

# Promoting sustainable consumption in consumer-to-consumer interactions

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## ABSTRACT

Customers buy plastic-wrapped products which contribute to harming the environment. The focus of current research is those aspects of sustainable consumption, which contribute to the increasing number of consumer choices based on the principles of sustainability. More specifically the research aims at understanding those consumer groups that spread information about sustainable buying decisions.

The aim of the research is to find answers to these questions:

1. How can customers be influenced to make more conscious purchasing decisions?
2. What are the best influencing tools to reach consumers?
3. Who inspires consumers to choose different products?

To answer these questions, a quantitative method will be used, in the form of a questionnaire. Also, measuring the effectiveness of influencing tools on a scale from 1-10. Participants will be recruited through social media channels.

The researcher believes that age groups are influenced by different tools. Research also shows that customers are often considerably influenced by other customers who speak out about the importance of sustainability. This factor must be considered.

The research aims at identifying those consumer groups which play the most influential role in advancing sustainability among other consumers. It will support customers on personal changes and showcase the most effective influencing tools for each age group.

## 1. Introduction

In this study, the researcher aims to discover the context of customer-customer interactions in sustainable consumption.

Sustainable consumption has become an emerging field of research. In advance to big data collection and the ability to analyse them helps researching and analysing sustainable consumption (Wang et al, 2019).

In addition, not only sustainable consumption, but the personal behaviour of customers towards sustainable consumption is indeed important since it has a significant impact on the changes towards a sustainable life.

Customers' personal changes have been examined as well, besides customers' influence on others. Changes in customer consumption are interesting as they may be influenced and changed in a positive or negative way. Consumption is a big question because nowadays the average consumption has increased, and customers have neglected being sustainable and now the Earth and the population face its consequences (Wiedmann et al, 2020)

## **2. Theory**

Population growth boosts the consumption of resources, both in person and in household consumption. Nowadays, customers' unsustainable consumption habits are negatively impacting the environment (Pilgrimiené et al., 2020).

It is important to speak about the negativity and problems in connection of unsustainable living. Communication is a key tool to use when a problem should be discussed, or a story to be told.

In sustainable consumption, communication has an essential role. Sustainability communication is a great tool to underline the importance of sustainable consumption. Still, sustainable consumption is an individual behaviour change (Fischer et al, 2021).

Consumers buying behaviour is related to the consumption of the needed goods and services to personal satisfaction. Different kind of factors influence the purchasing and decision-making process of customers. Besides the factors of purchasing behaviour, preferred brands, shopping habits, other factors influence customers as well, for example, social, personal factors (A, 2019).

Customers can feel engaged in products and services as well. It is important to compose customer engagement into sustainable consumption. Engagement is a key strategic tool when it is about promoting consumer behaviour. Customers tend to be more engaged to objects emotionally, meaning that customer engagement can advance beneficial changes in consumer behaviour (Pilgrimiené et al., 2020).

Considering that customers are influenced by social and personal factors underlines that customer-to-customer interaction is a possible way of influencing each other to have more sustainable consumption habits.

Customer-to-customer interactions have been examined by Jungi & Yoo (2016). The two researchers have examined both negative and positive interactions. They found that when customers are experiencing good customer service from another person, they try to keep in touch with them (Jungi & Yoo, 2016).

The fact that customers are able to be influenced through services' means, that positive mentality could be pushed through these channels to reach customers. On the other hand, as customers do like other customer's actions, it underlines the importance of the interaction between customers, which establishes the niche for this research, to find how customers impact customers and promote each other for sustainable consumption.

Sustainable consumption has gained assiduous attention and became a meaningful research area. However, this field is still in its inception (Quoquab & Mohammad, 2020). Still, there are enough research and knowledge which helps the researcher in further studies related to this research area.

### **3. Influence**

Social media has a high influencing efficiency, which can lead to social responsibility (Simeone & Scarpato, 2020). We have all experienced the influence of a seen advertisement or a story read about someone else's experience. Let it be about anything, but the context, the feeling came through and were so strong to make us act in a certain way, based on the arouse we felt from that interaction.

Customer-to-customer interactions have increased and strengthened. Customer interactions have gained its effectiveness through the ability of being connected to each other via online media more than ever before (Blazevic et al, 2013).

### **4. Methodology**

To expand the research, qualitative and quantitative research methods will be used to gather primary data. Primary data are from the origin of the source (Sileyew, 2019).

For qualitative information, a case study has been done to investigate consumer-to-consumer interactions.

Case study as a qualitative research method enables the researcher to conduct in-depth research in the affected area. The concept of research must be understood to make an effective case study. The researcher must be aware of the aims as well. Specific checklist for case studies helps the researcher conduct the study properly, fulfilling all needed steps (Rashid et al., 2019).

More primary data were collected through the quantitative data collection. The questionnaire is a great tool to reach participants (Sileyew, 2019). Inside the questionnaire a Likert scale have been also inserted to measure the effectiveness of each influencing tool, measure the effectiveness of customer-to-customer interactions.

### **5. Research findings**

#### ***Questionnaire***

The questionnaire was conducted with the help of the social media platform called, Facebook. There were 201 numbers of participants.

The first section has been related to sustainability. Twenty questions were asked in the survey to obtain information about customer interactions and promote sustainability. A Likert scale was also used to measure their impact.

Secondly the researcher delegated the questions on the fields of customers impacting each other.

In this section, questions were asked about whether customers are impulse buyers, are they affected by others during consumption, or have they changed anything because someone has affected them so much. On the other hand, the researcher wanted to know, what and how are impacting customers.

Furthermore, two questions were based on the influence of customer on someone else and their impact.

The fourth section looked at the impact of customers on others. This section is customer-centered, who try publicly or have the courage to talk about their personal lifestyle changes through social media platforms. 4 questions were related to this topic, asking about knowing anyone who is known by the public and reaches other customers with their personal advice, and if yes, who are these customers and on which platforms have they met with these people. Furthermore, to measure the effectiveness of their impact, a Likert scale has been established to measure it.

Finally, some background information was requested to facilitate the researcher's ability to group responses with demographic information.

