Ethical consumption? There’s an app for that: Exploring the role of crowd sourced mobile technologies in everyday consumption practices

by

Naomi Horst

A Thesis
presented to
The University of Guelph

In partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Geography

Guelph, Ontario, Canada

© Naomi Horst, April, 2015
ABSTRACT

ETHICAL CONSUMPTION? THERE’S AN APP FOR THAT: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF CROWD SOURCED MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES IN EVERYDAY CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

Naomi Horst
University of Guelph, 2015
Advisor: Professor Roberta Hawkins

It has been suggested that the advent of new mobile phone application technologies that consumers can consult while shopping, and advances in web platforms towards user-generated information, may help to close the attitude-behaviour gap cited in ethical consumption research. This thesis explores this potential through a case study of the Buycott app and evaluates Buycott’s potential to act as a source of information for consumers and to influence change in consumer behaviour. The research employed a combination of methods including content analysis, surveys, focus groups, journals and one key informant interview. Participants were found to interact with and interpret the app’s information in complex ways, often resulting in a distrust of user-generated information, and made constant negotiations between the recommendations of the app and other factors. This study concludes that the complex interaction of technologies and everyday consumption practices requires further exploration and provides recommendations on the future directions of consumer apps.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Roberta Hawkins, for your continued support and enthusiasm in my research. Your guidance and invaluable reviews have helped me to produce a thesis I am proud of. I am also greatly appreciative of your confidence in my work and for introducing me to the imposter syndrome. I am also extremely grateful to my committee member, Dr. Jennifer Silver, for providing me with unique perspectives and support. Working with these two women has been an extremely rewarding process. I would also like to thank my external review, Dr. John Smithers, your comments and insights have strengthened this thesis.

In addition, I would like to thank my many colleagues who made this process immensely more enjoyable. I only hope I didn’t distract you too much. In particular, I would like to thank Sloane and Danielle for their help collecting the data for this thesis, and those friends who helped test, edit, and improve my work.

On a more personal note, thank you to everyone in my life who inspired and encouraged me. First, I would like to thank all of the women in my family for being such strong female role models. I’d like to thank my Mom for being my inspiration and teaching me the important lesson that it’s never too late to do better, fight harder, and create the life you want. Thank you to my Grandma Joan, for always supporting and encouraging my love of learning, since my first subscription to Chicopee and the wonderful (if not overly ambitious) junior Mensa activity book. And of course, thank you to my late Great Grandmother Naomi who inspired and supported us all.

Thank you to my Dad, for fueling me with caffeine, vegetarian lasagna and banana bread, and ensuring I always had someone who was on my team. I cannot thank you enough for your tireless support and your willingness to go out of your way to help me.

I am grateful to my brother, for inspiring me to take my first economics course and challenging me intellectually so that I was always driven to learn more.

And finally, I am so thankful to Derrick, who has worn many hats throughout this process – friend, editor, counselor, partner (in crime) – this would have been a difficult and less fulfilling two years without you.
Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... IV

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ...................................................................................................... III

TABLE OF CONTENTS ......................................................................................................... IV

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................. VII

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................ VIII

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................ 1

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW ................................................................................... 3

2.1 CHARACTERIZATIONS OF ETHICAL CONSUMPTION .............................................. 3
   2.1.1 Ethical Consumption and the Expression of Personal Values and Politics .......... 3
   2.1.2 Ethical Consumption and Consumer Sovereignty ............................................. 4
   2.1.3 Ethical Consumption as boycotting or buycotting ........................................... 5

2.2 CRITIQUES OF ETHICAL CONSUMPTION .................................................................. 6
   2.2.1 Risks of Mainstreaming .................................................................................. 6
   2.2.2 Ethical Consumption as Individual Action ....................................................... 7
   2.2.3 Ethical Consumption as Elitist ...................................................................... 8

2.3 ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOUR GAP ................................................................................... 8

2.4 THE KNOWLEDGE-FIX ............................................................................................ 9
   2.4.1 Role of Technology within the Knowledge-fix .................................................. 10

