onsibility factor into whether or not you buy their product?

**Interviewee**: I don’t usually do too much research into it but if it was a choice between two I would go for the product from a good company. So yeah I guess so.

**Interviewer**: Have you ever researched a company’s ethical and environmental policies before buying their product?

**Interviewee**: I only really look into something if it’s a topical issue. So if there’s been a lot of media coverage on something I might look into the policies but I can’t think of a time recently.

**Interviewer**: Do you think social media has an impact on what sort of products you buy?

**Interviewee**: Yeah to some degree. Some people post some pretty startling videos on what goes on behind the scenes of some of these companies, like the stuff the companies don’t want you to see. So that does have an impact on what I buy.

**Interviewer**: Would you agree or disagree that ethical and environmentally friendly products have a higher perceived value in society and are more attractive purchases?

**Interviewee**: I would say so yeah.

**Interviewer**: Why would you agree with this?

**Interviewee**: Well when you see someone buying fair trade items or other environmental items there is a sort of respect that they are doing their bit for the environment.

**APPENDIX I -Interview Transcript 5**

Interviewer: Would you consider yourself a conscientious consumer?

**Interviewee**: Yes, I’m a vegetarian so I have to be careful about what I eat.

**Interviewer**: Are there any particular environmental or ethical issues that have impacted your purchasing decisions recently?

**Interviewee**: Well I’m against killing animals so that’s a big issue which impacts what I buy. But I’ve been a veggie nearly my whole life so this isn’t a recent issue.

**Interviewer**: What is the most important factor for you personally when deciding what product to buy?

**Interviewee**: At the moment it’s probably the price.

**Interviewer**: Why is this most important?

**Interviewee**: I’m trying to save up some money for a holiday so I’m trying to cut back my spending.

**Interviewer**: Would you ever pay more for an ethical product over an unethical product?

**Interviewee**: I’d like to think I would but it depends how much difference there is.

**Interviewer**: Are there any products that you make sure are environmentally friendly and ethical before you buy them?

**Interviewee**: Yes. I always get makeup from companies that don’t test their products on animals. I know that a lot of the big companies like MAC test on animals so I stay clear of them.

**Interviewer**: Would you ever recommend a product to a friend that wasn’t environmentally friendly?

**Interviewee**: That really depends on the product but I don’t think so.

**Interviewer**: Does a company’s social responsibility factor into whether or not you buy their product?

**Interviewee**: No.

**Interviewer:** Have you ever researched a company’s ethical and environmental policies before buying their product?

**Interviewee**: The only time I can think of is when I was looking into which companies test their products on animals. I spent quite a while finding out which ones did and didn’t.

**Interviewer**: Do you think social media has an impact on what sort of products you buy?

**Interviewee**: Yes for me I use Facebook and Instagram to see what celebrities are wearing so I can see what’s fashionable and it gives me ideas on what to buy.

**Interviewer:** Would you agree or disagree that ethical and environmentally friendly products have a higher perceived value in society and are more attractive purchases?

**Interviewee**: Nah not really

**Interviewer**: Why wouldn’t you agree with this?

**Interviewee**: It’s your own opinion and for me it doesn’t make you any better than anyone else.

**APPENDIX J -Interview Transcript 6**

**Interviewer:** Would you consider yourself a conscientious consumer?

**Interviewee**: Yes, I’m quite picky when it comes to choosing what I buy.

**Interviewer**: Are there any particular environmental or ethical issues that have impacted your purchasing decisions recently?

**Interviewee**: Not really at the moment but if there’s something that came up in the news I might change my mind.

**Interviewer**: What is the most important factor for you personally when deciding what product to buy?

**Interviewee**: Well I care a lot about the quality of the product so I’d probably say that.

**Interviewer**: Why is this most important?

**Interviewee**: I like to know what I’m buying is made to a good standard.

**Interviewer**: Would you ever pay more for an ethical product over an unethical product?

**Interviewee**: Yes, a lot of the time the ethical products are higher quality so that’s what I usually buy.

**Interviewer**: Are there any products that you make sure are environmentally friendly and ethical before you buy them?

**Interviewee**: A lot of my food I make sure comes from environmentally friendly companies. I usually buy fair trade goods just because I know there’s been a lot of information coming to light about farmers in poor countries not being paid enough for their work.

**Interviewer**: Would you ever recommend a product to a friend that wasn’t environmentally friendly?

**Interviewee**: Yeah I think I would unless we were talking about a really unethical company.

**Interviewer**: Does a company’s social responsibility factor into whether or not you buy their product?

**Interviewee**: No not really I don’t know a lot about the companies behind the products. I just look at the product and decide based on that.

**Interviewer**: Have you ever researched a company’s ethical and environmental policies before buying their product?

**Interviewee**: No I haven’t, you can usually tell just from the packaging what sort of product it is.

**Interviewer**: Do you think social media has an impact on what sort of products you buy?

**Interviewee**: Yes, there’s a lot of marketing on social media trying to create a buzz around products.

**Interviewer**: Would you agree or disagree that ethical and environmentally friendly products have a higher perceived value in society and are more attractive purchases?

