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### An analysis on the awareness of sustainability in the food consumption in Dublin

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# CCT College Dublin

## Assignment Cover Page

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<b>Module Title:</b>	Applied Business Research Project
<b>Assignment Title:</b>	Individual Research Project (5ECTS)
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**An analysis on the awareness of sustainability in the food consumption in  
Dublin**

## **ABSTRACT**

Millennials have been much more concerned with the origin of the food that they consume and its ultimate destination. It has been said that all over the world this new generation seeks for healthier options and also concerns about the use of plastic in packaging, waste reduction and compostable, reusable and recyclable materials. This is a research paper that aimed to investigate if the Dublin's food buyers are following this global path while getting more conscious about their consumption, engaging with environmental agendas and behaving sustainably through their consumption. Through an applied structured online questionnaire, 290 participants' results demonstrate that people are becoming more conscious about their consumption in relation to the environment and also that people that are normally interested about environmental agendas tend to engage more actively with sustainability through their consumption.

**KEY WORDS: sustainability; consumer behaviour; awareness; consumption**

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

First and foremost, I dedicate this work to all the women of courage and militancy who allowed me today to have voice and express myself.

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## 1 Introduction

In July 2018, the market research company Global Web Index conducted a survey willing to explore the eco-conscious consumerism, particularly, people's mindset towards environmental issues, sustainability and to understand the role of consumers in the evolution of the eco-friendly market. As presented by Young (2018), the strategic insights manager of the company, 80% of the respondents answered that the reason why they purchase eco-friendly products is because they care about the future of the planet. Still, among all 2,324 survey respondents, 79% mentioned that their reason when acquiring those products is connected to the fact that they think they should be respectful of all living creatures and environment, and 56%, because they like to be part of a positive movement.

Survey after survey have been proving that consumers are becoming aware of environmental issues and the impossibility of maintaining a high level of consumption if there is a desire for change in this picture. The sense of purpose and collective consciousness have been also contributing in the same perspective. Society that was leaving the development of a sustainable economy in the hands of the corporations is now taking back control and understanding its crucial role in balancing the consumption paradox and the perspective of sustainability.

According to BBMG and GlobeScan (2015), with this new mindset rising between consumers, they tend to purchase more from socially and environmentally responsible brands. Also, as mentioned by the press release, this behaviour can influence the companies to behave sustainably aiming to keep competitive and make the brand attractive to expand its reach, market share and increase their revenue.

When it comes to the food industry, some behaviours of sustainable consumption are clear, such as the increased on the demand for organic and local products. Millennials have been much more concerned with the origin of the food that they consume and the ultimate destination. It has been said that all over the world this new generation seeks for healthier options and also concerns about the use of plastic in packaging, waste reduction and compostable, reusable and recyclable materials.

Following this approach, this research focused on addressing the following main question: "Are Dublin's food buyers getting more conscious about their

consumption?”, and secondary key questions: “Are the consumers engaging with environmental agendas?” and “Are the consumers behaving sustainably through their consumption?”

## **2 Literature Review**

### *2.1 Introduction*

As stated by Malhotra and Dash (2009), the content analysis is an crucial tool in order to comprehend the study area and availability of information towards the content to be approached in the research. The aim of this research is to discover if Dublin’s food buyers are getting more conscious about their consumption and if the existing brands in this market are improving its products aware of the possible sustainable consumers’ behaviour.

In this perspective, the following topics in the next sections of the Literature Review are key points connected to the research purpose, results and implications in this specific society, and these include: sustainability and the challenges for a sustainable development, sustainable consumer behaviour and its influence in the food industry, marketing and sustainability, and cases of brands acting sustainably in the food market.

### *2.2 Sustainability and the challenges for a sustainable development*

As reported by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), sustainability focuses on satisfying the demands of the society living in the existing time without compromising the possibility of next generations to also meet their necessities. Since sustainability involves various components it is hard to establish one specific concept (Filho, 2000) and that is why it is usually divided in the three pillars: economic, environmental and social, that according to Stigter and Cooper (2018) are also known as profits, planet and people.

A sustainable economy refers to financial decisions being made prudently focusing not only in costs but also benefits in concern of all aspects of sustainability

such as society and environmental agendas (Spangenberg, 2005). A green growth is the main goal of economic sustainability and takes into consideration beneficial issues such as government subsidies, reduction of unnecessary costs, increased quality and durability of products and services offered, exemptions from fees and taxes when adopting smart and sustainable development (Jänicke, 2012).

According to Costanza et al. (2012), when referring to economy, sustainability is a production model that aspires the achievement of economic results while considering earnings for humanity and the environment also. Following the authors' approach it is crucial to find a balance between the production of goods and the finite natural resources available in the world. As supported by the authors, there are viable alternatives to reverse the current situation, but it would be needed an entire reformulation of the current economic regime and its boundaries.

The environmental pillar focuses on the main idea that any impact in nature should be taken into account (Morelli, 2011), as the main purpose of environmental sustainability is to minimize those impacts and encourage the recovery, maintenance and protection of natural resources keeping its purpose and applicability for as long as possible (Goodland, 1995).

In the sustainability triad, the social sphere relies on ideas and implementations that make viable the economic development that adds to the social bias. Generally, the debate about society regarding sustainability involves many aspects, such as legal, cultural and equity between generations (Vallance et al., 2012). In the specific case of the legal facet Huq et al. (2014) mentions labour law and the consequences of deforestation and pollution involving the issue of public health as vital aspects of the social sustainability pillar.

Sustainable development has the challenge to maintain those three pillars working in harmony, since if one of them is deficient or weak, sustainability itself does not exist (Stigter and Cooper, 2018). The challenges for sustainable development, according to Hopwood et al. (2005) are linked to various issues such as social, economic and political inequality, pollution and the excessive use of natural resources. A sustainable system requires enormous effort on the part of large corporations, government and even individual human actions.

### *2.3 Sustainable consumer behaviour and its influence in the food industry*

As stated by Sheth (1979), consumer behaviour is related to the process of determining how and why consumers act the way they do. The decision of purchasing a product can be influenced by many factors such as necessity, sense of belonging, social prestige and so on. And each purchase decision has the potential to contribute to a sustainable or unsustainable consumption patterns (Moisander, 2007) in all three pillars of sustainability. The green consumption is connected to this daily decision-making process made individually but considering the possibility of bigger implications in the market.

When it comes to the food industry, consumers play a very important role in the maintenance of sustainable patterns by buying more local and organic, searching about the whole supply chain and its ethics, checking labels, disposing, pushing the government for new regulations and pressuring companies to behave in a more ethical and sustainable manner (Grunert, 2011). A positive attitude from purchasers can affect the food industry and its productions (Thøgersen, 2000), and consequently the environmental and socio-economic spectrums of sustainability.