2.5 CONCLUSION: ETHICAL CONSUMPTION AND THE BUYCOTT APP .................. 10

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN .................................................................................... 12

3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH ............................................................................................ 12
   3.1.1 Study Site: Guelph, Ontario .......................................................................... 12
   3.1.2 The Buycott App ......................................................................................... 13
      3.1.2.1 Purpose of the App ................................................................................ 13
      3.1.2.2 Campaigns ............................................................................................ 14
      3.1.2.3 Use of the App ...................................................................................... 17

3.2 METHODS ................................................................................................................. 22
   3.2.1 Content Analysis ............................................................................................ 24
   3.2.2 Surveys ........................................................................................................... 24
   3.2.3 Round 1 Focus Groups .................................................................................. 28
   3.2.4 Participant Journals ....................................................................................... 30
   3.2.5 Round 2 Focus Groups .................................................................................. 31
   3.2.6 Key Informant Interview ............................................................................... 33
CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS I: PRE-APP USE ANALYSIS .......................................................... 38

4.1 WHO ARE THE PARTICIPANTS? ................................................................. 38
4.2 ATITUDES TOWARDS ETHICAL CONSUMPTION ........................................ 39
4.3 DEFINING ETHICAL CONSUMPTION ......................................................... 41
4.4 PARTICIPANT BEHAVIOUR ........................................................................ 43
4.5 THE ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOUR GAP .............................................................. 45
4.6 THE ROLE OF INFORMATION IN ETHICAL CONSUMPTION ..................... 45
4.7 SUMMARY OF PRE-APP USE FINDINGS ................................................... 49

CHAPTER 5. FINDINGS II: POST-APP USE ANALYSIS .............................................. 50

5.1 FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS’ ENGAGEMENT WITH INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE APP ................................................................. 50
   5.1.1 Participants’ Reactions to Campaign Information ...................................... 50
5.2 INFLUENCES OF THE BUYCOTT APP ON PARTICIPANTS’ EVERYDAY ETHICAL CONSUMPTION DECISIONS ........................................... 55
   5.2.1 No Change in Behaviour ................................................................. 55
   5.2.2 Changes in Participant Behaviour .................................................. 56
      5.2.2.1 Changes in Shopping Location .................................................. 56
      5.2.2.2 Changes in What Participants Purchased .................................... 57
5.3 BARRIERS TO CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR .................................................. 60
   5.3.1 Lack of Available Alternatives ....................................................... 60
   5.3.2 Price of Ethical Alternatives .......................................................... 62
   5.3.3 Time Required for App Use ............................................................ 63
   5.3.4 Summary of Behaviour Change ...................................................... 64
5.4 PARTICIPANTS’ TRADE-OFFS WITH ETHICAL PRIORITIES .................... 64
   5.4.1 Trade-Offs Based on Competing Priorities .......................................... 64
   5.4.2 Trade-Offs Based on Parent Companies .......................................... 65
   5.4.3 Trade-Offs Based on Social Pressure ............................................... 66
5.5 SUMMARY OF THE INFLUENCES OF THE BUYCOTT APP ON PARTICIPANTS’ EVERYDAY ETHICAL CONSUMPTION DECISIONS ..................... 67
5.6 PARTICIPANTS’ THOUGHTS ON ETHICAL CONSUMPTION AS AN EFFECTIVE ROUTE TO CREATE CHANGE ........................................... 70
   5.6.1 Feelings of Insignificance and the Need for Critical Mass .................... 70
   5.6.2 Complementary Actions .................................................................. 72
   5.6.3 Boycotts vs. Buycotts ..................................................................... 73
REFERENCES

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION .............................................................................................................75

6.1 INFORMATION AND BEHAVIOUR ..................................................................................75

6.1.1 Negotiations between Ethical Priorities and Information ............................................75

6.1.1.1 Competing Ethical Priorities ..................................................................................75