**Interviewee**: Yes I think there is.

**Interviewer**: Why would you agree with this?

**Interviewee**: Not that I judge people based on what they buy but I think there is some degree of judgement towards people who buy fair trade and stuff like that.

**Interviewer**: What sort of judgement?

**Interviewee**: I’d say it’s a positive thing, like you know they care about what they buy.

**APPENDIX K -Interview Transcript 7**

**Interviewer**: Would you consider yourself a conscientious consumer?

**Interviewee:** No, I wouldn’t.

**Interviewer**: Are there any particular environmental or ethical issues that have impacted your purchasing decisions recently?

**Interviewee:** No, I just buy what I need to buy.

**Interviewer**: What is the most important factor for you personally when deciding what product to buy?

**Interviewee**: The price is very important for me; I’m trying to keep my costs down.

**Interviewer**: Why is this most important?

**Interviewee**: As I said I’m trying to keep my costs down, spend as little as I can on food and save up some money for when I leave university.

**Interviewer**: Would you ever pay more for an ethical product over an unethical product?

**Interviewee**: I think I would if I was made aware of the negatives that buying another product would bring. I don’t mind doing my own little bit to help good causes.

**Interviewer**: Are there any products that you make sure are environmentally friendly and ethical before you buy them?

**Interviewee**: Well I get fair trade bananas and coffee regularly.

Interviewer: Why just these products?

Interviewee: I think it’s just because I’m aware of the difference it can make to someone in a third world country.

**Interviewer:** Would you ever recommend a product to a friend that wasn’t environmentally friendly?

**Interviewee:** To an extent yes, but it depends on the product.

**Interviewer**: Does a company’s social responsibility factor into whether or not you buy their product?

**Interviewee**: Yeah it can do, if the company is known to be bad I might stay away.

**Interviewer**: Have you ever researched a company’s ethical and environmental policies before buying their product?

**Interviewee**: No I never have.

**Interviewer**: Do you think social media has an impact on what sort of products you buy?

**Interviewee**: No, not for me personally.

**Interviewer**: Would you agree or disagree that ethical and environmentally friendly products have a higher perceived value in society and are more attractive purchases?

**Interviewee**: Yes they are seen as better.

**Interviewer:** Why would you agree with this?

**Interviewee:** It just kind of shows your consideration of others, not just buying what you want and not thinking of the consequences.

**APPENDIX L -Interview Transcript 8**

Interviewer: Would you consider yourself a conscientious consumer?

Interviewee: Not every time I go shopping but sometimes I am.

Interviewer: Are there any particular environmental or ethical issues that have impacted your purchasing decisions recently?

Interviewee: Not recently no.

Interviewer: What is the most important factor for you personally when deciding what product to buy?

Interviewee: How much things cost plays a big part in what I get.

Interviewer: Why is this most important?

Interviewee: Well I’m a student so money is tight and I can’t spend a lot of money on my food shopping.

Interviewer: Would you ever pay more for an ethical product over an unethical product?

Interviewee: If the difference wasn’t too great then yeah I don’t see why not. But if it was twice the price I don’t think I would.

Interviewer: Are there any products that you make sure are environmentally friendly and ethical before you buy them?

Interviewee: Well my housemates and I always get Fairtrade coffee for our house.

Interviewer: Would you ever recommend a product to a friend that wasn’t environmentally friendly?

Interviewee: No I don’t think I would.

Interviewer: Why wouldn’t you?

Interviewee: I just don’t think companies that are polluting the environment or taking advantage of workers deserve to be recommended.

Interviewer: Does a company’s social responsibility factor into whether or not you buy their product?

Interviewee: Yes, I would always choose a company that did have a good environmental policy over one that didn’t.

Interviewer: Have you ever researched a company’s ethical and environmental policies before buying their product?

Interviewee: No I never have.

Interviewer: Do you think social media has an impact on what sort of products you buy?

Interviewee: Yes, there’s a lot of advertising on social media which promotes products. For me personally I don’t take much notice but I think it must be working or they wouldn’t keep doing it.

Interviewer: Would you agree or disagree that ethical and environmentally friendly products have a higher perceived value in society and are more attractive purchases?

Interviewee: I’d agree with that.

Interviewer: Why would you agree with this?

Interviewee: It’s hard to describe but there’s just a general positive feeling towards buying these products.

**APPENDIX M -Interview Transcript 9**

**Interviewer**: Would you consider yourself a conscientious consumer?

**Interviewee:** No

**Interviewer**: Are there any particular environmental or ethical issues that have impacted your purchasing decisions recently?

