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# **Ethical fashion shoppers: beyond the hedonic/utilitarian motivations dichotomy? An explorative research**

## **Summary**

Despite the growing importance of ethical fashion, little attention has been given to the understanding and analysis of the consumer motivations of ethical fashion shoppers. Indeed, ethical fashion literature mainly focuses on issues such as: re-cycling, vintage, under consumption, second hand clothes, child free labour conditions, local craftsmanship valorisation, solidarity towards disadvantaged people (such as disables, prisoners, disadvantages mothers) (Dickson 2001; Shaw and Duff 2002; Tomollilo and Shaw 2004).

Starting from the classical Consumer Behaviour dichotomy between hedonic and utilitarian shopping motivations (Tauber 1972; Westbrook, Black 1985; Dawson et al.1990, Babin, Darden, Griffin, 1994) the aim of this contribution is to verify if these motivations are sufficient to explain the success of ethical fashion.

The explorative research has been conducted through qualitative personal interviews to a convenience sample of twenty women, actual consumers of ethical fashion in Milan. The data have been interpreted and arranged by re-codifying the gathered information in a series of emergent categories able to highlight the actual consumers' motivations.

## **Keywords**

Consumer motivations; eco-sustainable fashion; second hand clothing; fair trade fashion; swapping

## **1 Introduction**

The debate around the existence of an ethical consumer is lively (Buchholz, 1998, Thøgersen, 1999, Harrison et al., 2005). Researches conducted in Italy (Lori, Volpi, 2007), UK (Co-operative Bank, 2009) and USA (New American Dream, 2008) confirm that the numbers of those consumers is steadily growing, although they still represent a niche in the market. Environment and animal welfare, societal concerns including human rights like child labour or exploitation of workers are just some of the issues worrying the ethical consumer, who takes into account all these issues while shopping, using his power as consumer to boycott

(Friedman, 1999) or boycott (Friedman, 1996, Neilson, 2010) brands and corporations according to their negative or positive behaviours.

Among the different sectors, like food and drink, green home expenditure, eco-travel and transport, ethical finance, and ethical personal products, fashion is one of the less explored if compared to the food or cosmetic sector. The topic has been touched in the recent past, related in e.g. with the sweatshops issue (Dickson, 1999, Dickson, Littrell, 1997) or with the impact of social responsibility on clothing purchase intention (Kim et al., 1998), or specifically with fair trade concerns in the context of sweatshop clothing (Shaw et al. 2006). Moreover, Shaw and Duff (2002) analysed attitudes and issues that impact on consumer's choice in the context of clothing purchases where ethical concerns exist; these researches often emphasize that ethically concerned consumers find themselves confronted by uncertainty in terms of both information available to aid decision-making and the consequences of their actions (Tomolillo, Shaw, 2004).

Among the contributions aimed at understanding ethical consumer behaviour, ethical consumer motivations have been investigated by Freestone and McGoldrick (2008). Within the framework of the Decisional Balance Scale (DBS), their study suggests that respondents' motivational attitudes are a function of their stage of ethical awareness, concern and action. Some contributions refer to the decision making process (Shaw, Shiu, 2003) with a particular focus on fair trade (Shaw, 2005, Shaw et al., 2005; Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al. 2006). The aim of these researches is to modify the well known theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985, 1991), which does not consider ethical or social issues within its model measures, focusing instead on the self-interested concerns of individual. The issue's relevance notwithstanding, there is not much research available concerning the motivations behind the actual ethical behaviour: motivations related to green food choice (Lockie et al. 2002), or more generally motivations related to the choice of a simple life style (Shaw, Newholm 2002).

The present contribution presents the findings of a qualitative research aimed at investigate the actual consumer motivation for ethical fashion.

## **2. Conceptual framework**

### *The ethical fashion and the ethical fashion consumer*

Ethical fashion can be defined as “fashionable clothes that incorporate fair trade principles with sweatshop-free labour conditions while not harming the environment or workers by

using biodegradable and organic cotton” (Joergens, 2006, p. 361). According to the literature, ethical fashion includes also buying vintage or second hand clothing (Lunghi, Montagnini, 2007; Roux, Guiot, 2008), used clothing donation that is typically considered as a socially responsible behavior (Ha-Brookshire, Hodges, 2009), recycling fiber or fabrics before or after the consumer waste (like rubber reused for trainers soles) that reduce the waste and the pollution of the environment; re-designing dismissed garments or using, in a creative way, plastic bottles or metal cans (Kumar, 2007); adopting technologies that help developing 100% biodegradable garments, or implement the way of processing renewable materials, like bamboo or soy, into a fabric.

In recent years ethical fashion has attracted more and more consumers: in UK, according to the Co-operative Bank's Ethical Consumerism Report (2009), expenditure on ethical personal products has increased in the last nine years from £653 million to £1.8 billion in 2008. Indeed, spending on organic, fair trade and recycled clothes has increased rapidly, but it remains less than half the sum spent on second hand clothes for ethical reasons.

The ethical fashion consumer has been assimilated to the organic food consumer (Conner, 2004; Hustvedt, Dickson, 2009) and more broadly to the environmentally and socially responsible consumer (Dickson, Littrell, 1997; Dickson, 2000; Bovone, Mora, 2007), since the motivations driving him are related to concerns toward the environment, concerns toward right work conditions and support of the organic farming (Carrigan, Attalla, 2001, Hustvedt, Dickson, 2009). Despite some similarities, clothing consumption is much more complicated and provides a wider range of different stages than that of food or housing. Indeed, every consumer experiences each stage of clothing consumption, from product information search, acquisition, usage, storage, and disposal to postdisposal evaluation (Ha-Brookshire, Hodges, 2009).

Moreover, the choice to buy ethical fashion is conditioned by issues like style or colour, that are often more important than intangible attributes like social responsibility (Dickson, Littrell, 1997; Kim et al., 1998). Indeed, some German and British consumers cannot avoid acting unethically when purchasing clothing if they can't find clothes suiting their aesthetic needs (Joergens 2006). Finally, the often higher price of ethical clothes, compared to the price of trendy and fashionable clothing available in most of the department stores and fashion chains (like, Zara, H&M, Kiabi, Pimkie), could represent a further restraint.