6.1.1.2 Competing Interests ............................................................................................76

6.1.1.3 Trust of Information ............................................................................................76

6.1.1.4 Perceived Impact .................................................................................................77

6.1.2 Avoidance of Information .........................................................................................78

6.2 INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY .............................................................................79

6.3 FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR MOBILE PHONE APPLICATIONS/WEB 2.0 IN ETHICAL CONSUMPTION ..................................................81

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS: CONTRIBUTIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH .....85

7.1 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS ....................................................................................85

7.1.1 How did Participants Engage with the Information provided in the Buycott App? ........85

7.1.2 How did the Buycott app influence participants’ everyday ethical consumption decisions? 86

7.1.3 How did participants negotiate between the app’s recommendations and other factors? 87

7.1.4 In what ways did participants consider ethical consumption an effective route to create change? 88

7.2 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY .............................................................................................88

7.3 FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS...................................................................................89

REFERENCES ..........................................................................................................................91

APPENDICES ...........................................................................................................................98

APPENDIX 1: SURVEY ..............................................................................................................98

APPENDIX 2: HONORARIUM SCHEDULE .............................................................................106

APPENDIX 3: PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTIONS .........................................................................107

APPENDIX 4: ROUND 2 FOCUS GROUPS HANDOUT ............................................................108

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW GUIDE .........................................................................................109
List of Tables

Table 1: Most Popular Campaigns................................................................. 15
Table 2: Campaigns with Monsanto in their Name ........................................ 16
Table 3: Summary of Methodological Framework as it Relates to Research Questions........ 23
Table 4: In-Person Dissemination of Surveys ................................................ 25
Table 5: Online Dissemination of Surveys ...................................................... 25
Table 6: Dates and Sizes of Round 1 Focus Groups........................................ 29
Table 7: Dates and Sizes of Round 2 Focus Groups........................................ 32
Table 8: Example of Coding Process............................................................. 36
List of Figures

Figure 1: Imagery from Buycott Facebook Page ................................................................. 14
Figure 2: Screen while Scanning a Product's Barcode ......................................................... 18
Figure 3: Screen Informing User they're avoiding this Product ............................................ 19
Figure 4: Campaigns Conflicting with Product ................................................................... 19
Figure 5: Campaigns Supporting Product ............................................................................. 20
Figure 6: Screen of Frito Lay's Corporate Family Tree ......................................................... 21
Figure 7: Gender of Survey Respondents and Focus Group Participants ......................... 38
Figure 8: Age of Survey Respondents and Focus Group Participants ................................. 38
Figure 9: Survey Respondents’ Answers to the Question: “How strongly do you agree with the statement 'I am an Ethical Consumer'?” ........................................................................ 40
Figure 10: Survey Respondents' Priorities ........................................................................... 41
Figure 11: Survey Respondents' Participation Levels ......................................................... 44
Figure 12: Focus Group Participants' Participation Levels Indicated in Surveys .................. 44
Figure 13: Responses to Survey Questions Regarding Information Engagement ................ 46
Figure 14: Matrix Results I ................................................................................................. 68
Figure 15: Matrix Results Part II ......................................................................................... 69
Chapter 1. Introduction

The ‘attitude-behaviour gap’ noted in ethical consumption research refers to a contradiction where a large proportion of consumers who state the intention to consume ethically actually do not follow through and purchase ethical products (Boulstridge and Carrigan, 2000; Carrington et al., 2010; Nicholls and Lee, 2006; Papaoikonomou et al., 2011). This gap has been widely researched and often is attributed to either a lack of information or an overload of contradictory information about ethical products (Bray et al., 2011; Kollmus and Agyeman, 2010; Padel and Foster, 2005; Uusitalo and Oksanen, 2004). With the advent of new mobile phone application technologies (i.e., ‘apps’) that consumers can carry and consult while shopping, and advances in web platforms that collect and distribute user-generated (i.e. ‘crowd-sourced’) information, new technologies may be just the tool needed to close the gap between ethical consumption attitudes and behaviours (Watts and Wyner, 2011). This thesis explores the potential for mobile apps to provide information to consumers and tests whether increasing consumer access to information will change their decision-making in terms of ethical consumption.

