



# Ethical Fashion: Analysis of the consumer behavior in Switzerland



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# About the study

- Analysis of the consumer behavior towards ethical fashion in Switzerland
- Bachelor Thesis at the University of St.Gallen
- A first analysis of the impact of Helvetas' awareness campaign

# Ethical Consumer

- The theoretical background was based on findings from previous studies of the ethical consumer
- Research on ethical fashion consumers is increasing in the UK, the United States and Germany
- Consumer behavior in this study was measured in relation to **attitudes, beliefs, self-identity, past behavior, future purchase intention and knowledge**

# Ethical Fashion in Switzerland

- One of the fastest growing countries in ethical fashion, but still a niche market
- Growing number of publications & events
- Increasing consumer awareness on the social and environmental issues surrounding the textile industry
- Pioneer labels and NPO's like: Switcher, COOP Naturaline and Helvetas

# Study Design

- 5 explorative interviews
- Web-based survey
- Sample: 350 students between 18-30 years old
- 3 Swiss universities
- Response rate: 24%

# Main findings (1/2)

- Most respondents rarely buy ethical fashion
- Style, color & quality play a more important role than social and environmental issues
- Price only plays a secondary role, consumers would be willing to pay a premium price
- Most students are dissatisfied with the availability
- Ethical fashion is perceived as very basic and not fashionable enough
- Fair trade & organic labels have strong influence on food; little influence on clothes

## Main findings (2/2)

- Motivations: social concerns followed by sustainability & environmental concerns
- Consumers have strong beliefs and positive attitudes towards ethical fashion
- Consumers are poorly informed, do not actively search for information
- Most effective marketing tools: awareness campaigns, on-the-product labels, in-store poster & TV
- Newspapers, magazines & the internet are seen as the least effective

# Helvetas' awareness campaign impact

- One month after the launch of the awareness campaign, more than half of the respondents had seen the campaign's billboards
- The fruit/vegetable comparison was regarded as appealing, interesting & effective
- Consistently with the responses regarding effective marketing tools, it was found that most respondents had not visited the homepage (the campaigns' core source of information)



# Conclusions & practical implications

LOHAS are not yet present in the fashion industry in Switzerland. However, more demand for ethical fashion would result from:

- increasing the **knowledge & awareness** of the average consumer
- increasing the **positive attitudes** towards organic cotton & the **self-identity** as ethical consumers
- increasing the availability of **attractive and fashionable** ethical apparel

# Hypothesis 1

We need to move beyond existing marketing techniques and explore innovative ways of reaching the consumer. The best way to involve, inspire and inform consumers about ethical fashion is through the internet (facebook, twitter, websites).

## Hypothesis 2

A lot of regions are now setting up industry platforms (NICE, EFF, Greentogreener), but they should include a team of people that focuses directly on consumers, so that they know how to attract them to eco fashion.

## Hypothesis 3

The ethical fashion consumer? Doesn't exist anymore. The Ethical Fashion Network shows us that consumers are now increasingly becoming industry players themselves.

## Hypothesis 4

The people at WCOC are selling to themselves and to the supply chains. They are not selling to the end consumer, while they should know who their end consumer is. They should inspire the consumer. If they don't do this, it could mean the end of organic.

# Hypothesis 5

It's not enough to have organic. What we don't include in discussions here, is what the end product should look like, that it should be sexy, appealing, what emotional values lie in there, how would this fabric make a woman look fantastic? It's all about the farmers, the workers... and that's only half of the whole story.