*Consumers' motivations: a literature review*

The origins of the academic debate on consumers motivations can be traced back to Copeland's pioneering work on rational and emotional buying motives (1924), which has been widely adopted in marketing and advertising literature for long. Specifically, rational buying motives included the search for product dependability or durability, as well as the economy in purchase, whereas emotional buying motives, which have their origin in human instincts, included emulation, satisfaction of the appetite, pride of personal appearance, cleanliness, pleasure of recreation, securing home comfort, and so forth.

As Udell (1964) noted, the main limit of Copeland's theory is the unfortunate labeling of the two sets of motivations: by naming one class of motivations "rational", the other group is assumed to be irrational. Actually, it is not irrational to seek emotional satisfaction, since contemporary consumers are far beyond satisfying their basic needs for survival, and psychological and emotional satisfaction is necessary for both individuals and the society as a whole. Furthermore, emotional appeal does not necessary inhibit reasoned purchasing and, more generally, there is a continuous interplay of emotion and reason in all types of consumer buying motives. On these premises Udell proposed a buying motives continuum, which included on the two extremes what he labeled as "operational buying motives" and "psychological buying motives". The former incorporated the satisfaction derived from the anticipated physical performance of products, while the latter incorporated the satisfaction derived from consumer's social and psychological interpretation of the products and their performance. From this standpoint, the utility for the consumer is only indirectly derived from the product's physical performance, since "the direct source of utility is the psychological satisfaction that he or she receives through the ownership, use, and social prestige of the product" (Udell 1964, p. 9).

Other numerous studies developed taxonomies of retail shoppers, often in an attempt to infer shopping motivations from distinct types of shoppers, such as Stone's (1954) "economic", "personalizing", "ethical", and "apathetic" consumers, or Stephenson and Willet's (1969) "store-loyal", "compulsive and recreation", "convenience", and "price-bargain conscious" shoppers. In such literature, a recurring dichotomy is the one between "recreational" and "convenience or economic" shopping, suggested by Bellenger, Robertson and Greenberg (1977) and further elaborated by Bellenger and Korgaonkar (1980). Recreational shoppers enjoy shopping as a "leisure-time activity", whereas convenience or economic shoppers "dislike shopping or are neutral toward it, and thus approach retail store selection from a time- or money-saving point of view" (Bellenger, Korgaonkar 1980, p. 78).

Apart from shopper taxonomy literature, the first comprehensive effort to taxonomize the fundamental motivations underlying consumer behavior is Tauber's (1972) article "Why do People Shop?". The author's premise is that shopping behavior is motivated by a variety of psychosocial needs beyond those related to the actual purchase. Through the findings of exploratory in depth interviews, Tauber distinguished between personal and social shopping motivations. The first category includes the opportunity to: (1) enact a culturally prescribed role; (2) divert from daily routine; (3) obtain self-gratification; (4) learn about new trends, fashions, and innovations; (5) physical exercise; and (6) receive sensory stimulation from the retail environment. The second category includes the chance to: (1) socially interact outside home; (2) communicate with others having similar interests; (3) affiliate with reference groups; (4) increase in social status; and (5) achieve success in bargaining and negotiation.

Similarly to Tauber, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) suggested that consumer's shopping motivations are not essentially instrumental such as purchasing specific products but that they could also be related to affective goals. This way, the researchers described consumers as problem solvers or seeking fun, fantasy, arousal, sensory stimulation, and enjoyment (Hirschman, Holbrook 1982). This argument recurred in Consumer Behavior literature with the themes of "shopping as a work" (Fischer, Arnold 1990; Sherry, McGrath, Levy 1993) versus "shopping as fun" (Bloch, Bruce 1984; Sherry 1990), with the aforementioned dichotomy between "recreational" and "convenience or economic" shopping (Bellenger, Korgaonkar 1980) or, more in general, with the well-known distinction between "utilitarian" and "hedonic" shopping (Babin, Darden and Griffin 1994). In this framework, utilitarian consumer behavior is concerned with purchasing products in an efficient and timely way to achieve one's own goals with the minimum effort. Accordingly, its nature is rational and task-related. Hedonic consumer behavior, on the other hand, is concerned with the fun and play of shopping arising from the experience in itself, and not for the achievement of any pre-specified end-goal. Its typical dimensions are "increased arousal, heightened involvement, perceived freedom, fantasy fulfillment, and escapism" (Babin, Darden and Griffin 1994, p. 646), as well as festivity (Sherry 1990; Arnold, Reynolds 2005), treat, and self-indulgence (Miller, 1998). As a result, "people buy so they can shop, and not shop so they can buy" (Langrehr 1991, p. 428).

Athola (1985) suggested the usefulness to make a distinction between utilitarian and hedonic motives underlying consumption. However, he emphasized the artificiality to divide behaviors into either hedonic or utilitarian, since every behavior has both utilitarian and hedonic aspects. From this standpoint, Westbrook and Black's (1985) motivation-based

shopper typology goes beyond the utilitarian/hedonic dichotomy. In order to identify a shopper taxonomy, the researchers proposed seven dimensions of shopping motivation: (1) anticipated utility (2) role enactment; (3) negotiation (4) choice optimization (5) affiliation (6) power and authority; and (7) stimulation.

According to the authors, these motivations can virtually all coexist in the same consumer. However, as Arnold and Reynolds (2003) noted, all Westbrook and Black's motivations "can be described as containing both hedonic and utilitarian elements", but "some are more utilitarian in nature while others are more hedonic in nature" (pp. 78-79). With this premises, the researchers proposed an inventory of consumer's shopping motivations that are primary hedonic in nature. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative studies, the authors developed a scale including the following shopping motivations: (1) adventure, (2) social, (3) gratification, (4) role, (5) value, and (6) idea.

In the specific domain of socially responsible consumer behavior, consumer motivations have been investigated in relation to second hand shopping. Bardhi and Arnould (2005) carried out an ethnographic study on "thrift shopping", i.e. shopping in second-hand settings such as second-hand shops, estate sales, garage sales, flea markets, auctions, and so forth. The research emphasized a dialectic between "thrift" and "treat", namely an interplay between economic and hedonic shopping motivations. More in detail, thrift was conceptualised as a "careful management of resources, careful consumption and saving in the present in order to consume better in the future" (Bardhi, Arnould, 2005, p. 227). Despite its economic and moral nature (Miller, 1998), the search for thrift proved to be part of a hedonic shopping experience, which allows to realize consumer fantasies and pursuit the unexpected. According to the authors, thrift shopping is "a continuous search for hidden 'treasures' waiting to be found", such as luxury brands and collectable items. Accordingly, participants to the study "described their experiences of thrift shopping [...] as fun, exciting, a hobby, a treasure hunt, satisfying and unexpected" (Bardhi, Arnould 2005, p. 230). Moreover, the research showed that consumers used thrift as a way of justifying self-indulgences. Non-thrifty and even wasteful shopping practices which should be in conflict with the moral value of thrift, such as buying items consumers would never use or even like, or buying in excess of their needs, were actually justified through the normative framework of thrift shopping. This way, thrift proved to be a "cultural resource" to justify the realisation of consumer desires and wasteful purchasing practices.