Regarding the participants out of 201, 75% were women, 24% men and 1% other gender. The participants were from a wide range of ages still most of the participants were between 40-50.

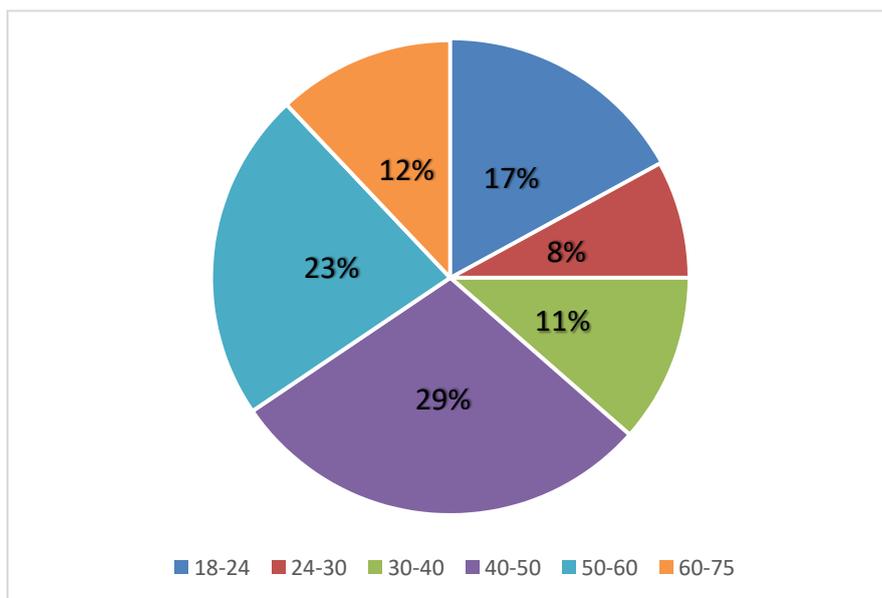
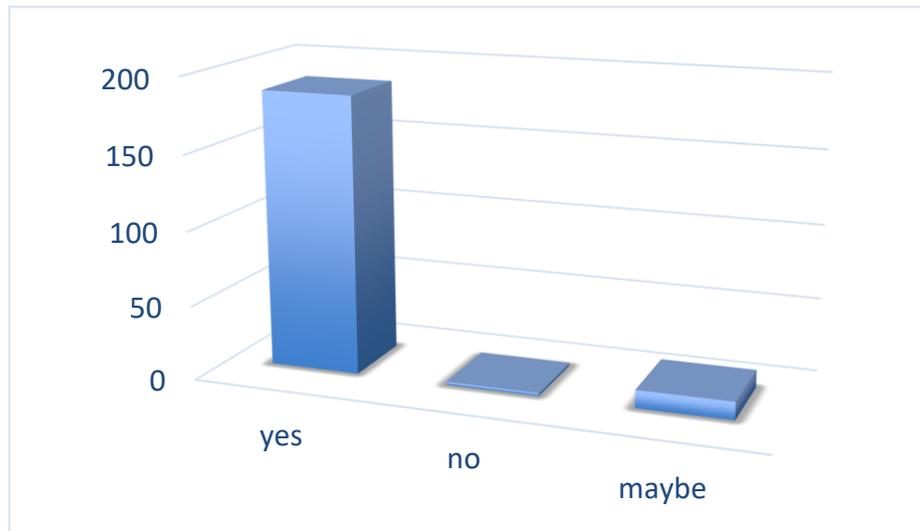


Figure 1, self-made

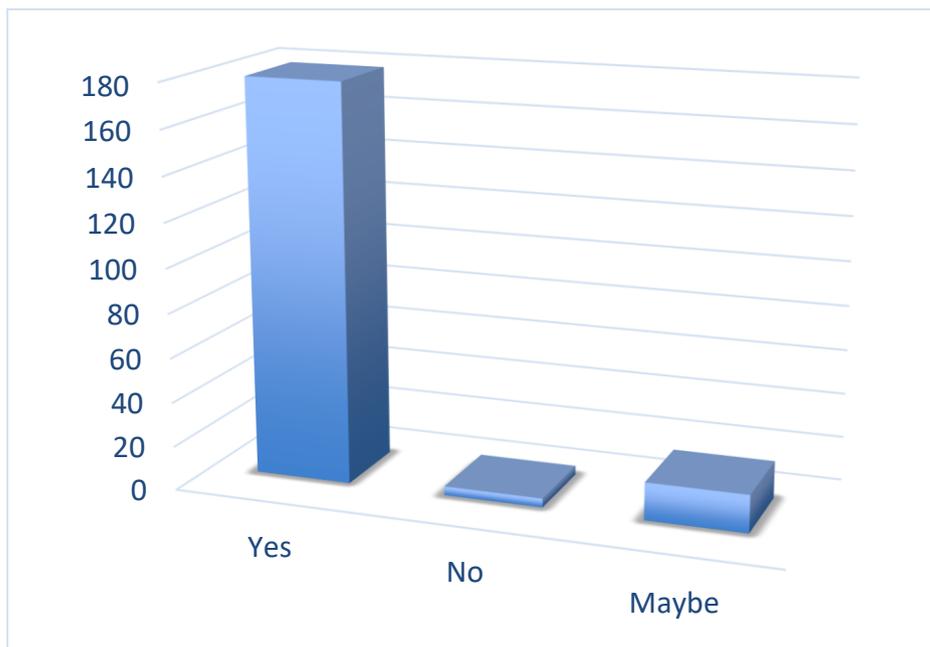
In relation to the occupation of the participants has a full-time work, with 61% and in relation to the place of life is the capital with 60%.

The first question was about the thought of conscious consumption. The researcher wanted to know whether customers were aware of the conscious use. Most of the participants chose the answer yes, there is conscious consumption, which underlines the importance of conscious consumption and the fact that customers should know about it and it underlines that customers know about this terminology.