Young et al. (2009) cite some behavioural patterns by consumers that affect the companies and a few examples that show the awareness of those sustainable purchasers. The authors reinforce de buyers' strength in developing a trust relationship with the brand while educating the businesses about their own ethical needs which is the case of indiscriminate use of pesticides, high carbon emissions, animal testing and the fair trade issue and labelling for example. This consumer strength proves to be very potent when uniting their power, the consumer market organizes boycott collective actions for businesses that ignore environmental and humanitarian issues.

### *2.4 Marketing and sustainability*

Assuming that there is a real and growing concern on the part of society and recent generations regarding the degradation of the environment and the existence of social problems of the most diverse generated by consumerism and the high production of goods, there is also a growing opportunity for the development of

green and sustainable marketing that sees in this new pattern of behaviour the possibility of offering more sustainable alternatives following this latent demand (Grunert, 2011). A considered very smart move that can be adopted by brands as reported by Kriflik and Yeatman (2005) is the labelling strategy. According to the authors, there is a potential to grow the sustainability awareness and even reduce environmental damage through labelling strategies through merely the use of recyclable material for eco-labelling or informative of sustainable supply chain and marketing ethics.

If during a research 56% of people answer that the reason why they purchase eco-friendly products and brands is because they like to be part of a positive movement (Young, 2018), brands' Marketing aware of this consumer trend can utilise the pro-business sustainability issue by developing strategies such as labelling its products to inform its customers about brand guidelines.

When it comes to the food industry specifically, the rising demand for organic, chemical free and free range products, for example, demonstrates the consumers' concern towards the origin of the food they are purchasing and also about adulterated, contaminated and industrialised products (Harper and Makatouni, 2002). The big challenge and real struggle consumers are facing nowadays in their weekly or daily food purchases is the aim to find a balance between health priorities through the quality and origin of products acquired, individual economic capacity of expenditure and the responsibility to be sustainable and collaborate with the preservation of the environment (Kriflik and Yeatman, 2005).

Contrary to popular belief, marketing and sustainability can go hand in hand. Jones et. Al (2007), for example, presented a perspective of what sustainability can offer to marketing and vice versa. The authors entered the debate assuming that people's point of view towards marketing is normally focused on the idea that both concepts are contradictory, believing that marketing often misleads people with the primary purpose of generating increased sales revenue. The argument that they bring is that actually both marketing and sustainability have much to exchange.

In accordance with Charter et al. (2006), business need to reevaluate their marketing strategies concerning sustainability in all its aspects, since it has certainly the power to enhance the brand in the market. And as reported by Jones et. Al (2007), that is exactly what sustainability has to offer to marketing, a strong and stable brand that is aware of trends, legislations and environmental issues. With all

the media coverage and public pressure, companies cannot put in risk the brand's stability and reputation because this could put in risk also its relationship with their shareholders.

According to the authors, the counterpart of Marketing is exactly the use of its role of influencing attitudes and customs in the market and contributing to the evolution of society towards sustainability and the adoption of a healthier and environment-driven lifestyle (Jones et. Al, 2007). Through the definition of the 4 P's (McCarthy, 1964) - Price, Product, Promotion, and Place - Marketing is also able to influence consumers' buying decisions which can be crucial in the final decision of an already aware individual inclined to sustainable theme.

### *2.5 Cases of brands acting sustainably in the food industry*

Many entrepreneurs have been embracing the sustainable cause and bringing sustainable and profitable business to the food market worldwide. Many measures also have already been taken by businesses around the world such as encouraging the use of reusable cups through discounts in store, compostable and recyclable materials for take away, plastic use reduction and the banishment of plastic straws, waste reduction, incentive to local producers and organic and chemical free food.

It follows below cases of companies with a sustainability purpose that has been gaining ground in local and global markets - Beyond Meat, Too Good To Go, Tony's Chocolonely, Sprout & Co and Vegware. Fortunately, this type of businesses will continue to appear and gain space and the trend is that after the legislative restrictions adopted by the European Union (European Union, 2019) in 2019 with regard to banning on selected single-use products made of plastic, the current market situation will take a new direction towards sustainability.

The first example of an eco-conscious business is related to the brand Beyond Meat that started in 2009 in Los Angeles, California. The business founded by Ethan Brown produces fake chicken, beef and sausage that according to Brown tastes and looks almost exactly like real meat, but without causing much environmental negatives consequences as cattle ranches and animal agriculture. The second case of a sustainable engaged business in the market is the start-up Too Good To Go that was founded in 2016 in Copenhagen and has as its core business fighting food

waste. The business connects through a digital platform people with shops and food stores that interested in selling their surplus for a lower price instead of throwing it away.

Tony's Chocolonely is the third case presented and it is a sustainable chocolate company that started its activities in Holland in 2005. The company is focused on social and environmental sustainability. Through a strict control on the supply chain, Tony's Chocolonely guarantee a fair trade and slave-free chocolate, while collaborating for the development of cocoa farms in Ghana and Ivory Coast. Sprout & Co, in turn, is an Irish company that has been marketing , substantial, sustaining, healthy, seasonal and local food since 2015 in the capital Dublin. Business owners guarantee the freshness quality of the products sold as all the inputs used are planted and harvested organically on farms that are also owned by the Sprout & Co and are based only a few kilometres from the points of sale.

The last case used as an example for the present study brings to light the company Vegware. The business was established by Joe Frankel in Edinburgh, UK, in 2006. Vegware is a manufacturer of plant-based compostable foodservice packaging that distributes its products to more than 70 countries in the world, including Australia, Hong Kong, Australia and several other countries in Europe, Middle East and South America. Frankel guarantees that its products can biodegrade in under 12 weeks.

### **3 Research: Questions, Goals and Objectives**

The research focused on addressing the following main question: "Are Dublin's food buyers getting more conscious about their consumption?" and secondary key questions: "Are the consumers engaging with environmental agendas?" and "Are the consumers behaving sustainably through their consumption?".

The goals of the research include: discovering if the Dublin's food buyers are getting more conscious about their consumption, finding out if Dublin's food consumers are behaving sustainably, identifying variables that affect the purchase decision and finally, finding out if Dublin's consumers are engaging with environmental agendas.

This research is a case of investigation and it is based on a research applied to the Dublin's food sector's consumers in order to investigate their awareness and behaviour regarding sustainability. This project had the objective to understand the variables that may influence their mindset, behaviour and purchase decision.

The investigation was established through the implementation of an online questionnaire, which facilitated the reach, agility and analysis of sample data, mainly in view of the context in which it was applied. The survey was applied during the global lockdown period due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The author believes that the conjuncture contributed to the investigation. During the period, people have sought more information, questioned themselves about their consumption and its environmental impacts, and that there has been probably also a change in people's mindset when witnessing a global pandemic and the consequences of this for the world in all areas related to sustainability: economic, social and environmental.

#### **4 Research Methodology and Methods**

In this part of the study are highlighted the methodological aspects, which initially consist of the characterization and contextualization of the research, followed by the procedures to be taken for its accomplishment. The purpose of the research was defined as exploratory. Exploratory research is conducted to explore the problem situation, that is, to obtain ideas and information about the matter (Malhotra, 2007).