Specifically, the research draws on just over 200 survey responses, an interview with the Buycott app developer, and focus groups that follow the experiences of 26 participants in Guelph, Ontario who used one specific app – the Buycott app – and examines its potential to close the attitude-behaviour gap. Detailed background on the Buycott app will be provided further on in the thesis, but here it is important to note that it was chosen as the focus of this research because advocates argue that it “puts a world of ethical information about the products you're buying, and the track record of the companies that make them, at your disposal” (Shubber, 2013). Moreover, Buycott is said to “take the legwork out of unearthing sometimes hard-to-find company information, giving consumers a new way to signal their approval of, or opposition to, specific business practices” (CONE Communications, 2013). Through entering their preferences (e.g. no animal testing) and scanning the barcodes of products, consumers are informed through the app which products they should and should not purchase. Literature on the attitude-behaviour gap suggests that this information, presented at the point of purchase, may convince consumers to follow through with their intentions of buying an ethical product, and influence their decision-making.
This thesis aims to evaluate the Buycott app’s potential to act as a source of information for consumers and to influence change in consumer behaviour. Four main research questions were developed to guide and structure this research:

1. How did participants engage with the information provided in the Buycott app?
2. How did the Buycott app influence participants’ everyday ethical consumption decisions?
3. How did participants negotiate between the app’s recommendations and other factors?
4. In what ways did participants consider ethical consumption an effective route to create change?

This thesis contains seven chapters. Chapter two introduces main concepts in ethical consumption literature, including conceptualizations and critiques of ethical consumption. The attitude-behaviour gap is introduced as a key barrier to ethical consumption and debated solutions are discussed. These solutions focus on the role of information and technology in changing consumer behaviour. The methods and analysis used in this study are introduced in chapter three and the Buycott app is introduced as a case study. Methods include content analysis, surveys, two rounds of focus groups, participant journals, and a key informant interview with the app developer. Chapters four and five split the findings of this thesis into two categories: pre-app use findings and post-app use findings. Following these findings, Chapter six connects the results of this study to the literature about information and behaviour, information and technology, and the future directions of mobile phone applications for ethical consumption. Finally, this thesis concludes that although the Buycott app did not mediate significant change to participants’ behaviour, there is potential for mobile phone applications to facilitate everyday ethical consumption practices. This thesis contributes to ethical consumption scholarship by concluding that the attitude-behaviour gap cannot be resolved by providing consumers with more information and further reveals that consumers will negotiate their ethical values in light of and despite the information they are given.
Chapter 2. Literature Review

This section will introduce the concept of ethical consumption as a way of expressing personal values and creating change through the market place, highlight a few key critiques of ethical consumption, introduce the attitude-behaviour gap, the knowledge-fix, and the role of information in consumer decision-making.

2.1 Characterizations of Ethical Consumption

The rise in geographical research on ethics in the 1990s was coined by Smith (1997, 2000) as “the moral turn” and signified an increase in research on responsibility and obligation between people and the environment (Hall, 2011). For some geographers, this meant exploring the idea that the consumption of material items could be an outlet in the expression of moral identity (Hall, 2011). The emergence of ethical consumption as a new research focus within Geography reflects interests in the connection between the materiality of production-consumption processes and their socially and culturally constructed meanings. Ethical consumption has been broadly defined in the Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture as:

“The use of the consumer market for political or ethical purposes…involv[ing] considerations that go beyond the traditional economic perspective of the relationship between the price and material quality of consumer goods. It includes such matters as human and workers' rights, gender equality, use of nature and natural resources, animal treatment, relationships between the developed and developing world (so-called North and South dilemmas), and other related topics that concern values about the politics behind products and the politics of consumption” (Micheletti, 2011).