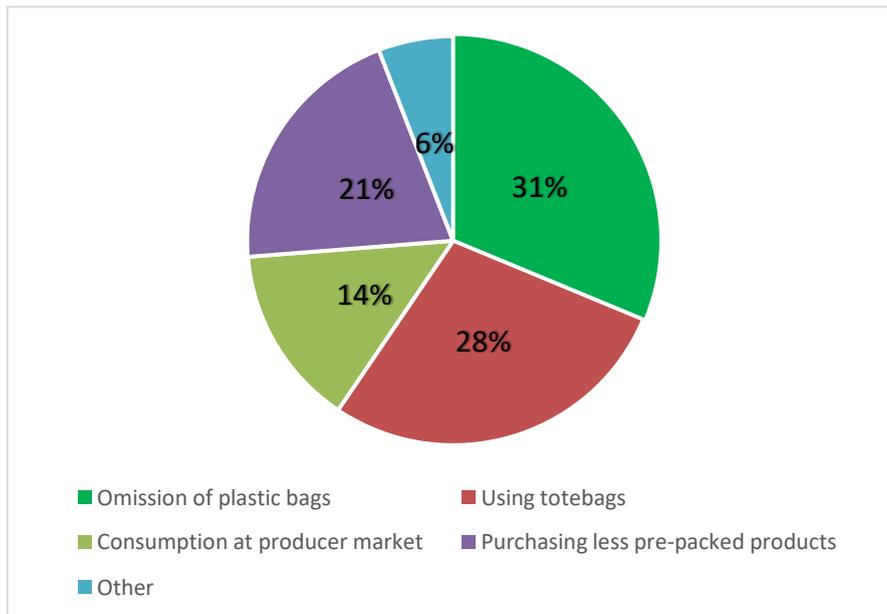
**Figure 2, self-made**

The next question was about, the inner call for customers to be more conscious and do they take in mind sustainability. 179 participants said that there is a call for them to be more conscious. It means customers are aware of and motivated to make changes. Which is a positive sign towards customers' opinion.



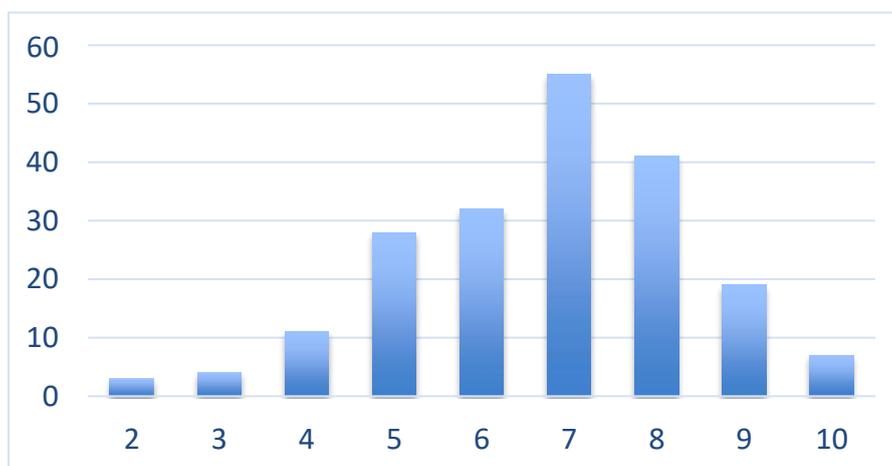
**Figure 3, self-made**

The next question in the survey was about the changes that consumers have already made in their consumption patterns. 31% had made a big change, the omission of plastic bags which is an easy yet helpful decision. As discussed before, plastic bags and one of the most damaging for the environment. Close to that in percentage is using tote bags, which is a replacement of plastic bags, providing safer carriage of the products in an environmentally friendly way.



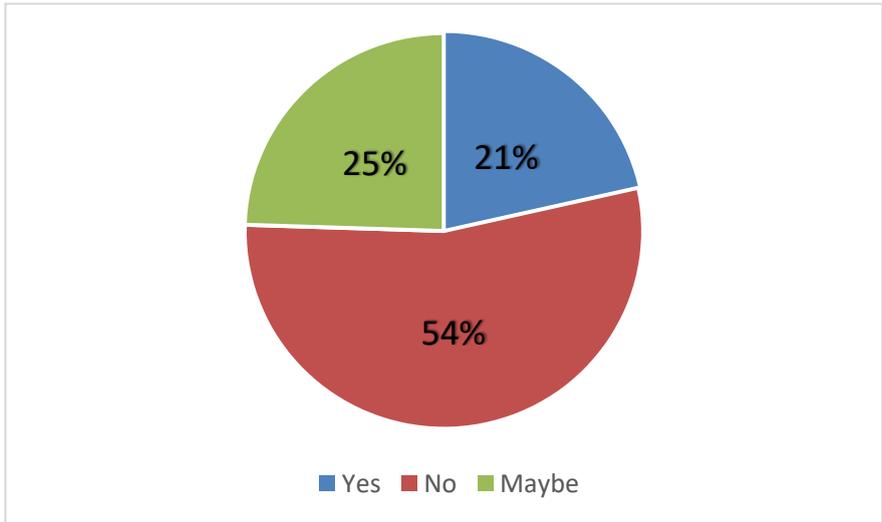
**Figure 4, self-made**

Continuing the questions, as mentioned in the methodology section the researcher indicated Likert scales to measure the impact on customers. The first scale was to measure how much do customers consider themselves as conscious consumers. The examination of the scale, number of efficiencies and number of responses to these numbers is relatively high. This reveals that customers not just care about the environment, but they do act as well.