In order to achieve the proposed objectives, it was adopted as a methodology field research an online questionnaire applied to overage people (18 years old or more) who live in Dublin and consume food products. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire with nineteen closed and one open question. Out of the nineteen questions, each respondent could choose only one alternative in seventeen questions, and in two other questions the participant could choose more than one option. At the end, the data was tabulated and statistically represented by graphs, allowing a general quantitative view of the results achieved.

In the case of this study, the sample consisted of participants selected at random sample and the sampling technique chosen for the research was non-probabilistic. In



this case, as no statistical principles are used to select the population elements that was part of the sample, it is not possible to guarantee the equal chance of any element of the population to compose the sample to be researched, as is the case with a probabilistic sampling Malhotra (2007).

Therefore, in this case generalizations to the universe are compromised by the lack of observance of statistical techniques. The procedure performed was the convenience method, because it is characterized by obtaining information quickly and cheaply (Aaker et al., 2004). Thus, the sample was reached in individual and online approach through a digital questionnaire platform.

Data collection for marketing research was done through primary data searches. McDaniel and Gates (2003) argue that primary data is survey, observation, or experiment data collected to solve a particular concern under investigation. Being the present research characterized as quantitative, the method of structured questionnaires was used.

The survey's questions was designed based on specific objectives to identify the behaviour of food industry's customers residing in Dublin, Ireland. The discovery of this paper can be stated only to the particular population of online respondents for this research and does not represent the entire universe of the consumers active in Dublin's food sector.

## **5 Ethical issues**

The author conducted the online survey only with people over 18 and this prerequisite was made explicit in the presentation text of the survey that preceded the questionnaire. In addition, the question number two on the survey form asked the participant to select their "age range" that started with the option "18 to 25 years of age" which guaranteed the fulfilment of this prerequisite. For research hypothesis needs, the participant needed to tick an option containing salary averages, however the questionnaire did not require the survey respondents to inform specific personal data such as name, address, email, bank details and so on.

The language applied to the research questions was simple and accessible for easy and better understanding by participants and to guarantee clarity of what is

being questioned. The confidentiality of the data obtained as well as profile information of respondents was ensured, complying with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) regulations.

The participant was informed about the reason of the research, as well as the use of the data obtained from it. In addition, as explicit in the presentation text of the survey that preceded the questionnaire, when the respondent decided to take part in the survey he explicitly agreed (GDPR, 2016) to have his data used for this research analysis and presentation of results to conclude the hypotheses and objectives of this research.

## 6 Research Results

In this section it will be presented all the data collected from 290 participants. The questionnaire was composed by nineteen question related to their profile, behaviour, mindset towards sustainable agendas and consumption.

### 6.1 Gender

In the first question of the form the participant was asked to select an option for gender. It was given four options, those being: female, male, agender and rather not say. The author decided to include the last to options aware of the necessity to be inclusive as the research purpose was to collect as many respondents as possible. As shown below in the graph (Figure 1) of 290 answers, 160 were female (55,2%), 127 male (43,8%) and 3 (1%) respondents selected the option “rather not say”.

Gender:

290 respostas

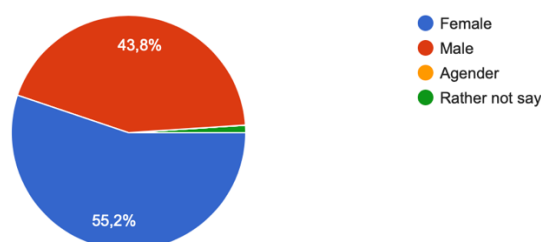


Figure 1: Gender graph

### 6.2 Age range:

In the second question of the form participants were asked to select an option for age range. It was given four range options, including: 18 to 25 years old, between 26 and 33, 34 to 41 years old and over 42 years old. As presented in the graph below (Figure 2) out of 290 answers, 48 were between 18 and 25 years old (16,6%), 181 between 26 and 33 years old (62,4%), 46 between 34 and 41 years old (15,9%) and 15 over 42 years old (5,17%).

Age range:  
290 respostas

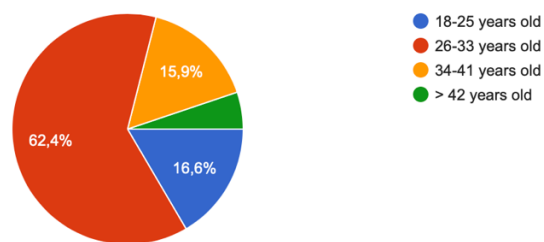


Figure 2: Age range graph

### 6.3 Educational level

In the third question of the questionnaire participants were asked to select an option related to their educational level. It was given five options, including: secondary, undergraduate, graduate, masters and doctorate. As shown in the graph below (Figure 3) out of 290 answers, 20 selected secondary (6,9%), 40 selected undergraduate (13,8%), 153 selected graduate (52,8%), 73 selected masters (25,2%) and 4 selected doctorate (1,3%).

Education level:  
290 respostas

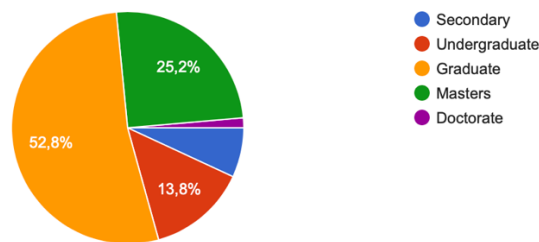


Figure 3: Educational level graph

#### 6.4 Gross total income range

In the fourth question of the questionnaire participants were asked to select an option related to their gross total income range. The questionnaire gave the respondent three range options: equal or less than €20,000 per year, between €20,000 and €35,000 per year and over €36,000 per year. As shown in the graph below (Figure 4) out of 290 answers, 111 selected equal or less than €20,000 per year (38,3%), 103 selected €20,000 to €35,000 per year (35,5%) and 76 selected over €36,000 per year (26,2%).

Gross total income  
290 respostas

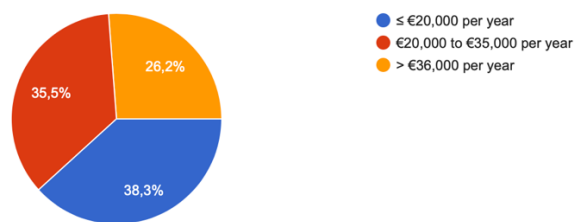


Figure 4: Gross total income range graph

#### 6.5 The factors that influence the most at the time of purchase

In the fifth question of the form respondents were asked to select an option related to the factors influence them the most at the time of purchase. It was given the respondent eight options: price, sustainability (environmentally friendly, reusable and recyclable or no plastic packaging), origin (eg. local, big brands), design, purpose (utility of the good), quality, fair trade and shopping experience. In this

question the respondents were given the instruction to choose 3 options. As presented in the graph below (Figure 5) out of 290 answers, the respondents considered as the four main factors: price (76,2%), quality (74,1%), purpose (51,4%) and sustainability (44,8%).