Finally, the study on second hand shopping motivations of Roux and Guiot (2008) revealed a hierarchical structure characterized by two second-order factors, one corresponding to

economic motives and the other to recreational motives. Economic motives included: (1) the search for fair price, (2) ethics and ecology; and (3) distance from the system. Recreational motives included: (1) treasure hunting; (2) originality, (3) social contact; (4) nostalgia for items from the past.

The discussed consumer motivations are summed up in table 1:

Table 1: a review of the main contribution on consumers' motivations

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Area of investigation</i>	<i>Motivations</i>
Copeland (1924)	Consumption in general	(1) Rational buying motives. (2) Emotional buying motives.
Udell (1964)	Consumption in general	Operational and psychological buying motives continuum.
Tauber (1972)	Shopping in general	(1) Personal shopping motivations: (a) enacting a culturally prescribed role; (b) diverting from daily routine; (c) obtaining self-gratification; (d) learning about new trends, fashions, and innovations; (e) physical exercise; (f) sensory stimulation. (2) Social shopping motivation: (a) socially interacting outside home; (b) communicating with others having similar interests; (c) affiliating with reference groups; (d) increasing in social status; (e) achieving success in bargaining and negotiation.
Westbrook and Black's (1985)	Shopping in general	(1) anticipated utility; (2) role enactment; (3) negotiation; (4) choice optimization; (5) affiliation; (6) power and authority; (7) stimulation.
Arnold and Reynolds (2003)	Hedonic shopping	(1) adventure; (2) social; (3) gratification; (4) role; (5) value; (6) idea.
Bardhi and Arnould (2005)	Thrift shopping	(1) Thrift. (2) Treat.
Roux and Guiot (2008)	Second hand shopping	(1) Economic motives: (a) searching for fair price; (b) ethics and ecology; (c) distance from the system society. (2) Recreational motives: (a) treasure hunting; (b) originality; (c) social contact; (d) nostalgia.

### 3. Research's goals and methodology

The general aim of the research was to verify if the in-depth motivations behind ethical fashion consumption are amenable to the traditional dichotomy between hedonic and



utilitarian shopping motivations. Moreover, in order to collect more information about the sample able to help us in interpreting the data we have also set some sub-objectives of the research:

i) to understand if the consumer was an habitual shopper of ethical fashion, ii) to investigate which kinds of ethical fashion are consumed; iii) to understand the consumers' awareness about the different kinds of ethical fashion.

The research design has been of interpretative nature, aiming at understanding of the ways in which people subjectively experience the social world (Hultgren, 1989).

Given the explorative aim of the research and the involved topic, we decided that the personal interview (Spradley, 1979) was the most useful tool to investigate the motivations behind the consumption of ethical fashion.

In order to find consumers really involved with ethical fashion, a convenience sampling approach was adopted: indeed we chose to interview twenty women shopping in ethical fashion stores in Milan. Although twenty participants may seem a relatively small number, a review of the transcribed interviews showed a recurrence of the most emergent concepts mentioned by participants (Spiggle, 1994). This indicates saturation, suggesting the interviews were sufficient for an interpretative analysis and further interviews would probably not produce new insights.

Interviews lasted around 30 minutes per participant; all of them have been audiotaped with the participants' consent and then transcribed. A grounded theory approach to data analysis was then adopted (Glaser, Strauss, 1967, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Lowe, 1991).

Interviews were semi-structured and as a conceptual framework for the interview's trace we draw on the consumers behaviour literature, highlighting the utilitarian and hedonic motivations related to the choice of buying ethical fashion.

The transcribed interview data, demographic information, and field notes have been coded and then interpreted thematically to uncover the motivations behind the consumption of ethical fashion as experienced by the twenty participants.

#### **4. The findings of the study**

This section will detail the analysis of the personal interviews. In order to present the results in the most useful way, we decided first to provide a brief description of the informants and then to discuss the various aspects of the ethical fashion in different paragraphs, starting from the "less ethical" consumption practice.

### *Respondent overview*

The sample (Table 2) included twenty female consumers ranging from 21 to 59 years old and representing all the souls of ethical fashion. Moreover, we also interviewed the owners of Humana Vintage and Atelier del Riciclo and the press office manager of Asap as they could provide some useful insights to interpret consumers' motivation.

At a general level, the findings of our study reveal that ethical fashion consumption is driven by a multiplicity of motivations that may be both utilitarian and non-utilitarian (Athola, 1985; Babin, Darden, 1994; Bardhi, Arnould, 2005; Bellenger, Korgaoknar, 1980; Hirschman, Holbrook 1982). Such motivations are not mutually exclusive and can coexist in the same subject.

Table 2 - The sample

<b>Interview</b>	<b>Point of purchase</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Kind of shopper</b>	<b>Eco-fashion</b>	<b>Fair-trade fashion</b>	<b>Vintage</b>	<b>Swap</b>	<b>Awareness of different EF</b>
1	Ethic	29	Italian	Occasional	no	yes	yes	yes	high
2	Asap	28	Italian	Occasional	yes	no	no	yes	medium
3	Atelier del Riciclo	40	Italian	Habitual	yes	yes	no	yes	medium
4	Atelier del Riciclo	55	Italian	Habitual	no	no	yes	yes	medium
5	Ethic	31	Italian	Habitual	yes	yes	no	yes	high
6	Humana Vintage	24	Italian	Habitual	yes	yes	yes	yes	low
7	Humana Vintage	23	Italian	Habitual	no	no	yes	yes	low
8	Humana Vintage	43	Italian	Habitual	no	yes	yes	yes	low
9	Humana Vintage	21	Italian	Habitual	yes	no	yes	no	low
10	Humana Vintage	59	Italian	Occasional	no	yes	yes	yes	medium
11	Humana Vintage	23	Italian	Habitual	no	yes	yes	no	medium
12	Asap	27	Italian	Habitual	yes	yes	yes	yes	high
13	Altromercato	50	Italian	Habitual	yes	yes	yes	yes	high
14	Altromercato	30	Italian	Habitual	yes	yes	yes	yes	high
15	Altromercato	39	Italian	Habitual	yes	yes	no	yes	medium
16	Altromercato	32	Italian	Habitual	yes	yes	yes	yes	high
17	Altromercato	30	Italian	Occasional	no	yes	no	yes	medium
18	Asap	29	Italian	Habitual	yes	n.a.	yes	yes	high
19	Altromercato	38	Italian	Occasional	yes	yes	no	yes	medium
20	Altromercato	42	Italian	Habitual	yes	yes	yes	yes	high