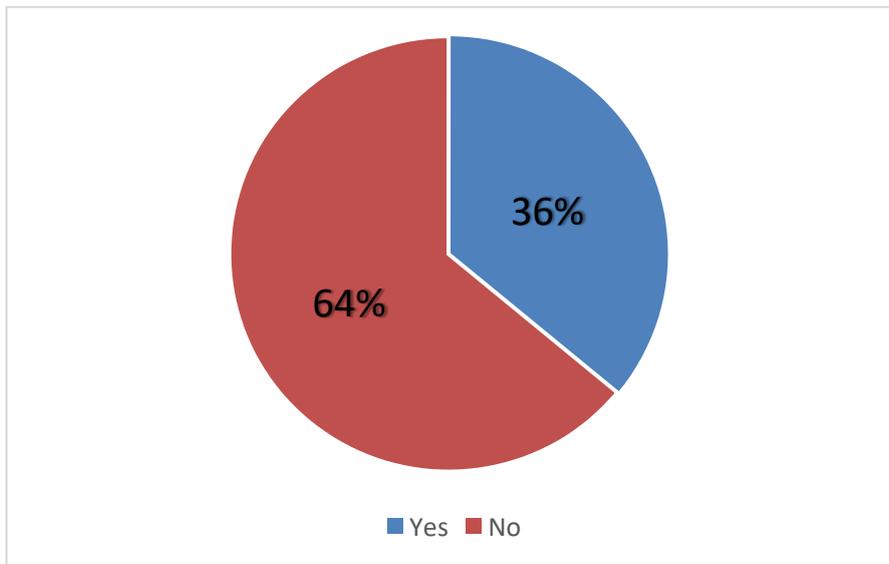
**Figure 5, self-made**

The following question is, do customers consider themselves as impulsive customers have revealed that customers with 54 percent states that they are not impulsive customers. Even though 25 percent answered with a “maybe” which is a high percentage. This can show that some customer may not accept that they are impulsive customer.



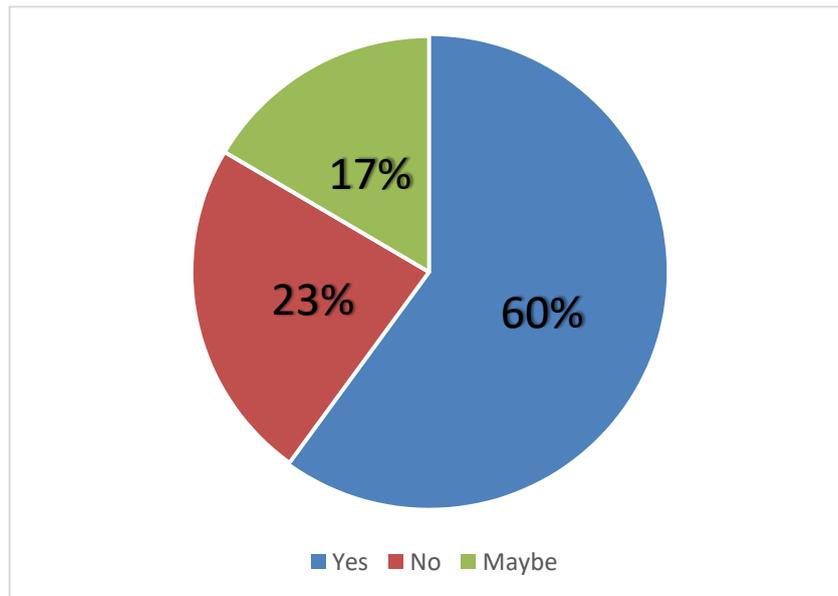
**Figure 6, self-made**

Then, to find out if customers are impacted by others a question was asked regarding this area. So, the question has about been customers impacted by others during consumption. Looking at the chart, customers say they are not affected by others, which is a controversial response compared to before and after responses.



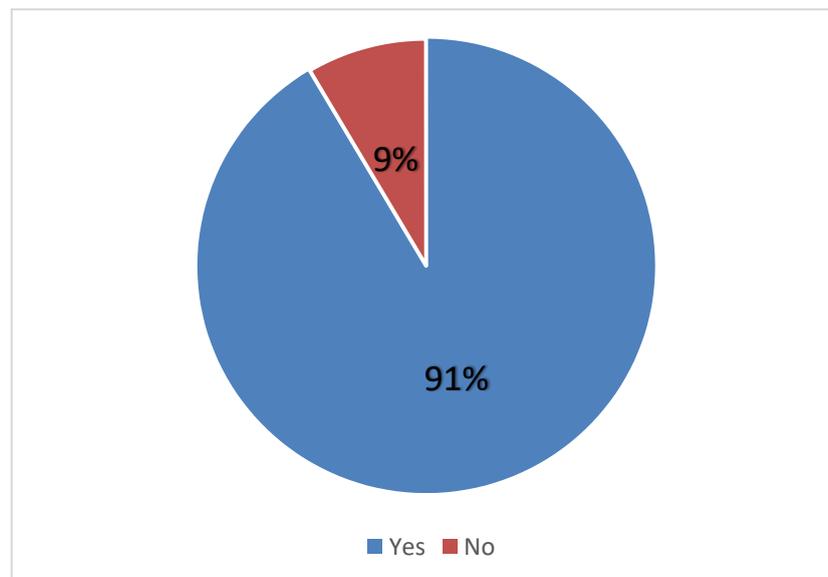
**Figure 7, self-made**

With respect to the last question, the following is about the changes consumers have made to their consumption because someone or something has influenced them. The answers are mainly yes, and it shows customers can be influenced by others.



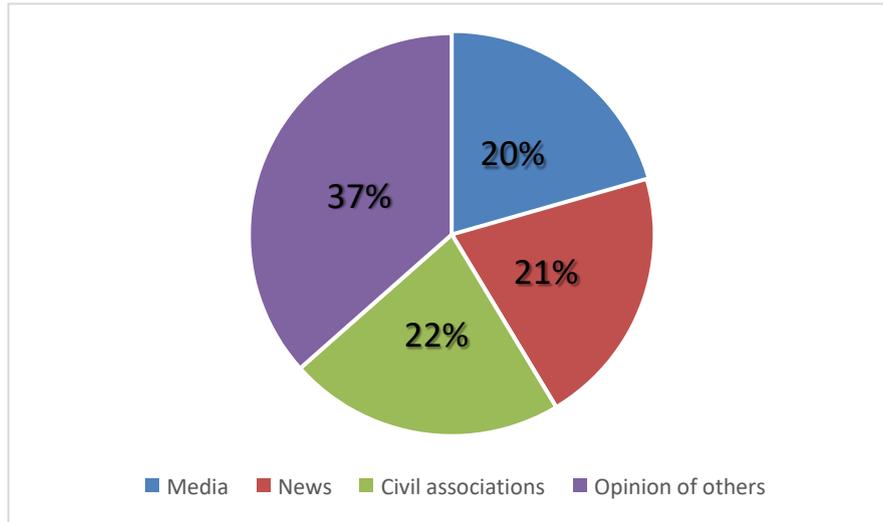
**Figure 8, self-made**

The next question helped to reveal if customers' changes were in a positive direction. Fortunately, 91% of participants changed their habits on a positive basis.