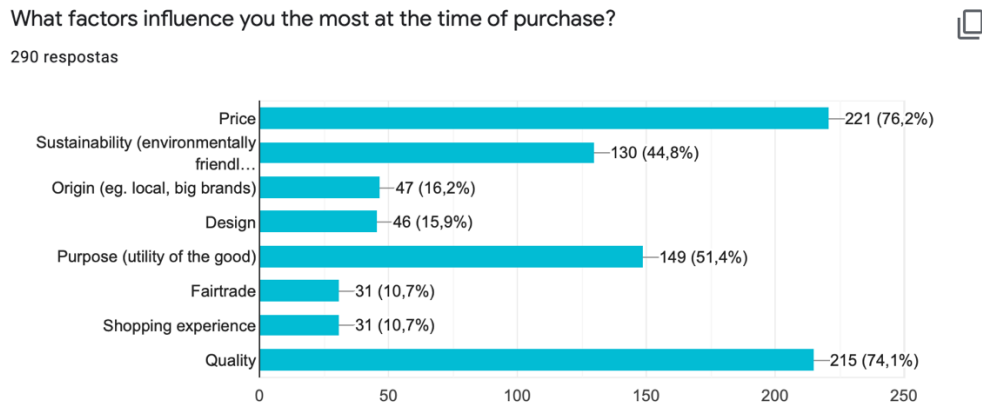


Figure 5: Factors graph

### 6.6 Healthy eating

In the sixth question of the questionnaire participants were asked about their opinion on how healthy they consider their diet is. The questionnaire offered a scale from 1 to 5, in which 1 meant not healthy at all and 5, a very healthy diet. As shown in in figure below (Figure 6), out of 290 answers, 1,4% selected 1, 10% selected 2, 42,4% selected 4, 36,6% selected 4 and 9,7% selected option 5. It can be clearly seen that most of the participants believe having a considerable healthy diet.

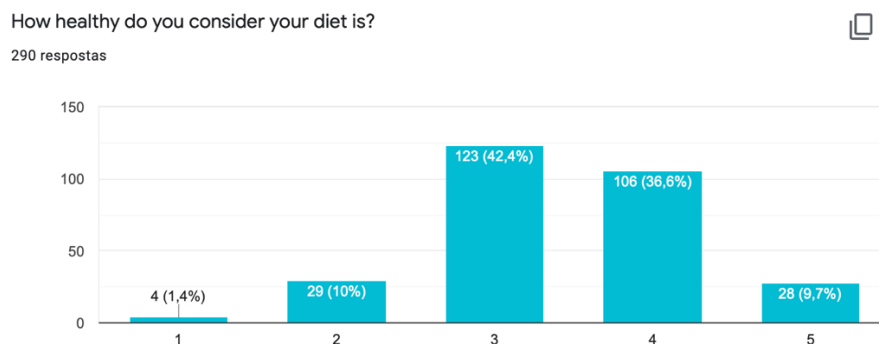


Figure 6: Diet graph

### 6.7 Practice physical exercises

In the seventh question, participants were asked if they practice exercises regularly. This was a question of yes or no. As shown in the graph below (Figure 7) out of 290 respondents, 173 answered yes (59,7%) and 117 answered no (40,3%). With this result it can be stated that more than half of respondents demonstrate being active in a regular basis.

Do you practice physical exercises regularly?

290 respostas

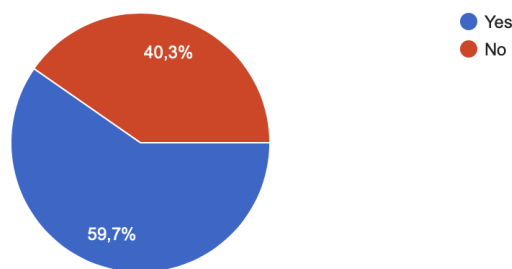


Figure 7: Practice of physical exercises graph

### 6.8 Fair trade awareness

According to Nicholls and Opal (2005), fair trade is an alternative that seeks to balance financial earnings and social justice in benefit of small farmers around the world. In the eighth question of the form, participants were asked if they know the meaning of the word fair trade. The author had the intention to investigate the level of social sustainability awareness in the reached sample.

The questionnaire gave the respondent three answers to choose from: I know, I have heard about it and I do not know. As it can be seen in the graph below (Figure 8) out of 290 answers, 58,6% confirmed knowing the meaning of the word, while 24,1% of them confirmed having heard about it and 17,2% confirmed not knowing the meaning of the word.

Do you know what fairtrade is?

290 respostas

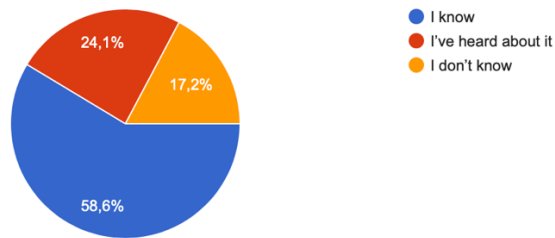


Figure 8: Fair trade awareness graph

### 6.9 Recycling awareness

In the ninth question of the form, participants were asked if they have the habit of separating their garbage. The author had the intention to investigate the level of recycling awareness in the reached sample. The questionnaire gave the respondent three answers to choose from: yes, no and sometimes. As it can be seen in the graph below (Figure 9) out of 290 answers, 79% of respondents answered yes, 14,1% answered to do it sometimes and 6,9% denied separating their garbage.

Do you separate your garbage?

290 respostas

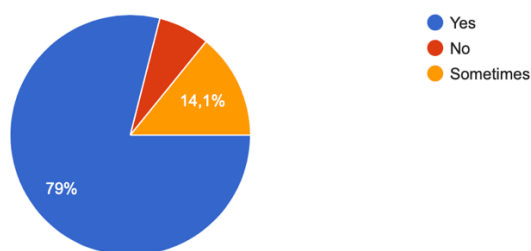


Figure 9: Recycling awareness graph

### 6.10 Consumption of recyclable packaging

The tenth question of the questionnaire asked participant if when purchasing products they choose those that use packaging that can be recycled over non-recyclable materials. This question offered the respondent three answers to choose from: yes, no and sometimes. As it can be seen in the graph below (Figure 10) out of 290 respondents, 34,5% of them replied as yes, 46,9% as sometimes and 18,6% as

no. The results show that 81,4% (236) of the respondents show some awareness at the time of purchase when it comes to environmental sustainability.

When purchasing products, do you choose those that use packaging that can be recycled over non-recyclable materials?