**Interviewee**: I can’t think of any so no.

**Interviewer**: What is the most important factor for you personally when deciding what product to buy?

**Interviewee**: In terms of food, I just like to buy stuff that tastes nice.

**Interviewer**: Why is this most important?

**Interviewee**: I don’t see the point in buying food that isn’t nice to eat.

**Interviewer**: Would you ever pay more for an ethical product over an unethical product?

**Interviewee**: I guess if it wasn’t too much more I wouldn’t mind. Ethical products are usually better quality anyway so you get your money’s worth.

**Interviewer**: Are there any products that you make sure are environmentally friendly and ethical before you buy them?

**Interviewee**: There aren’t any that I make sure to always buy but from time to time I do buy environmentally friendly stuff when it’s the best option available.

**Interviewer**: Would you ever recommend a product to a friend that wasn’t environmentally friendly?

**Interviewee**: Yeah I think I would if the product is good.

**Interviewer**: Does a company’s social responsibility factor into whether or not you buy their product?

**Interviewee**: I’d like to say it does but I honestly can’t think of a time that it’s been a deciding factor.

**Interviewer:** Have you ever researched a company’s ethical and environmental policies before buying their product?

**Interviewee**: No, I never have.

**Interviewer**: Do you think social media has an impact on what sort of products you buy?

**Interviewee**: Yes defiantly, it shows me what sort of stuff other people are buying that I haven’t seen before. I work in retail so it’s good to know what sorts of things are fashionable at the moment.

**Interviewer**: Would you agree or disagree that ethical and environmentally friendly products have a higher perceived value in society and are more attractive purchases?

**Interviewee**: No that’s just your personal opinion.

**Interviewer**: Why wouldn’t you agree with this?

**Interviewee**: Some people might think that but for me a product isn’t more attractive just because it’s from an ethical source or whatever.

**APPENDIX N -Interview Transcript 10**

**Interviewer**: Would you consider yourself a conscientious consumer?

**Interviewee**: Yeah I’d like to think that I am.

**Interviewer**: Are there any particular environmental or ethical issues that have impacted your purchasing decisions recently?

**Interviewee:** The only example I can think of is the fur trade. Not that I’ll be buying a fur coat any time soon but I think the whole fur trade is morally wrong.

**Interviewer**: What is the most important factor for you personally when deciding what product to buy?

**Interviewee:** I usually go for whatever looks the best option in terms of quality. Reading other people’s reviews often factors into whether I buy something, especially if it’s something expensive.

**Interviewer:** Why is this most important?

**Interviewee**: I just want to know I’m not wasting my money on something cheap and low quality.

**Interviewer:** Would you ever pay more for an ethical product over an unethical product?

**Interviewee:** I would if the product was better.

**Interviewer:** How much more would you be willing to pay?

**Interviewee**: Depends on what I was buying but I would defiantly pay more if there were some obvious advantages.

**Interviewer:** Are there any products that you make sure are environmentally friendly and ethical before you buy them?

**Interviewee:** I can’t think of any but I’m sure there are some.

**Interviewer:** Would you ever recommend a product to a friend that wasn’t environmentally friendly?

**Interviewee:** Yeah I guess so if it was a decent product.

**Interviewer**: Does a company’s social responsibility factor into whether or not you buy their product?

**Interviewee**: No it doesn’t, unless they were notoriously bad for their social responsibility.

**Interviewer**: Have you ever researched a company’s ethical and environmental policies before buying their product?

**Interviewee**: I have done in the past when I have been choosing between two similar products.

**Interviewer**: Do you think social media has an impact on what sort of products you buy?

**Interviewee**: Not really, but I guess it shows you what other people are buying and what marketing companies are trying to make you buy.

**Interviewer**: Would you agree or disagree that ethical and environmentally friendly products have a higher perceived value in society and are more attractive purchases?

**Interviewee**: Yes

**Interviewer**: Why wouldn’t you agree with this?

**Interviewee**: Well in some cases they are helping out the planet so I guess that is more attractive.

**APPENDIX O – Original Assignment Brief**

### Assignment task

You are to conduct a **qualitative study** on the following contemporary topic:

**Millennials as conscientious consumers**

**Your question:**

For this assessment, you are required to add to existing millennial consumer research by exploring the specific topic of ‘conscientious consumption’. Your question, in summary, is to:

***“Describe, explain and research the conscientious consumption behaviour of millennials and explore the dimensions of both in a qualitative study*”.**

You will be required to conduct between 5-10 semi-structured interviews with members of the millennial market. While you will be exploring the topic within a UK consumption context, your sample may consist of non-UK residents.

There will be scheduled time early on during the module (Weeks 1 and 2) to assist you in delineating the topic for yourself (for example, what literature should you review?; who will you interview?; how will you treat cultural differences?). As the module progresses, there will be time available in the seminars to begin developing your qualitative semi-structured interview guide, and develop other ideas and practices related to your data collection. Paramount to succeeding in this assessment is early engagement with the literature and starting your data collection early. Please see the semester plan synopsis for this module on pages 2-4 of this guide to give you an indication of the timescales involved for your research.