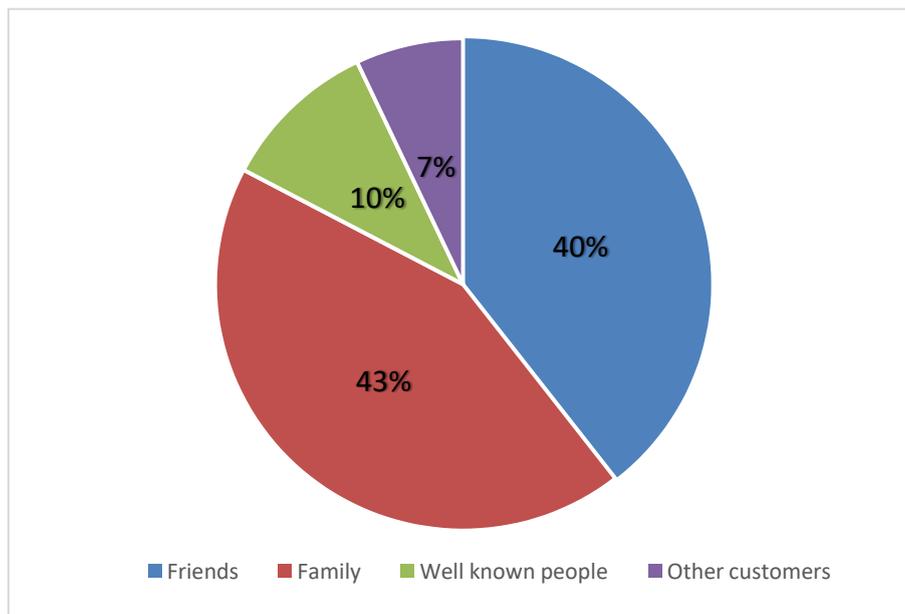
**Figure 9, self-made**

The next question is to get a glimpse into what is impacting customers. 37% said that the opinion of others is the most influential tool that has an impact on them, then associations have an enormous impact on customers as well. News and media are close to each other, both with high scores, as they are excellent tools as well, when used appropriately.



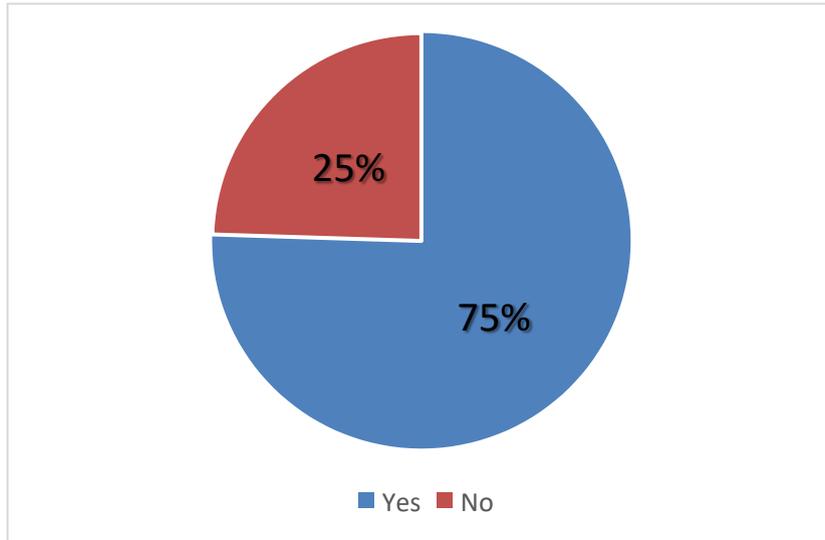
**Figure 10, self-made**

Then the question was who affects the customers. Perhaps it is not a surprise that family influences most others, then friends. The two have a great importance of influence and it is normal that these people influence us because they are the closest to us. There may be an overlap between the answers as participants may choose more answers, which is why the two percentages are close to each other.



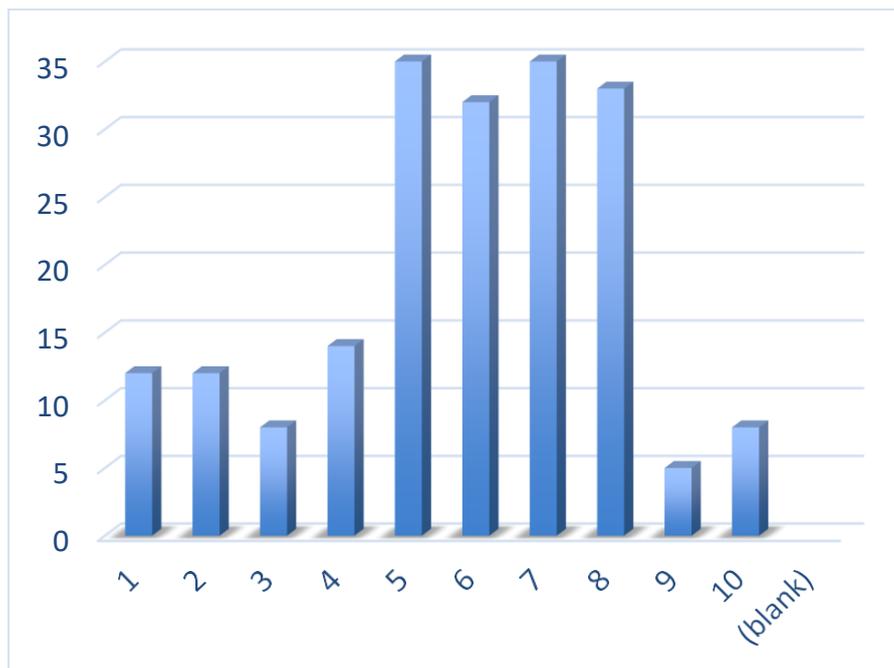
**Figure 11, self-made**

To determine whether participants influenced others, the next question showed that yes, they influenced others to have different consumption changes.