### *Second hand and vintage clothing*

The term vintage refers to consumption practice implying wearing garments linked to a defined historical period (the twenties, sixties and seventies). Vintage fashion does not necessarily come from second hand stores,; indeed garments and accessories from the past

can also be bought new at exhibitions or specialized markets. Moreover, vintage clothing can be inherited passing from mothers to daughters or from grandmothers to granddaughters. Consequently, the borders among vintage, swapping and second hand are not well defined and often the three categories can overlap. Actually, a vintage cloth is not necessarily used, and a used one has not to be necessarily vintage. Indeed, many retailers offer used clothes and accessories, i.e. from Zara and H&M., that are nor ancient nor with a prestigious label. Furthermore, contemporary used clothes are not necessarily bought at second hand retailers: they can also be acquired trough swapping (see infra).

In the specific domain of second hand fashion – which does not necessarily includes vintage fashion – the predominant utilitarian motivation proved to be the affordability of used clothing:

I even found a pair of Chanel! [...] They cost 40 Euros. [...] 40 Euros for vintage Chanel shoes is nothing! It's a piece of history!

6\_Humana Vintage\_24<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the price, that may make even luxury brands affordable, some informants recognize in vintage clothing a superior quality level:

I bought some wonderful leather purses [...] nowadays leather has nothing to do with it.

6\_Humana Vintage\_24

For some atypical categories of consumers, namely fashion schools students or young fashion designers – who are very numerous in Milan – second hand and vintage clothing may be bought to recycle low cost material to reuse in original creations, to build an historical archive or to simply stimulate creativity.

Hedonic motivations immediately emerge by investigating the feelings and emotions experienced by the informants visiting second hand stores. Such shopping expeditions actually proved to be recreationally and playfully lived. Specifically, the pleasure of shopping results from the act of sifting, from the search for good bargains or for the queer, unusual or unique item:

You have to sift, it's the pleasure of vintage [...] it's easy to go and find a Pucci of the 40's at ... I don't know, 200 thousands of Euros [...] it's nice to come here, to search.

9\_Humana Vintage\_21

It's a practice that one informant has even defined as “the treasure hunt”:

*Do you enjoy sifting?*

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<sup>1</sup> Verbatim are provided with general information about the interviews they were extracted from: progressive number of the interview, setting of the interview and age of the informant.

I like it a lot [...] like finding something in the middle of a hundred thousand. It's typically female, in my view. [...] It's the treasure hunt.

16\_Altromercato\_32

The attraction for garments and accessories belonging to specific times, that might intuitively seem the primary motivation for vintage clothing, actually emerged only in a few women:

[...] the periods which I prefer are the 20s or the 60s/70s. [...] I recently bought a collector's item, an Elsa Schiaparelli hat, unobtainable. [...] It's been an impulse buying. It was the first time I saw a Schiaparelli piece, there are only a few around, and usually are in the hands of private collectors. So when I saw it I could not resist [...] It was actually quite expensive, but it's something that I preserve in my living room as an actual museum piece.

12\_Asap\_27

In some cases searching for items with a recognisable historical identity originates from the will to be up to date with fashion. As it is well known, what comes into fashion is often rich in references and allusion to past styles:

*Are you used to look for a particular period? Is there a style you identify with?*

Well, it comes and goes. Anyway, I follow fashion, event though not too much. Now I'm wearing H&M, but if the 70's are in fashion, I look for the '70s.

7\_Humana Vintage\_23

Some consumers, fascinated by past fashions, admitted not to look for specific styles since they don't have the required expertise to recognize them:

*Are you interested in vintage, in garments you can trace back to specific times?*

No, I'm not, also 'cause I wouldn't be able to recognize them [...] to match the style with the period. But I'm really keen on some stuff my mother-in-law gave me, a wonderful ceremony dress I wore the other day, all with flowers [...] but I wouldn't be able to say if it was '50's, '70's or '30s.

16\_Altromercato\_32

Therefore, the search for clothing items with a recognizable past style seems to affect only the passionate enthusiasts or particularly fashion conscious consumers. As it emerges from one of the aforementioned examples, these women may even consider vintage garments or accessories as works of art, collector's pieces to exhibit at home as in a museum.

Conversely, the nostalgic fascination for products "with a past" or "a story behind" appears to be more common:

[...] yesterday I bought a '20's or '30's Swedish military bag, a beautiful bag [...] handmade, with a gorgeous leather [...] and you can see a story in this bag [...] in my view it's a beautiful thing: you own something that connects you to a person... you can see a slice of history through that bag...

11\_Humana Vintage\_23

However, the will to wear unconventional garments has proved to be even prevailing over nostalgic motivations. For various vintage or second hand lovers, used clothes actually have the power to confer a sense of exclusivity and uniqueness:

I buy vintage clothing because I like to create my own fashion. [...] I like to be free, not to be limited by the market proposals... [...] shopping in the city [...] you pass from one store to another with the same models, with the same colours... all for the same target... then I get bored.

8-Humana Vintage\_43

This dimension has clearly emerged also from the interview with Humana Vintage's owner:

Humana Vintage is patronized by the young boy or girl willing to differentiate himself or herself, who doesn't want to dress like all the others 'cause he or she wants something special, different from all the rest. It doesn't matter if it suits too big or too small, because the appearance, the colour, the fabric and the way it is sewn up are more important [...] this image of uniqueness is more important. Because if the dress is forty or fifty years old, you can imagine that it is unique. Also because forty or fifty years ago all dresses used to be made in tailors or dressmaker's shop, then the size or the colour variant you might be looking for is unavailable: there is only that dress, that is unique. Hence, and in that sense it is similar to a boutique: when you buy a garment you know that you are the only one owning it. And this exclusivity really confers an aura of prestige to the one that buys it.