290 respostas

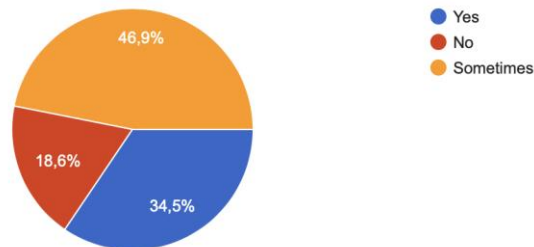


Figure 10: Consumption of recyclable packaging graph

#### 6.11 Consumption of local products

In the eleventh question of the form, participants were asked about their habit of buying local products. The author aimed to investigate the level of economic sustainability awareness in the reached sample. It was given three answers to choose from: yes, no and sometimes. As shown in the graph below (Figure 11) out of 290 answers, 40,3% answered yes, while 40,7% answered sometimes and 19% answered no. More than 80% of the investigated sample showed some support to local economy while affirming to at least sometimes purchasing from local brands.

Do you have a habit of buying local products?

290 respostas

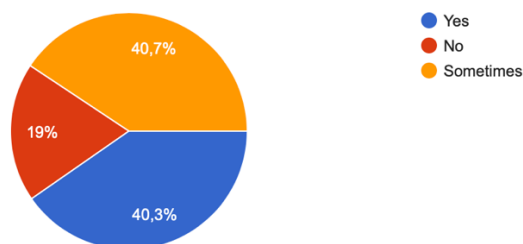


Figure 11: Consumption of local products graph

#### 6.12 Consumption of organic food



In the twelfth question respondents were asked about their habit of buying organic products. It was given three answers to choose from: yes, no and sometimes. As it can be seen in the graph below (Figure 12) out of 290 answers, 34,5% answered yes, while 40% answered sometimes and 25,5% answered no. Around 75% of the investigated sample showed having interest in consuming organic goods.

Do you have a habit of buying organic food?

290 respostas

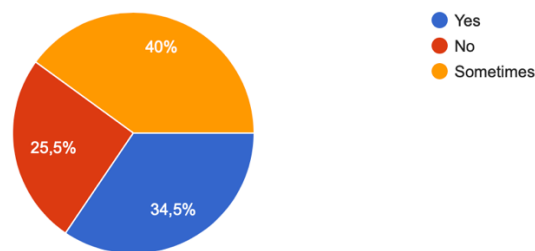


Figure 12: Consumption of organic food graph

### 6.13 Consumption of refills

In the thirteenth question of the form, participants were asked about their habit of buying product refills to use containers that they already own. The author aimed to investigate the level of engagement in environmental sustainability in the reached sample. It was given three answers to choose from: yes, no and sometimes. As expressed in the graph below (Figure 13) out of 290 answers, 27,6% answered yes, while 32,4% answered sometimes and 27,6% answered no.

Do you have the habit of buying product refills to use containers you already own?

290 respostas

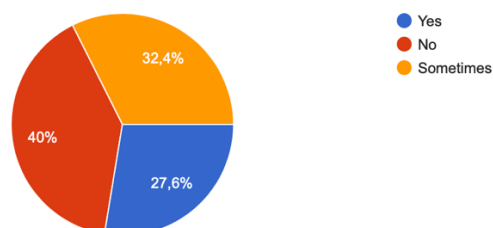


Figure 13: Consumption of refills graph

#### 6.14 Food waste awareness

In the fourteenth question of the questionnaire, respondents were asked if in their houses the food usually passes the “best before”. This specific question aimed to investigate the level of food waste awareness in the reached sample. It was given three answers to choose from: yes, no and sometimes. It can be clearly seen in the graph below (Figure 14) that out of 290 answers, 13,8% answered yes, while 43,8% answered sometimes and 42,4% answered no. It can also be seen that more than 55% of the investigated sample (57,6%) recognised to be wasting food somehow.

In your home, the food usually passes the “best before”?

290 respostas

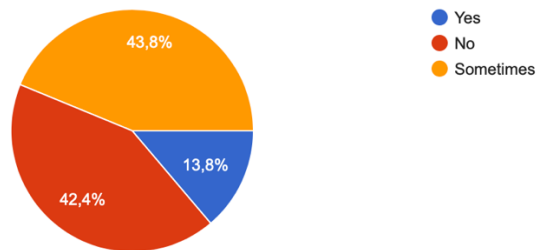


Figure 14: Food waste awareness graph

#### 6.15 Environmental sustainability awareness

In the fifteenth question of the form, respondents were asked if they would stop buying from a brand that shows disrespect for the environment. This specific question aimed to investigate the level of environmental sustainability awareness in the reached sample. It was given three answers to choose from: yes, no and maybe. It can be clearly seen in the graph below (Figure 15) that out of 290 answers, 76,9% answered yes, while 20,7% answered maybe and only 2,4% answered no. Thus, it becomes clear that most of people, based in the sample, care about brand’s actions towards environmental agendas.

Would you stop buying from a brand that shows disrespect for the environment?

290 respostas

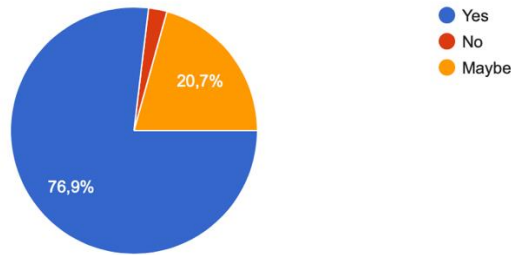


Figure 15: Environmental sustainability awareness graph

### 6.16 Social and environmental awareness

In the sixteenth question of the questionnaire, participants were asked if they have the habit of reading products labels looking for information such as environmental care, fair trade and recycling. The author aimed to investigate the level of activity and engagement towards social and environmental sustainability agendas in the reached sample. To the participant it was given three answers to choose from: yes, no and sometimes. As shown in the graph below (Figure 16) out of 290 answers, 36,2% answered yes, while 34,5% answered sometimes and 29,3% answered no. Thus, it becomes clear that based in the sample, only around one third of respondents present the habit of always checking the labels.

Do you have the habit of reading product labels to see information about environmental care, fairtrade and recycling?

290 respostas

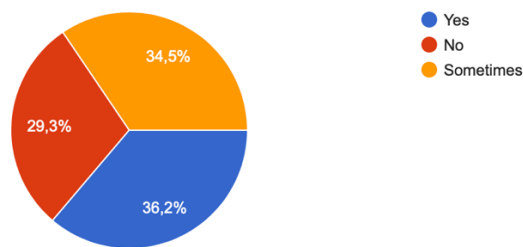


Figure 16: Social and environmental awareness graph

### 6.17 Environmental consciousness

The seventeenth question of the form, participants were asked if they are interested about environmental news. The author aimed to investigate the level of

environmental consciousness in the reached sample. To the participant it was given three answers to choose from: yes, no and sometimes. As shown in the graph below (Figure 17) out of 290 answers, 67,6% answered yes, while 27,2% answered sometimes and 5,2% answered no.

Are you interested in environmental news?