This definition touches on two key factors: ethical consumption is understood as using the market to create change, and ethical consumption reflects the values and politics of consumers.

2.1.1 Ethical Consumption and the Expression of Personal Values and Politics

Ethical consumption is seen by many as an outlet for the expression of personal values (Clarke, 2008; Hall, 2011; Wilk, 2001). According to Wilk (2001), “consumption is, in essence a moral matter” (p.246). It points to issues of equality, self-vs.-collective interests, gratification, and raises a moral debate essential to human politics (Wilk, 2001). Ethical consumption is seen as a method to construct an ethical life (Barnett et al., 2005) and reduce negative effects on the environment, people, and animals (Hall, 2011). Barnett et al. (2005) find that the ethics of ethical
consumption do not follow universal laws, but instead characterize the ways that consumers construct the person they ought to be.

Some believe that ethical consumption is more than an expression of personal values, but that it is also a political act (Clarke, 2008; Micheletti and Stolle, 2003). Clarke et al. (2007) found that consumers of fair trade products identified less as consumers and more as activists or campaigners. Clarke (2008) uses this research as well as other research (Clarke et al. 2007; Dickinson and Carsky, 2005) to show a turn to approaching ‘ethical consumption’ as “something that involves organization and mobilization (the stuff of politics)” (p. 1867). He continues to draw on work by Micheletti and Stolle (2003) to describe the market as a political arena, and consumption a democratic expression (Clarke, 2008). In this work, ethical consumption “is seen as a form of political participation that is non-bureaucratic, low-threshold, and attractive, therefore, to non-traditional groups such as women” (Clarke, 2008 p. 1876). Further, Mansvelt (2008) describes consumption as “an arena in which governance, regulation and citizenship are produced” (p.105). Clarke et al. (2007) found that ethical consumption was seen by political consumers as complementary to other forms of political participation (including letter writing and meeting attending). These conceptualizations of ethical consumption rely on the idea that consumers hold power in the market place through their purchases.

2.1.2 Ethical Consumption and Consumer Sovereignty

Consumer sovereignty is defined as the power of consumers to influence what products and services are offered or created for the market (Dickinson and Carsky, 2005). This concept highlights the power held by consumers in influencing production processes through ‘consumer voting’. Consumer voting is not a new concept; it was first introduced by economist F.A. Fetter in 1911 who wrote “[t]he market is a democracy where every penny gives the right to vote” (p.394). This concept has re-emerged in the ethical consumption literature (Dickinson and Carsky, 2005; Hofmann and Hutter, 2011; Shaw et al., 2006) to provide justification for ethical consumption. By recognizing the power of the consumer, ethical consumption can be seen as a way of addressing inequalities in the world from within the market system (Dickinson and Carsky, 2005). In fact, some believe that a market-based approach is the only possible solution to issues associated with consumption. Oilman (1998) states:
“With the explosive expansion of consumerism – of the amount of time, thought, and emotions spent in buying and selling, and in preparing for (including worrying about) and recovering from these activities – the market has become a dominant, if not the dominant, influence in how people act and think through the rest of their lives” (p.2).

The idea of consumer sovereignty is linked to traditional economic concepts of supply and demand. Consumers play an important role in the economic market, as it is assumed that a firm would not produce an item, or open a store, without any evidence that consumers would be willing to pay prices that reflect the cost of production plus an additional margin for profit (Dickinson and Carsky, 2005). An open market also offers the theoretical opportunity for consumers to participate in ethical consumption or consumer activism. However, Dickinson and Carsky also caution that like consumers, firms have needs and desires and will produce what is in their best interest. Additionally they assert, firms can, and frequently do, manipulate consumers through marketing (Dickinson and Carsky, 2005). Consumers can express their power, or consumer sovereignty, through collecting information about, purchasing, or refraining from purchasing products.