Humana Vintage's owner

Consequently, a significant number of the vintage consumers included in our study proved to share the desire to dress differently from others and, more in general, to display an "alternative" stile, able to distinguish her from the others:

I love creating my own style by mixing vintage with H&M or other more particular stuff. I want my style [...] I like unique things, then matching different things in order to have a unique style. Even if at the end I wear jeans as all the others. I want my personal style, to distinguish myself, to be unique.

18\_Asap\_29

A style, however, that may be shared with reference groups:

*And did you enjoy dressing in that way during adolescence?*

Yes, I did.

*Why? Did it make you feel different?*

No, not different... actually more similar to my friends... that is... more similar to my friends, but different from the rest of the people.

*So it was a way to share a common style ?*

Yes, it definitively was.

1\_Ethic\_29

Especially for the youngest consumers and for those used to wear second hand clothing during adolescence, often in a wider Grunge style framework, used fashion becomes a way to adhere to a style able to communicate a sense of belonging to a reference group and, at the same time, the will to dissociate from aesthetic codes that are more conventional for the society or peculiar to other groups or subcultures.

Furthermore, second hand clothing proved to be a way for experimenting with new self images or to play with one's own body, going beyond the beauty canons imposed by the market, the fashion system or more generally by our society:

*In this shop I can also find references to past models belonging to me [...] I like to personify different characters, so...*

In what sense personifying different characters?

*In the sense that I like to change personality. [...] In my case, it's not going and looking for a specific period [...] I like creating in my way, for instance putting together a piece belonging to a time, another belonging to another one and build up an ensemble. Then, I don't know... there is the day I prefer being more masculine, then I find an unusual satin weaved waistcoat... and that's a way to experiment in my way.*

8\_Humana Vintage\_43

*If you refer to the beauty canons you are also used to mirror yourself, with these products you also have to get used to see your single image in a certain way ...*

Are you trying to say that these garments makes you feel different, that you feel the sensation to go beyond the beauty canons society imposes on us?

*Yes, exactly.*

6\_Humana Vintage\_24

The awareness of the ethical significance of the choice to wear used garments or accessories, finally, only emerged in two interviews. In these cases, the informants emphasized on the one hand the eco-compatibility of used fashion, on the other hand its compatibility with the will to minimize waste, and more in general, with a sustainable lifestyle. However, although second hand and vintage clothing recur in literature as forms of ethical consumption (Lunghi, Montagnini, 2007; Roux, Guiot 2008; Ha-Brookshire, Hodges 2009), our study puts in evidence how such consumption practices have to be interpreted above all as a form of self expression, almost always associated with the desire to display a unique and original style able to distinguish the subject from other people.

### *Swapping*

This paragraph outlines the so called “swapping”: the term defines the practice of exchanging clothes and accessories, perceived as useless or simply as out of fashion, among friends, relatives or acquaintances. The swapping emerges from our sample as an independent type of ethical fashion – beside second hand and vintage clothing, eco-sustainable fashion, and fair trade fashion – intimately related to the practice of cloth giving, but with a more hedonistic and cool connotation. Indeed, people engaged in this practice experience the playful side of exchanging clothes or accessorizes, organizing private swap parties or attending swap parties

organized by firms or associations, more than the utilitarian component of giving away something unfitting or out of fashion or the altruistic component of the charity donations.

The swapping through institutional channels is not so widespread among our sample, since just three women have attended some public swap parties and just one swaps regularly through Atelier del Riciclo. However, the informants organize more often informal swap parties among friends, often after a dinner or a drink together, trying on clothes, taking photos or even parading:

[...] we have organized some swap parties among girlfriends [...] there is the idea of exchanging, the desire to enjoy a funny evening, an alternative way to spend time among friends [...] a little bit like “Sex & the City” [...] we meet together for a drink or a dinner, 5 or 6 or 7 people, and it’s a lot of fun because we arrive with large suitcases, and then everyone shows her things, we try them on, we take pictures ...

12\_Asap\_27

Sometimes private swap parties become a sort of ritual, with a peculiar name:

[...] we call it “Ratto-Baratto<sup>2</sup>” [...] once or twice a year we meet together, a meeting among women, everyone brings with her all the old clothes [...] We have dinner and then we try them on, in a sort of fashion parade [...] Then we declare: “Ah this one, in my opinion, is perfect for Giulia, for Luciana, etc.” and then we give it to the designed person.

16\_Altromercato\_32

As far as the motivations behind the swapping, some women declare that it is a useful practice, allowing people to give away clothes no more used – because out of size or simply because they have become bored with them – avoiding the throwing away of them.

Indeed simply throwing away clothes, just because the closet is full, lets people experience some sort of guilt. Moreover, some women outline the ethical side of the giving and receiving clothes for free:

It’s nice to take discharged things, I took a green pullover from my aunt; she wanted to throw it away. [...] The waste irritates me; I really enjoy wearing these things.

20\_Altromercato-42

Saving, buying designer clothes at a bargain price and renewing more frequently their clothes emerge as motivations encouraging our informants to attend public swap parties:

And then there is also the accessibility side, here everyone can buy a designer cloth, they are not luxury items for few people, but everyone can get them.

Owner of Atelier del Riciclo

I like changing, wearing a different garment every day. Even if some of them are always used and others are used once and then remain hanging in the closet, waiting for a second chance.

4\_Atelier del Riciclo\_55

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<sup>2</sup> The translation would be “abduction-barter”, but it loses the assonance of the Italian expression.

About the hedonic motivations referring to swapping, some informants mentioned the joy to share with others. Moreover, the playful side of the exchange emerges as an important driver of this non-conventional way to acquire clothing. This allows us to also understand the spreading of both private swap parties organized among girlfriends and the public ones organized by associations as Atelier del Riciclo:

People like swapping because it is like a play. [...] Thanks to the playful side of the swapping, there is a very high emotional involvement [...] customers enjoy it much more, when we organize some events so that they can contact directly other customers, showing them their objects, trying on their clothes, swapping them.

The swapping event “Christmas Gift”, held last January (a very big success, all the newspapers have reported it), has been much appreciated; customers have really enjoyed it; actually maybe they swapped a simple perfume bottle with a Yves Saint Laurent dress, things that can not be compared [...] they really enjoyed it a lot, then they were trying on clothes, all in a sort of play.