290 respostas

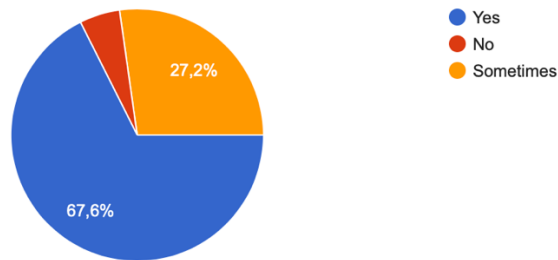


Figure 17: Environmental consciousness graph

#### 6.18 Usage of reusable items

The eighteenth question of the form asked participants if they use any reusable items. This was a yes or no question that aimed to measure the engagement and activity of the investigated sample towards their garbage production and use of disposable materials. As it can be seen in the graph below (Figure 18), out of 290 answers, 94,1% of the respondents answered yes against 5,9% no answers. It becomes clear that based in the sample, more than 90% of people use at least one reusable item in their daily lives.

Do you use any reusable items?

290 respostas

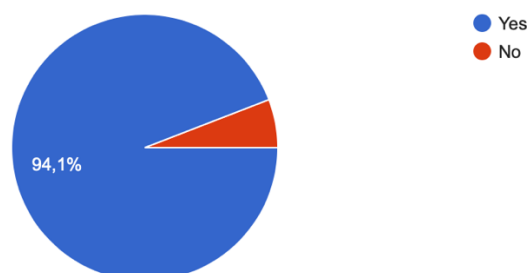


Figure 18: Usage of reusable items graph

## 6.19 Reusable items

The question nineteenth, and last of the questionnaire, asked participants that have answered yes in the previous question (question 18), to answer what kind of reusable items they use. Participants that answered no in the previous question did not have to answer to this question. In this question the respondent could choose as many options as they wished. The five options given were: reusable cups, water bottles, eco bags, cutlery and straw. The author highlighted the most well-know and used reusable items to facilitate the answer, but also offered an open answer (“Others”) so then the participants could specify other reusable items that they also use. As it can be seen in the graph below (Figure 19), out of 277 answers, 89,9% confirmed using water bottles, 81,6% choose eco bags, 72,6% utilise reusable cups, 38,6% selected cutlery and 28,9% confirmed using reusable straws. Water bottles and eco bags are most used reusable items, according to the sample.

If yes, which ones (choose as many as you wish):

277 respostas

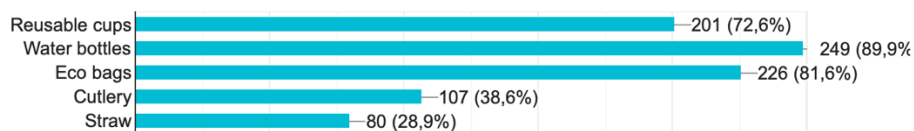


Figure 19: Reusable items graph

A lot of participants used the open field “Others” to mention other reusable items that they also use. Answers included: books, second-hand bike, tea filter, gift packaging, menstrual cup, moon cup, period cup, reusable food covers (replaces cling film), containers for refilling washing up liquid, household cleaner, cleansing pads, cotton pads, plastic and paper bags, second-hand clothes, glass jars for food, glass pots, sauce pots, food containers, food boxes, lunch boxes, Tupperware, boxes and handkerchief.

## 7 Research data analysis and findings

In this section the author crossed some of the data collected for a deeper analysis.

### 7.1 Diet x Organic products consumption

To analyse the relation between the respondents' diet and their habit of consuming organic products, the author divided the results into 3 main groups: unhealthy people (1 and 2 in the scale), healthy people (3 in the scale) and people very healthy (4 and 5 in the scale). As can be seen in the graph below (Figure 20), the healthier the participant's diet, the greater the consumption of organic products, which demonstrates that there is a correlation between the two aspects.

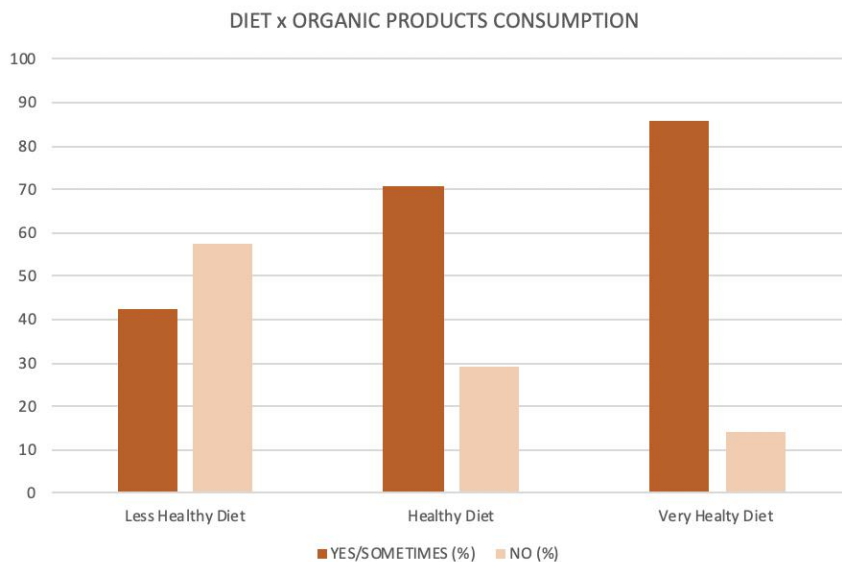


Figure 20: Diet x Organic products consumption graph

### 7.2 Income x Food waste

In order to analyse the relation between the respondents' income and their level of food waste, the author considered sometimes and no as positive answers. If summed the percentage of those two answers in the three ranges of income, it can be noticed that people with the higher range of income are the ones who waste less food (Figure 21) with 89%, followed by people with lower income (88%) and 82% with the gross total income between €20,000 and €35,000 per year.

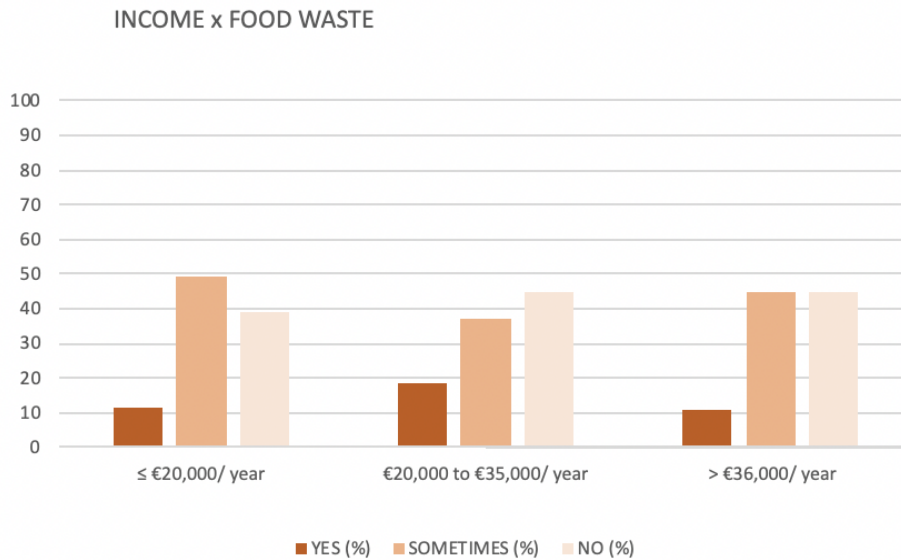


Figure 21: Income x Food waste graph

### 7.3 Educational Level x Reading product labels

The author aimed to find out if there was a correlation between respondents' educational level and their habit of reading product labels to check information about environmental care, fair trade and recycling. As it can be seen in the graph below (Figure 22), the higher the educational level (graduate, masters, doctorate) the higher the habit of reading product labels seeking for sustainable practices. This difference is represented by 11%.