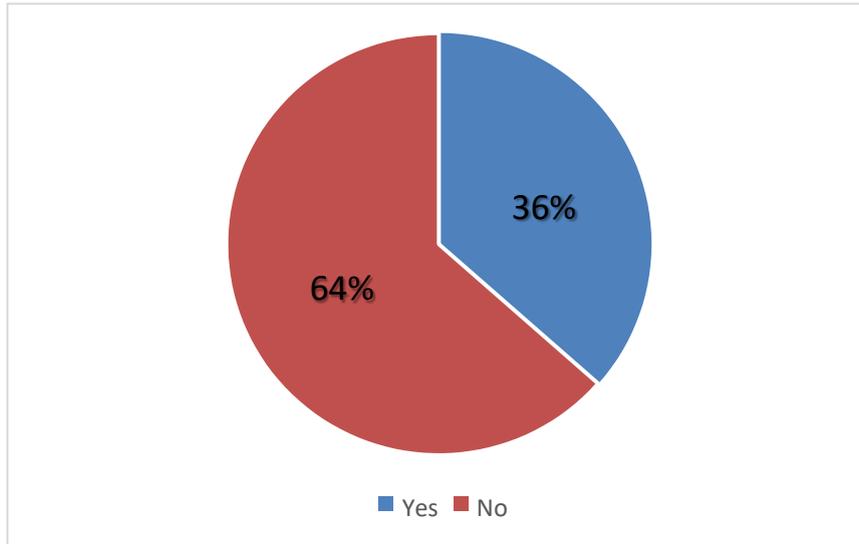
**Figure 12, self-made**

To measure the effectiveness of their impact shows positivity. The numbers and the number of responses show a strong impact, and we can hope that they will last as long.



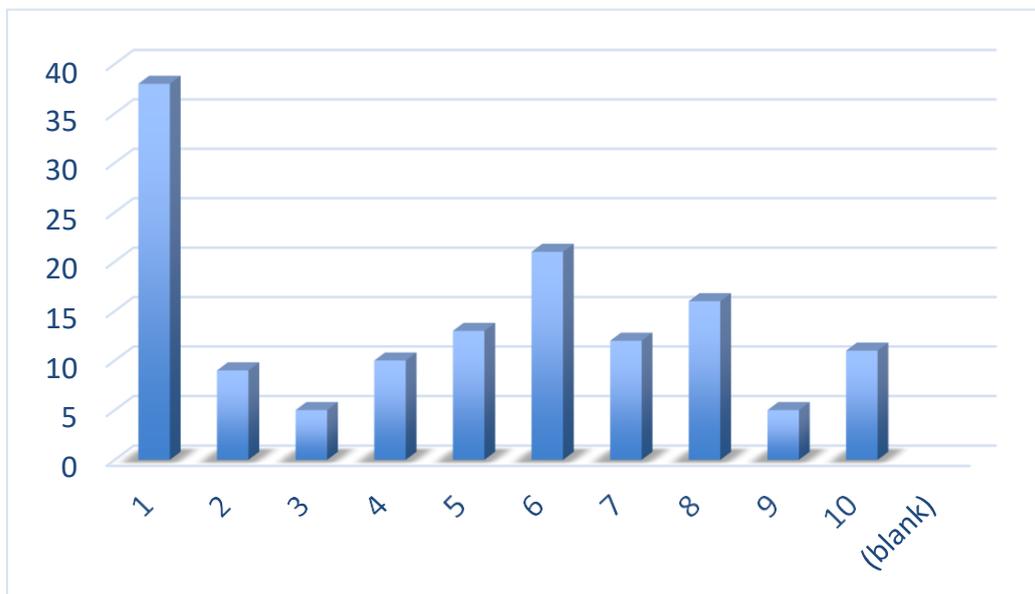
**Figure 13, self-made**

In relation to the case study, the researcher asked whether customers know anyone who speaks publicly about conscious consumption. With 64 percent the participants answered they do not know anyone who does anything like that.



**Figure 14, self-made**

The researcher expected different outcome of the question before. Still with this question, it was to measure the impact of the influence of others. The answer in the scale indicates the connection to the previous question. Even though 36 percent received an impact from others, the effectiveness was so low, that the scale reveals that others, who publicly talk about being eco-friendly is low, and it only reaches the impact level of 1.



**Figure 15, self-made**

The final question related to platforms where customers may meet with other customers. The platforms show that Facebook is the most used place to meet with others and then personal communication is the most effective platform to meet with these customers. The researcher thinks that it is almost obvious that this tow has received the highest rating. First, Facebook is used by most of the examined customers based on the case study. On the other hand, personal communication is always different from anything else. It is useful, impactful, and effective.

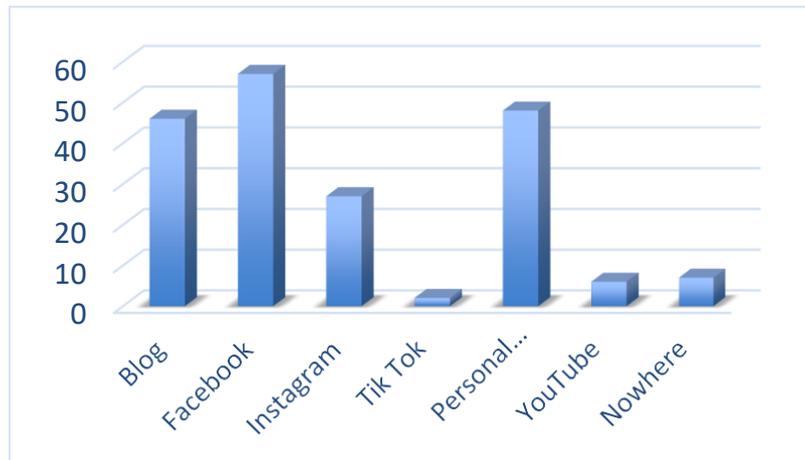


Figure 16, self-made

## 6. Case study

With the tool, case study, the goal is to examine customers that have a social impact on other customers to have a more sustainable lifestyle and consumer habits. The researcher herself follows some customers, who are not influencers, but customers who are highlighting the importance of this area. The researcher wanted to know what other customers think, that are they listening to them as well-known customers. Through the research one question was in connection with the case study: Who are the customers, who publicly reach others through different platforms and help other customers in lifestyle changes.