Owner of Atelier del Riciclo

Our informants like swap parties also because they allow them to meet other people and to socialize. This side is all the more relevant for the private swap parties, perceived like an occasion to meet together and to share a funny experience with friends.

Beside swap parties, the swapping practice can be also perceived like a symbolic way to maintain a relationship with family members, specifically with grandmothers and mothers. So that the swapped item becomes a sort of bridge between different generations:

All the things that my mother gave to me mean something, there is also the emotional bond with my mom. These objects testify also our similar style and so we find each other [...] She often highlights this saying: “Look, how cool I was”, “We like the same things” [...] these are the thoughts when I wear something that she gave to me. I feel good when I look at the picture in which she was wearing the same clothes that now I’m wearing.

12\_Asap\_27

Finally, the swapping represents a free opportunity to experiment with different styles:

I like to use things belonging to other people, it is a way to use something that I would never have bought, things not belonging to my personal style. It’s a way to experiment; for instance you are prone to buy always the same things, you would never have bought a particular t-shirt, then out of the blue your friend gives it to you, and so you accept it, try it on, and then you think: “anyway I can always throw it away, or I will re-gift it or I will give it to charity!”

5\_Ethic\_31

### *Eco-sustainable fashion*

Eco-fashion consumption is often included in a healthy lifestyle oriented to environmental sustainability:



I basically love everything healthy. I think we don't need to eat a lot, but to eat well. Then I appreciate the gym: I train in a gym every mornings, I really value to eat organic food. [...] I also use natural detergents, without additives [...]. If it is not organic I won't buy it. [...] I don't eat meat very much , I only eat poultry once a week, I buy it at NaturaSi<sup>3</sup>. [...] I also use natural sponges...

13\_Altromercato\_50

Again in the case of eco-sustainable fashion, consumption may originate by a multiplicity of hedonic and utilitarian motivations coexisting in the same subject without mutual exclusion. In this framework, the product's capability to satisfy the individual's esthetical needs proved to be a sort of necessary prerequisite for all the subjects included in the study.

Eco fashion consumption often originates from the belief that eco-sustainable products, especially organic ones, are characterized by a superior quality level. Such higher perceived quality results from the employ of untreated raw materials and a greater care for the productive process, in which traditional or handcrafted know-how may be included (as, for instance, natural dyeing techniques through infusion):

I know that some firms adopt natural techniques, for example for the tanning of leather. [...] they use top-quality raw materials. [...] the products are more expensive, but made with better materials, so they produce better quality products, processed like in the past, using better raw materials [...] Materials' quality is really warranted.

20\_Altromercato\_42

The higher perceived quality often arises from the consumer's direct experience with the garments, that result more hard-wearing than conventional pieces of clothing and, consequently, characterized by a higher durability:

[...] an ethical garment lasts for ten years [...] I put these garments in the washing machine over and over again and they don't tear.

2\_Asap\_28

Moreover, the superior perceived quality may arise from the well-being sensations associated to the use of organic products:

Have you ever slept among organic cotton sheets? Eh! Or among flax sheets, it's completely different.

*Could you describe me your sensations?*

Something fresh, neat, very enjoyable. I mean, it's completely different. I have a trousseau (my mother gave to me a wonderful trousseau) completely made with flax and cotton, old-fashioned cotton, without dye, also the tablecloths, raw cotton ... it was called "raw cotton", but it's really just natural cotton, today it's called organic cotton.

13\_Altromercato\_50

In some cases, the preference for organic fashion and more generally for natural fabrics originates from the awareness of the chemicals harmfulness for the skin:

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<sup>3</sup> NaturaSi is an Italian supermarket specialized in organic food.

... I like natural fabrics, such as cotton, silk... It's nice to wear natural stuff on the skin... stuff untreated with chemical agents.

3\_Atelier del Riciclo\_40

I never use chemical products... and it's good for body and soul 'cause chemicals harm the skin [...] there is no help for it: everything's chemicals enter deep inside your body.

13\_Altromercato\_50

Accordingly, the ethical product may be experienced as a safer product, especially when its users are children:

Such products come from Germany... children's vest are made with a particular fabric. And this attracted me because I was looking for safety features. In Italy there are not such beautiful things.

20-Altromercato\_42

As Asap's press agent emphasized, organic fashion consumption may also be driven by specific problems of allergies or intolerances. However, none of the women included in the study declared to consume eco-compatible fashion because of this kind of problem.

Unlike second hand and swapping, the actual ethical end environmental consciousness proved to be the primary motivation for organic and recycled fashion:

I think that if a person has a hint of ethical and environmental conscience, he or she will start raising questions.

*What kind of questions?*

Why do we consume so much. If I consume, I want to understand what I consume [...] obviously you should also be a responsible consumer, therefore sometimes you have to stop yourself, and think: well, we want to consume, it's ok but let's try to understand also the provenience of the raw materials, and where do these products end up [...].

2\_Asap\_28

... just consider that I'm obsessed with differentiated refuse collection. I really care about it, and I get mad with people who don't do it properly. Hence, when I see a product that result from a legal application of recycling, I'm fascinated and I buy it with pleasure, especially when I recognise some design in it...

*Why are you obsessed with differentiated refuse collection?*

Because I think it's important to take care of our earth and the environment...

6\_Humana Vintage\_24

I like to think that we are re-using something we had already used and, since I like this kind of stuff, so why don't buying it, why going and buying something else?

15\_Altromercato\_39

[...] I'm really keen on everything in which recycled materials is used, as well as already used products, since I hate to throw stuff away [...].

16\_Altromercato\_32

Some of the informants are so environment conscious and so concerned with the ethical consumption, to nurture the need to speak about it with other people, to share opinions, information, and also products:

The mothers I met at my daughter's nursery school belong to this word, it's a niche... I discovered the organic products catalogue thanks to them [...] you speak with them because you share an interest... there's word of mouth [...] I met a family [...] a lady with two children [...] and we exchanged products, she was here for me, and I was there for her, we became friends. As you know people sharing your same lifestyle, it's much better, you feel that they understand you, you don't have to explain anything, it's more spontaneous. When consumption practices are alike, all is simpler [...] We created a mailing list through which we keep in touch, we do counter information on various topics, also on ethic consumption. [...] new e-mail addresses have been added and we use e-mails to spread information on politics, consumption, etc.