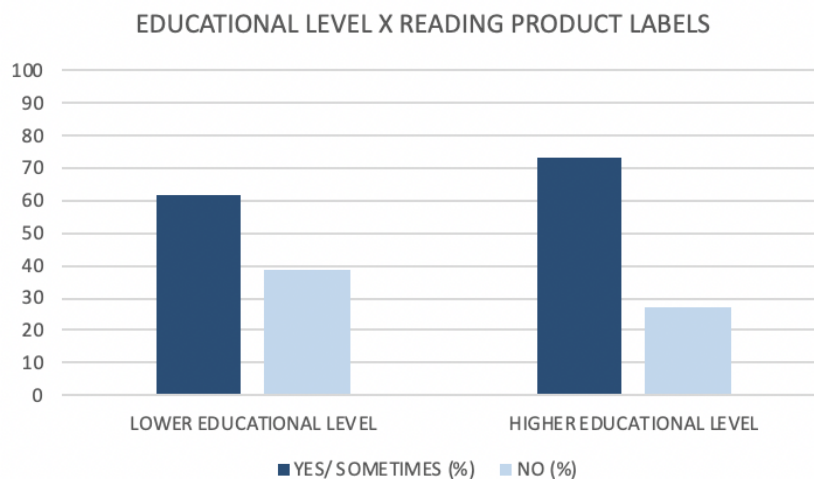


Figure 22: Educational Level x Reading product labels graph

#### 7.4 Gender x Local product consumption

It was crossed the data related to gender and habit of consuming local products. As shown in the graph below (Figure 23), female respondents have a greater habit of buying represented local products compared to the habit of male participants. This difference is represented by 9%.

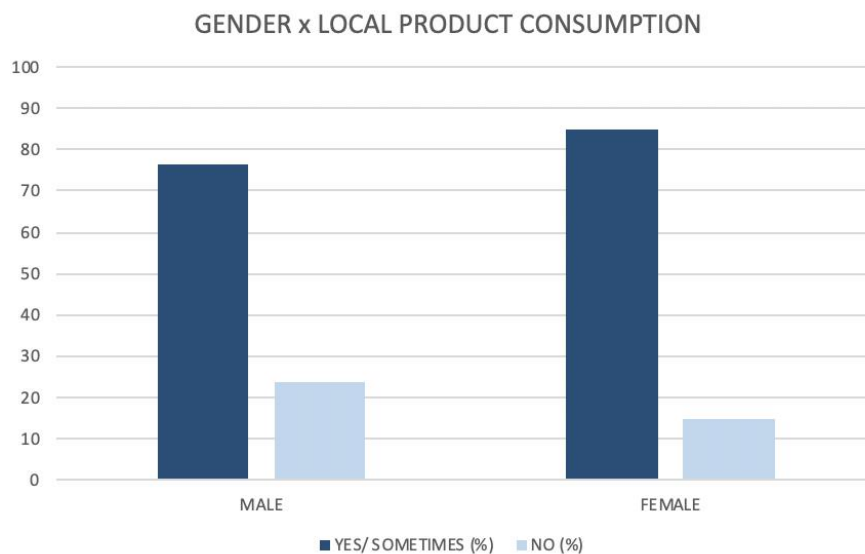


Figure 23: Gender x Local product consumption graph

#### 7.5 Age x Stop buying from certain brands

The author crossed the data related to age range and the question: “Would you stop buying from a brand that shows disrespect for the environment?”. Out of 290 respondents, only 7 of them affirmed that they would not stop buying from a brand that shows disrespect for the environment, which is by itself a great result. Analysing the graph (Figure 24) though, it can be seen that participants with over 42 years old presented the best result: 80% answered yes and 20% maybe. There were no negative answers in this age range group.



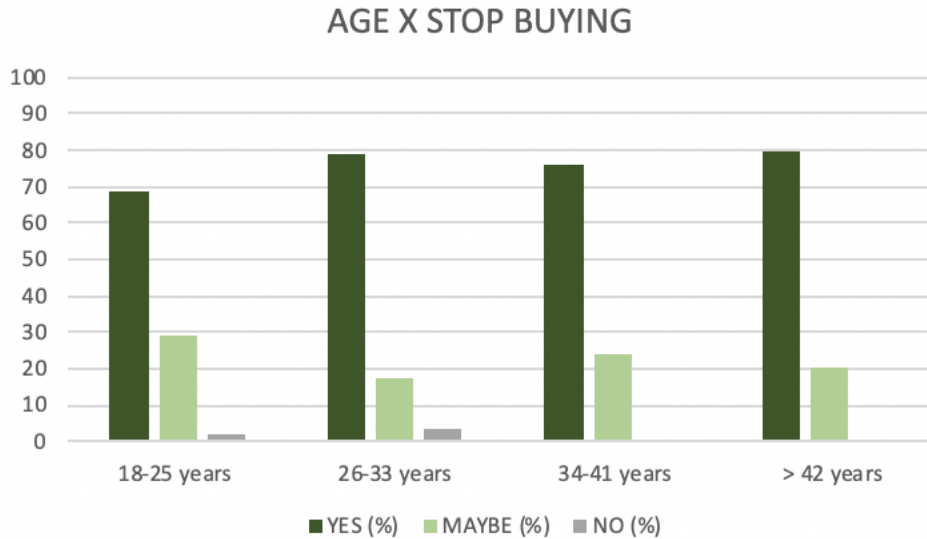


Figure 24: Age x Stop buying graph

### 7.6 Correlations

The author tested crossing the data to investigate levels of correlation between different aspects and questions. Firstly, it was crossed two questions: “Do you have the habit of buying local products?” and “Would you stop buying from a brand that shows disrespect for the environment?”. It was summed the number of respondents that answered yes or sometimes to the first question, and yes or maybe to the second question. The result of the sum equals 232 out of 290 participants. To this, it was summed the number of respondents that answered no to both questions (4 negative answers), which in total sums 236 participants (81,4%).

Against this, it was summed people that answered yes and sometimes to the first question but no to the second, and no to the first question and yes or maybe to the second question, which was equal to 54 respondents (18,6%). This analysis shows a very high correlation between the two variables. The answers that demonstrate some coherence and connection in between are 62.8% greater than the answers that diverge in the two questions analysed.