Not all answers suggested a specific person, more were about the Facebook groups of which they are part, but unfortunately not mentioning the groups.

Luckily, some names came up in the questionnaire. These names are useful because these people are determinative in a sustainable way of life, and they do promote this way of living and give suggestions to other customers. These names were mentioned by the fillers: Alekosz, Juhász Bence, Ökoanyu-Nagy Réka, Antal Éva (Vászonzsákoslány), Mengyán Eszter, Németh Csilla, Tóth Andi (Háztartásom hulladék nélkül), David Attenborough, Dr. Jane Goodall, Sárdi Barbara, Keleti Andrea, Puskás Peti and his Fiancée Bogi, Pocsaji Csilla, ZeroWastener, Istenes Bence, Kump Edina (Hulladékmentes.hu)

Therefore, to narrow down the names, the researcher decided to work with 4 customers, who were mentioned by more fillers. Öko-Anyu, Éva Antal, Pocsaji Csilla, Edina Kump (Hulladékmentes.hu).

The four customers were analysed by which platforms they use, to see where they can be found, and which are the most used platforms by them compared to the answers the survey participants give. On the other hand, they were analysed by the number of followers, subscribers they have and how much reactions do they receive from their followers.

### *Ökoanyu, Réka Nagy:*

Réka Nagy is a journalist, editor, and has been working in the field for over twenty years. For 6 years she had her own headline in the famous Hungarian newspaper called, *Nők Lapja*. After that she had

her publications in different papers and started her own blog and write about what she loves. She was motivated, and interested in her own job, in the field of sustainability and eco-consciousness that she wrote 4 books. All based on being eco. Besides her blog, web page, she has her Facebook page and Instagram profile. All used for one purpose, using the tools of various online media appearances. Her posts on Facebook are like the ones on Instagram. One thing that differs, that on Facebook, she tends to post her blog posts, while on Instagram she is more likely to post about tips and tricks, DIY ideas and shows products and gives recommendations.

### ***Éva Antal***

Éva is also known by the name, Vászonzsákoslány. She had an interview with Index, where she explained, how she was able to collect such a low amount of waste, that she filled only a jar with it. She has a passion for keeping her personal waste at a low level. On Instagram and on YouTube, she gives advice, she talks about the ideas, her decisions and tries to prove that a lifestyle like this, does not mean having a less joyful life.

### ***Csilla Pocsaji***

Csilla has introduced a zero-waste shop to the market. Back in 2019, they wanted to create something unique, which supports their mission, having a greener household, and supports others as well, on creating a sustainable lifestyle. On the 9th of November, in 2019, they have opened their store at Békéscsaba, under the name Tebe shop, where Tebe means the tree of life. After a year, Csilla, have applied into the TV show, called Between Sharks, which is a Hungarian tv show, created to introduce new investments. She had been successful, and one of the “sharks”, Toman Szabina, has invested into her idea, shop, and became part-owner of the grocery shop. Besides the shop, Csilla has taken the advantages of social media platforms and started to talk about sustainability, life changing habits. On Facebook she has a page, for the shop, but she is the one who posts about tips, DIY ideas. She was passionate and started her Tik Tok channel as well. On Tik Tok, with the uniqueness of creating videos, she creates meaningful videos, full of ideas, tips, DIY ideas and answers questions, regarding her personal lifestyle changes, questions she may not have answered before, and so on.

### ***Edina Kump (hulladékmentes.hu)***

Edina is an Environmental Researcher. She had been the first person to create Hungary’s first webpage dedicated to zero waste products, and education about sustainable, zero-waste lifestyle. This page has been available since 2016. The webpage Hulladékmentes.hu is filled with knowledge. Visitors can read about zero-waste lifestyle, household, conscious consumption and many other useful information and knowledge is on the page. Edina does courses for customers; besides, she can be invited to do lectures, conferences in this area. For additional information and for different target groups as well, she has an Instagram page, where she posts about her lifestyle, recipes, and tricks, also she can be found on Pinterest.

## **7. Platforms**

The platforms used by them are not always the same. Some of them focuses mainly on their blog, some tries to be present on Facebook and Instagram, and some have already opened for new social media platforms to reach their target group, for example Tik Tok.

### ***Blogs***

First, focus on blogs. Ökoanyu and Edina Kump has webpages where they post blog posts, articles.

Okoanyumag.hu is the page of Réka, where she writes about more than just sustainability. The has officially became a magazine. The site has different categories, such as news, households, children, plastic-free, climate, and podcast. She writes regularly and has the page updated. On the side of interactions, not much can be seen. Readers can vote up or down on each article, but the results cannot be seen. The researcher assumes, the results influence the articles which can be seen on the landing page (Nagy, 2021c).

Edina has her page called Hulladékmentes.hu. This page is her compact webpage where her blog can be reached and read as well. Her blog has different subcategories, so readers can easily access the needed article they would like to read. The page is also the web-shop for zero-waste products, and tools, and other information can be found on the site, such as lectures, course applications, information about them end so on (Hulladékmentes.hu, 2016)

### ***Facebook***

The platform that most of these consumers use is Facebook. All four are active on the platform.