20\_Altromercato\_42

However, sometimes sustainability may be perceived as a fashion. Accordingly, organic or ethical fashion are experienced as a way to show off an alternative lifestyle:

[...] Perhaps the youngsters are more attracted by style, sometimes they live sustainability, if not truly like a fashion, like something similar. Something alternative, as it also might be being vegetarian or vegan. Sometimes it is simply experienced as a fashion, and not something you really identify in...

Asap press office manager

Similarly to second hand clothing, eco-sustainable fashion becomes an instrument of differentiation, a way to assert one's own personality and to display a unique and original way of being:

I'm unconventional, then people notice me ... the recycled pursue is conspicuous, it's uncommon.

18\_Asap\_29

... then they are absolutely different from everything's around. I mean, Muji's vests are completely different from whatever other striped vest in whatever place in the world. Therefore, I buy it.

15\_Altromercato\_39

In the specific case of recycled fashion, finally, the product may also be appreciated for its artistic quality or, similarly to vintage, for its capability to enclose a story humanizing the product itself:

*Why do you like recycled fashion?*

Of course, I'm attracted by the ethical side, but I would be an hypocrite if I said it's for this reason only. I also appreciate the creativity and the design features [...] new form of products. The ethical side is really appealing, but I'm interested in the creative side too [...] it happens to face with a totally unique product, and that's very important to me. It's not only a product come out from a factory, it's an object with a soul and a certain charm... it's something already was but which became something new without using new material. It's respectful to use old material which is not thrown away. There's respect for things.

18\_Asap\_29

The last excerpt emphasizes how ethical conscience may coexist with different consumer motivations ranging from the desire for premium quality products to the need to assert one's own self; from the will to wear garments free from chemicals harming the skin to aesthetical research; from the need to keep abreast with the times following what comes into vogue to the aspiration to distinguish from the others.

## *Fair trade fashion*

Similarly to eco-sustainable fashion, fair trade consumption is often included into a social conscious lifestyle also oriented to environmental sustainability:

I'm fascinated by this philosophy of ethical fashion, because I'm really concerned about social problems. All my life is characterized by social involvement, I have worked as a union officer for many years, so I truly believe in these things.

13\_Altromercato\_50

Fair trade shops are usually patronized because they sell products that are habitually bought, like food and beverages:

[...] I usually buy there tea and sugar.

15\_Altromercato\_39

Most of our informants are used to choose fair trade shops when looking for a gift:

[...] at Christmas time there is a enormous tent, named Gorabombo, selling books, clothes, curtains, it's a place where you go to chose a gift.

10\_Humana Vintage\_59

For fair trade fashion, non utilitarian-motivations are prevalent. Very few interviewees mentioned the price accessibility and the products quality:

[...] In my opinion, such products have a very high quality, they are not easily breakable, the materials are resistant.

15\_Altromercato\_39

The individual's ethical conscience is the principle driver for fair trade fashion. A conscience based on solidarity and altruistic values:

[I consume these products] because I believe in what they represent, I believe in their philosophy: sweat free shops, helping poor countries, mostly female, female cooperation, mostly in India.

13\_Altromercato\_50

For ethical consumers respecting working conditions, helping development countries and the ethics of the product chain are benefits justifying the higher price of products:

You buy these products because they are produced respecting producing populations. You know that you are buying "good" products respecting workers. I prefer buying these products [...] Moreover, these corporations assure permanent contact work, so they really respect workers, not like some corporations delocalizing to produce at lesser cost or letting people work in bad conditions in the basement and underpaying them. These are social products: buying them it means that you really care. [...] It's nice because you know that they are produced respecting people: that is the most powerful driver. The problem is the price; they are nor so cheap, but it's a good thing, because you know that the earnings really went to the producer and are not lost along the retail chain.

20\_Altromercato\_42

The consumers with the strongest ethic conscience may even decide to boycott some brands:

The idea that my clothes are produced without respecting fair working conditions is really bothering me. [...] If I know that some corporations behave in a not responsible way... I mean, if I have some proof, if the press reports that, the media [...] I avoid to buy from those corporations.

1\_Ethic\_29

Mostly, I avoid shops that are not child labour free.

13\_Altromercato\_30

Such consciousness is well rooted in women with children:

[...] If you have some children, you think more about that, you are more environment conscious and you know that there are less lucky people in the world so, if you are lucky, you should share.

3-Atelier del riciclo\_40

The attraction toward non industrial products, and toward more human products, is another driver to fair trade consumption:

They are not mass produced, they are produced by real people.

3\_Atelier riciclo\_40

Moreover, the perceived high symbolic and immaterial value of fair trade products let them be chosen as gifts for the beloved ones:

When I decide to give you a fair trade product as a gift, it has a higher value compared to the value of the garment in itself. I mean, I have chosen it because behind the product there is a thought. For instance, you can appreciate it, because I know that you are environment conscious, or I give you a fair trade little ring, because I know that you don't like to waste money for jewels. I mean, that is how I think.

17\_Altromercato\_30

Speaking about gifts [...] there is more thought behind it, there is the will to give something with a concept, a story, an ethic.

12\_Asap\_27

The gift, not only of a fair trade object, but in any case of something linked with an environmental or humanitarian cause, can make people think about some important issues:

I have bought one [garment] in New York [...] Then I saw it in the H&Ms all over the world and so I bought another as a gift, a gift with a message [...] the message was that the money spent for the gift was donated to an association fighting HIV [...] The initiative was called "Fashion against AIDS" and they were designed by [...] someone by Dita von Teese, by McWilliamson, I'm not sure about that.

A project promoted by H&M, surely still working [...] I really believe in these things, in the idea of "the garment as a messenger"! [...] I believe that clothing can communicate at a more deep level, let people think deeply.

12\_Asap\_27

Besides all these social and altruistic motivations, that seem to be prevalent, many informants choose fair trade products because they are matching their personal style:

I like to dress colourful, so it's perfect.

16\_Altromercato\_32

As we have seen for the eco-sustainable fashion, also for faire-trade products the suitability with personal aesthetics ideals and with personal consumption choices is a prerequisite.