2.1.3 Ethical Consumption as boycotting or buycotting

Ethical consumption is typically expressed in the forms of boycotts, buycotts, comparative ethical ratings, relationship purchasing, or sustainable consumerism (Dickinson and Carsky, 2005). These actions are evident of increasing dissatisfaction and disenchantment with the mainstream production practices of the majority of multi-national companies and the destructive consumption patterns of Western Consumers (Hall, 2011). This review will focus on the first two actions: boycotts and buycotts.

R.A Hawkins (2010) describes both boycotts and buycotts as forms of consumer activism that enables seemingly powerless individual consumers to redress the imbalance in the marketplace. Boycotts occur when an individual or group actively stop purchasing a target company’s product(s) (Dickinson and Carsky, 2005). Buycotts are an alternative to boycotting and rather than focussing on negative attention, they reward positive actions by businesses (Hawkins, 2010). Although buycotts are arguably more prevalent in society than boycotts (Neilson, 2010) academic literature has mainly focused on boycotts (Hofmannn and Hutter, 2011; Pezullo, 2011). These two forms of consumer activism both seek to create change but
differ in their approaches either by punishing undesirable behaviour or by rewarding desirable behaviour (Hofmann and Hutter, 2011).

Boycotts may target an entire commodity, a specific product or brand, a single firm, or even an entire country (Hofmann and Hutter, 2011). This form of activism focuses on exhibiting consumer power through consumer voting in an attempt to hurt or punish a firm, or other target (Dickinson and Carsky, 2005). Boycotts may exert their influence purely through the market by decreasing sales, or they may operate through the media. Media is an important tool to boycotters as it helps increase the attention of consumers and press towards a scandal or negative practices, and thus damage the company’s reputation (Hofmann and Hutter, 2011). Boycotts can be local or international and function on multiple scales (Hofmann and Hutter, 2011).

Buycotts, approach consumer activism from the opposite tactic of boycotts by rewarding desirable behaviour by companies or firms by increasing purchases (Hofmann and Hutter, 2011). A common example cited in the literature is supporting fair-trade products (Lyon, 2007; Steinrücken and Jaenichen 2007; Wilkinson 2007). Shaw et al. (2006) note that although from a utilitarian value perspective boycotts and buycotts appear immensely different, if considered through the concept of consumer voting, they both indicate discontent within the marketplace.

2.2 Critiques of Ethical Consumption

The following sections will outline some of the most prevalent critiques of ethical consumption as presented in the ethical consumption literature. These critiques include the risks of mainstreaming, the notion that ethical consumption is an individual act which places blame entirely on consumers, and that ethical consumption is a practice reserved for the elite.

2.2.1 Risks of Mainstreaming

One contentious issue within the literature focussing on the market-based approach of ethical consumption is whether the mainstreaming of ethical products and practices is beneficial or detrimental to the cause (Clarke et al., 2007; Low and Davenport, 2005; Low and Davenport, 2007). Mainstreaming is understood as the transition of ethical products from niche markets to mainstream markets represented by large corporations and firms (Clarke et al., 2007; Low and Davenport, 2007). Much emphasis in the literature on mainstreaming surrounds fair trade products.
Mainstreaming is not seen as a problem for all activists, as it increases awareness of the fair trade objectives and logos among consumers (Clarke et al., 2007). In addition, moving from the fringes to the mainstream is seen as the only way to increase sales volume, and therefore to increase the number of producers who could be supported (Low and Davenport, 2005). This raises the question – does it matter if the true message is heard as long as more products are sold, and therefore more disadvantaged producers are supported (Low and Davenport, 2005)?

Other researchers suggest that in the process of mainstreaming, “the medium gets confused with the message” (Clarke et al., 2007 p.587). Low and Davenport (2005) state that:

the problem implicit in building successful fair trade brands is that whilst mainstream retailers see the benefits of selling the products, they do not, with the exception of those “values-driven” retailers that share the principles of fair trade organisations, endorse the radical, transformative message of fair trade to support the revolution of the trade system (p.499).

This can be seen when corporations such as Nestle and Starbucks agree to procure a small amount of fair trade products (Low and Davenport, 2007). This critique of the dilution of the fair trade message has led some academics to question whether mainstream fair trade can even qualify as ethical consumption (Johnston, 2002).