Ökoanyu, has 21 000 followers. She usually posts her articles on her page. She also writes interesting news, gives updates on her personal life, and shares interesting events. On the side of interactions, not all her posts receive the same amount of likes and comments. The most likes are usually on posts which are about something new, something eye catching or outstanding. Based on the likes, her post usually reaches people around 70 to even 300. Some posts are also shared by readers, which helps her posts reach others as well. The average shares are around two to 25 shares, which shows that readers to interact and react to the posts and want to reshare the read information. The comment section is not filled with offending comments. Most comments are supporting and harmonious ones, which encourages the page owner to keep up with her work (Nagy,2021b)

Csilla is officially present under the name of Tebe shop which is her zero-waste store. The page is liked by 6595 people, 6780 people follow them. This may not seem a high number, still examining the site it shows that customers are interested in the page. Photos are liked and loved by customers. Not many comments and shares are on the posts, but customers do interact with them (Tebe, 2021).

Edina's page, Hulladékmentes.hu is the most liked out from the 3 pages, with 45 310 K and followed by 46 723 K. Even though these numbers are high, the interactions on the posts compared to the followers are low. Posts are usual and up-to date based on new products in the shop, new trends, available courses (Kump, 2021).

Éva as Vászonzsákoslány has 3100 followers and her Facebook page has a five-star rating. She shares content about her daily life, in pictures, videos. She posts frequently and the average reaction to her posts in likes is around 60, and average two to three comments and shares are on her posts (Antal, 2021a).

### ***Instagram***

Moreover, the other used social media platform is Instagram. This platform has a different method to share information. Pictures are in the focus point and text is an addition which can give expanded information to the post.

Ökoanyu's username is @okoanyu. She has 3981 followers. First her profile was a personal user profile, later she started to post about tips, some personal insights, DIY (Do it yourself) ideas, suggestions, and some product promotions, suggestions. Her photos are appreciated with likes and comments (Nagy, 2021a).

Éva Antal is present on Instagram as well, @vaszonzsakoslany. She has 20 100 K followers. Her photos are liked by thousands of people. Her usual likes are around 2000. She usually shares videos of cooking, suggesting recipes as she is vegan, and usually suggest useful tips. Comments are usually appreciating her, ask for additional tips. It is good to see, that only some people leave hate comments on her site (Antal, 2021).

Csilla has her personal private profile, but Tebe- hulladékmentes bolt (@tebe\_hulladekmentes\_bolt) can be found on Instagram. The posts are almost the same as the ones published on Facebook. Tips, DIY ideas, information about the store are posted with pictures and texts. Here, the likes compared to the amount of likes on Facebook is higher. Their profile has 3797 followers, and the posts are liked by 50-150 people on average. Here as well, no hate comments can be read, which shows, that people follow these pages, profiles because they are interested in this topic, and would love to hear about them (Tebe,2021b).

Edina's page can be found under the name @hulladekmentes. The posts in some terms are the same as on Facebook. Some posts have different themes, but her profile is the same in terms of subjects of the posts as the ones mentioned above. Her profile has 16 500 followers, and the average likes higher in average, around 80-200. Regarding the comments, the same conclusion can be drawn that no hate comment can be found (Kump, 2021b).

### ***TikTok***

Further, another platform which the researcher has examined is TikTok. TikTok is a platform which allows people to create videos short videos including songs, texts, and effects on the videos (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019). Csilla and Éva are on Tik Tok, with the same aim as on Facebook and Instagram.

Csilla has a private profile, but has another one representing her store, under the username, @tebeshop. She creates videos about the same categories posted on Facebook or Instagram, but because of the uniqueness of this platform, the videos provide different kind of feelings, and the information can

reach the watcher differently. She has 67 000 followers and 2.6 million likes in sum on her videos. Most of her videos are watched by thousands of users. Here, she receives hate comments, because Tik Tok shows videos to everyone, viewers do not have to follow the profile. In the opinion of the researcher, Csilla does a great job. She does react to these comments, but in a creative way, protecting her thoughts and trying to calm the hate commenters down (Pocsaji,2021).

Lastly Éva is on this platform with 11 videos, 6972 followers and with overall 66 900 likes. Her videos are published on Instagram as well. These videos are about her lifestyle, ideas, and routines. The comment section is sometimes filled with hatred, but mostly the comments are supporting ones, or ask for support, suggestions, which may have not been answered in the video (Antal, 2021b).

### ***YouTube***

In addition, the researcher has examined one more platform, YouTube.

Vászonzsákoslány, Éva is on YouTube, she calls herself a youtuber as well. She has 8 playlists for different categories, such as Podcasts, Veganism, Q&A, DIY, Zero-waste, and menstruation, living, her favourites and a list about her performances in other videos. All in all, she has 63 videos, 37 800 followers. The videos are watched by thousand and liked as well. On YouTube viewers can dislike, but not many dislikes have been given to her videos. An interesting fact is the comment section. Under some videos there is the ability to comment, but under videos, which have a bit offending, or not so common content, the comment section is blocked. It is understandable, that she has decided, not to let viewers comment (Antal, 2019).

Lastly, on this platform Tebe shop is also present, they have 529 subscribers and 6 videos, related to this topic. Their YouTube profile is based on the same topics as on their other platforms (Pocsaji, 2020).

In conclusion, these customers focus on the zero and low waste lifestyle. They use various types of platforms to reach other customers and influence and promote them to have lifestyle changes. The platforms used are webpages, blogs, Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, YouTube and Pinterest. All of them has a great number of followers, who interact with their posts, thoughts, videos. It is a pleasure to see, their profiles are not filled with hate and the customers who follow them are really interested in their job.

## **8. Conclusion**

Regarding the research questions the researcher was able to answer all three questions by the usage of both survey and case study.

In summary, customers know about sustainability and mindful consumption. They care about this, but what they receive as an impact from other customers, externally is still not enough for them to change.

We know that they are aware of the environmental problems we face and that customers can be and are influenced to make conscious decisions.

The most commonly used tools include media, personal communication and Facebook. They are most influenced by family and friends.

We can say that customers who speak publicly about consciousness is great. They are able to reach many other customers. Perhaps they should work on their methods to reach out to others because the impact of their work is weak even though they reach numerous people on social media.

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