Secondly, when applied the same analysis to other questions it can be seen that there is also a high correlation between people that buy local products and people that buy refills to use containers that they already own. The answers that demonstrate some coherence are, in this case, 26,2% greater than the answers that diverge in the two questions. Comparing the habit of buying refills with the decision

of stop buying from brands that show disrespect for the environment, the answers that demonstrate some coherence are 19,3% greater than the answers that diverge in these two questions, which shows a strong correlation between the two variables. If compared the habit of practicing physical exercises regularly with the habit of buying organic, the answers that demonstrate some coherence are also 19,3% greater than the answers that diverge in these two questions, which also shows a strong correlation between the two variables. This results reinforces the idea that people have been demonstrating more conscious consumption in relation to the environment.

Lastly, and most representative, is the analysis on the correlation between people that are interested in news about the environment and people that would stop purchasing from brands that show disrespect for the environment. Following the same approach, the answers that demonstrate some coherence are 93,8% greater than the answers that diverge in these two questions. This shows that people that are normally interested about environmental agendas tend to engage more actively through their consumption.

## **8 Conclusion**

The research aimed to investigate if Dublin's food buyers are getting more conscious about their consumption, engaging with environmental agendas and behaving sustainably while purchasing products. The goals of the research included discovering if the Dublin's food buyers are getting more conscious about their consumption, finding out if Dublin's food consumers are behaving sustainably, identifying variables that affect the purchase decision and finally, finding out if Dublin's consumers are engaging with environmental agendas.

When asked if they knew the meaning of fair trade, only 17,2% of participants answered no. Only 6,9% of respondents denied separating their garbage, 18,6% of respondents denied choosing recycled over non-recyclable materials and around 19% affirmed not having the habit of purchasing organic and local products. Only 13,8% of the respondents affirmed wasting food regularly, 2,4% would not stop buying from a brand that shows disrespect for the environment, 5,2% affirmed not

being interested in environmental news and 5,9% affirmed not using any type of reusable item.

Drawing a parallel with the investigation proposed by the author, it can be clearly seen that all three questions were answered positively with the research results. Participants demonstrated to be aware, conscious and engaged with sustainable practices as consumers. When it comes to the specific goals proposed, the implemented research managed to solve them all. The research results brought a very optimistic perspective to the future in regards to the sustainable consumption in its whole process.

## **9 Critical Self-Review**

I consider to be very relevant to bring the topic of sustainability to the fore, especially at a time like this, the context of a global pandemic that started in an open food market located in Wuhan, China. It is a moment of opportunity for society to review its consumption patterns and reduce the impacts generated on the environment due to exacerbated consumerism.

Regarding the research, the data collection took place online, exactly because of the conjuncture mentioned above. Initially the idea was to collect data from 50 participants, but with the help of social media, friends who decided to help and people who were interested in the research and shared with other friends, the number of respondents reached was 290.

After applying the questionnaire, what surprised me the most was not the result itself, but the feedbacks I received. Many people came to talk to me about the research either because they were interested in the topic, or because they said they felt bad after filling out the form, as they believed they were doing little to support the sustainability issue. Many of these people thanked me for sharing the research and encouraging them to transform their routine by adopting more conscious and sustainable practices. This was certainly very gratifying feedback and I feel honoured to be able to bring information to people and also to contribute in some way to this agenda.

Regarding the research results, I believe that many people may have masked the real behaviour in some way for fear of judgment. Many questions that included the options "maybe" and "sometimes" had a high percentage of choice for these options and, personally, I believe this because it happened because some respondents did not want to pass a negative perspective on the topic.

I do believe that people are more aware, but I also believe that they could do more to change social, economic and environmental problems (the sustainability triad). An example of this is the result of the question that asked if the participant has the habit of buying products in refills to use containers that they already own. 40% of the respondents answered no and 32,4% sometimes. Or when they were asked about the factors that influence them the most at the time of the purchase, and the sustainability factor appears in 4<sup>th</sup> place behind price, purpose and quality. Or, when asked if they have the habit of reading product labels to understand the environmental and social impacts associated with that product and 29,3% of the participants stated that they did not and 34,5% stated that they only do it sometimes.

I try to remain positive about the future of the world, counting on the action of world organizations demanding from states that they increasingly look at this issue as a common global interest, creating campaigns and restrictive laws and educating our society.

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## 11 Appendices

## **“THE AWARENESS OF SUSTAINABILITY IN THE FOOD CONSUMPTION IN DUBLIN”**

**This survey is being conducted by Thayla Goulart as part of an undergraduate dissertation for the award of B.A (Hons) in Business.**

**This survey gathers data on consumer awareness in Dublin’s food market towards sustainability.**

**The purpose of this survey is for the statistical information and analysis of the dissertation.**

**Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire. The estimated time for completion is 3 minutes. Please note that individual findings will remain confidential and I would ask that you answer all questions as fully as possible.**

**If you encounter any problems concerning this questionnaire or you have any additional comments please contact me with the email address provided.**

**Please note that under 18's will not be able to take part in this survey.**

**Student: Thayla Goulart | Email: thaylapgoulart@gmail.com**

**Lecturer: Graham Glanville | Email: graham@cct.ie**

1. Gender:

Male  Female  Agender  Rather not say

2. Age range:

18-25 years old  26-33 years old  34-41 years old  > 42 years old

3. Education level



Secondary  Undergraduate  Graduate  Masters  Doctorate

4. Gross total income

≤ €20,000/ year  €20,000 to €35,000/ year  > €36,000/ year

5. What factors influence you the most at the time of purchase? (Please, choose 3 options)

Price

Sustainability (environmentally friendly, reusable and recyclable or no plastic packaging)

Origin (eg. local, big brands)

Design

Purpose (utility of the good)

Quality

Fair trade

Shopping experience

6. How healthy do you consider your diet is?

1 - 5

1 - Not healthy at all

5 - Very healthy

7. Do you practice physical exercises regularly?

Yes  No

8. Do you know what fair trade is?

I know

I've heard about it

I don't know

9. Do you separate your garbage? (eg: recyclable, organic, compostable)

Yes  No  Sometimes

10. When purchasing products, do you choose those that use packaging that can be recycled over non-recyclable materials?  
 Yes  No  Sometimes
11. Do you have a habit of buying local products?  
 Yes  No  Sometimes
12. Do you have a habit of buying organic food?  
 Yes  No  Sometimes
13. Do you have the habit of buying product refills to use containers you already own?  
 Yes  No  Sometimes
14. In your home, the food usually passes the “best before”?  
 Yes  No  Sometimes
15. Would you stop buying from a brand that shows disrespect for the environment?  
 Yes  No  Maybe
16. Do you have the habit of reading product labels to see information about environmental care, fair trade and recycling?  
 Yes  No  Sometimes
17. Are you interested in environmental news?  
 Yes  No  Sometimes
18. Do you use eco bags, reusable cups and other reusable items?  
 Yes  No
19. If yes, which ones (choose as many as you wish):  
 Reusable cups  
 Plastic/ Stainless steel bottles

- Eco bags
- Cutlery
- Straw
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_