**5. Discussion and limitations of the research**

According to motivations reported from consumer behaviour literature, we have re-codified the motivations obtained from the study and summed them up in table 3. The findings let us go beyond the classical dichotomy between hedonic and utilitarian motivations by adding a third category related to ethical motivations. Indeed, despite the utilitarian and the hedonic sides of ethical consumer behaviour (i. e. avoiding waste, recycling and limiting the depletion of resources or avoid guilt and the pleasure of being well by doing good), sometimes these categories are unable to explain the ideological connotations of the ethical commitment. As discussed above, such categories are not mutually exclusive and typically coexist.

Table 3: The motivations grounded from the study

<i>Category of ethical fashion</i>	<i>Motivations</i>
Second hand clothing	1) Utilitarian: (a) affordability; (b) perceived quality. 2) Hedonic: (a) treasure hunting; (b) self expression and differentiation; (c) nostalgia; (d) affiliation; (e) being up to date with fashion. 3) Ethical: (a) environmental friendly life-style; (b) avoid waste; (c) distance from the system.
Swapping	1) Utilitarian: (a) affordability 2) Hedonic: (a) affiliation. 3) Ethical: (a) avoid waste.
Eco-sustainable	1) Utilitarian: (a) perceived quality; (b); safety. 2) Hedonic: (a) affiliation; (b) self expression and differentiation; (c); aesthetical research (d); nostalgia (e); being up to date with fashion. 3) Ethical: (a) environmental friendly life-style.
Fair trade	1) Utilitarian: (a) affordability; (b) perceived quality. 2) Hedonic: (a); affiliation (b); aesthetical research. 3) Ethical: (a) environmental friendly life-style; (b) solidarity; (c) distance from the system.

Among the motivations the **hedonic** ones are numerically prevalent. We decided to re-codify them into the following categories: affiliation; self expression and differentiation; being up to date with fashion; aesthetical research, nostalgia and treasure hunting.

**Affiliation** recurs in all the four souls of ethical fashion. It is related to the social aspects of consumption such as sharing styles and objects with reference groups (Tauber 1972); sharing a playful experience with friends (Arnold, Reynolds, 2003); meeting other people and

socializing (Roux, Guiot, 2008); symbolically maintaining relationships with family members and communicating with other people having similar interests (Westbrook, Black 1985).

**Self expression and differentiation** mainly recur in eco-sustainable and in second-hand fashion. They are related to the desire to assert one's own personality and to display a unique and original way of being through unconventional garments (Roux, Guiot, 2008). Moreover, such category is connected to the need of experimenting new selves and styles, playing with one's own body (Westbrook, Black 1985).

**Being up to date with fashion** refers to desire to be fashionable (Westbrook, Black, 1985; Arnold, Reynolds, 2003) wearing vintage clothing and to be up to date following the sustainability trend.

Beyond the gratification experienced when the product fits consumer's taste (Westbrook, Black 1985), **aesthetical research** encompasses the attraction for the creative side of recycled fashion, as well as the fascination for past styles.

**Nostalgia** represents the fascination for products "with a past" or "a story behind" (Roux, Guiot, 2008 ).

**Treasure hunting** refers to the pleasure of bargaining (Tauber, 1972; Westbrook, Black, 1985; Arnold, Reynolds, 2003) finding treasures such as collectibles and luxury brands (Bardhi, Arnould, 2005).

As to the **utilitarian** motivations we distinguished among affordability, perceived quality and safety.

**Affordability** includes the search for fair price (Bardhi, Arnould, 2005), the desire to spend less and to buy more for the same budget (Roux, Guiot, 2008 ).

The research highlights that ethical garments and accessories are chosen thanks to their higher **perceived quality**. Such quality results from the employing of untreated raw materials and a greater care for the productive process, in which traditional or handcrafted know-how may be included

The issue of **safety** emerges only for some eco-fashion consumers concerned about the harmfulness of chemicals for the skin.

A quite wide array of **ethical** motivations emerges from the interviews: the adherence to an environmental friendly life-style, the drive to avoid waste, solidarity, distance from system.

The **adherence to an environmental friendly life-style** emerges as a common trait among the different souls of ethical fashion ((Dickson, Littrell,1997; Dickson, 2000; Bovone, Mora, 2007)

**Avoiding waste** can be interpreted as a way to behave ethically as not polluting the environment discarding old clothes (Roux, Guiot, 2008). However, avoiding waste is sometimes a way to avoid feeling guilty about discarding used clothes. Furthermore, accordingly to literature, products can also be recycled within family circles (Bardhi, Arnould, 2005).

**Solidarity** and generally altruistic values emerge as drivers for fair trade products consumption. Consumers are willing to pay more for clothing produced respecting working conditions and helping undeveloped countries (Dickson, 1999, Dickson, Littrell, 1997)

Finally, **distance from the system** refers to the desire to escape the conventional as well as to distance from fashion and consumer society (Roux, Guiot, 2008 ).

About the research limits, the first one is innate in the qualitative type of research. Indeed the results are just evidences collected on a very limited number of people, and, therefore, should be validated by further research. Moreover, our study focused only on the motivations leading to the choice of ethical fashion, leaving out all the other steps of the consumer behaviour process.

## **6 Managerial implications**

In UK expenditure on ethical goods and services has grown almost threefold from 1999 to 2008 (Co-operative Bank, 2009); the findings (Auger et ali., 2007) of a 2005 survey conducted by Global Market Institute (GMI) across a wide range of countries including the United States, United Kingdom, India, Australia, Canada, and countries throughout Europe reveal that more than half the interviewed consumers would be prepared to pay more for organic, environmentally friendly, or fair-trade products. However, despite their continuous growth in the last years, ethical consumers still represent a niche in the market. Nevertheless, the findings of our study confirm that ethical fashion consumers are willing to pay a premium price for ethical products and may be seen as a very interesting “new” market for existing corporations provided that they are able to “really” behave in an ethical way and to afford the costs of such behaviour. Indeed such products are perceived with a higher quality because of the certified raw materials (like the organic cotton) and the manufacturing techniques (like the natural dying for clothes and tanning for leather objects).

Companies willing to adhere to such productive standards entering the market of ethical fashion should warrantee and communicate the high quality of their products in order to satisfy consumers’ expectations.



Moreover, our respondents have shown an high propensity to speak with friends and acquaintances about their ethical commitments and their ethical purchase. Accordingly, ethical companies could stimulate the sense of affiliation and the desire to share experiences and products, as well as the circulations of ideas both in the real and in the virtual world. Ethical brands could foster the spreading of word of mouth communication, through appropriate in store communication and organizing seminars and events, and also through the support of blogs, forums and the presence in social networks.

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