This debate raises questions over morals and priorities in approaches to and perspectives on creating change. In essence, this is an issue of scale. Arguments about ethical consumption and mainstreaming are essentially asking at what scale is ethical consumption still ethical. These researchers question if the ‘scaling up’ of ethical consumption into mainstream markets is an effective proliferation of the message and example of successful consumer sovereignty, or if it is a complex message being co-opted by larger corporations for the purpose of marketing.

### 2.2.2 Ethical Consumption as Individual Action

Critiques of ethical consumption frequently characterize ethical consumption as an individual, autonomous approach undertaken alone and placing blame on powerless individual consumers (Binkley, 2006; Maniates, 2001). Maniates (2001) claims that ethical consumption is evident of the broader environmental movement’s individualization of responsibility and prevents change being made to policy and institutions as consumers are made to feel like they hold the ultimate responsibility.
This characterization of ethical consumption as an individual action displaces genuine forms of collective actions in consumption. Willis and Schor (2012) assert that this individualistic description of ethical consumption fails to recognize that consumption is both social and collective in obvious ways, including the predominance of people shopping in groups, consuming together, and the profoundly social understandings and motivations for consumption (Hall, 2011; Willis and Schor, 2012). Moreover, Lang and Gabriel (2005) recognize the tendency for consumers to unite around collective institutions such as co-operatives, unions, advocacy groups and social movements.

2.2.3 Ethical Consumption as Elitist

Perhaps the most common critique of ethical consumption is that it is an elitist practice (Barnett et al., 2005; Stolle et al., 2005), reserved for those privileged enough to have “the time, energy, and money to buy organic, drink fair trade and invest ethically” (Barnett et al., 2005 p.12). While Clarke (2008), (2005), and Mansvelt (2008) have suggested that ethical consumption is a democratic process, critics argue that it is only available to those with enough financial and social capital to participate (Littler, 2011).

Littler (2011) explains that dominant narratives of ethical consumption (e.g., the costs of buying cheap) discriminate against the working-classes and developing countries who are without access to ethical goods. She warns that ethical consumption narratives can be a way to propagate prejudice and marginalization of specific groups (Littler, 2011). However, Littler (2011) proposes that this is not always the case. She argues that many wealthy people have no interest in ethical consumption and she illustrates the historical associations of marginalized groups and ethical consumption, such as the US housewives’ boycott against supermarkets and labour exploitation in India, and working-class involvement in co-operatives in the UK (Litter, 2011).

2.3 Attitude-Behaviour Gap

A major barrier to ethical consumption cited in the literature is the attitude-behaviour gap, which describes the gap between the large number of consumers that state their intentions to consume ethically and the small proportion of them that follow through with purchasing ethically-sourced products (Carrington et al., 2010; Vermeir and Verbeke, 2008). A notable study by Cowe and
Williams (2000) found that more than a third of UK consumers described themselves as ‘ethical purchasers’ but that only 1-3% of the market-share is represented by ethical purchases.

There are many debated reasons for this gap, one widely cited reason is the lack of consumer access to information and lack of product knowledge (Bray et al., 2011; Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002; McDevitt et al., 2007; Padel and Foster, 2005; Uusitalo and Oksanen, 2004; Watts and Wyner, 2011). For instance, McDevitt et al. (2007) proposed that the most significant barrier to ethical consumption was the ignorance of consumers. Bray et al. (2011) found that (in addition to other barriers) their focus group participants believed they needed information to make ethical decisions. Uusitalo and Oksanen (2004) stated “the most important barriers to ethical consumerism appear to be difficulties in obtaining information” (p.220). On the contrary, Boulstridge and Carrigan (2000) found that no participants reported a lack of information as a barrier to ethical consumption. Carrington et al. (2010) argued that consumers may intend to purchase ethical products while shopping, but are hindered by various constraints such as physical and social surroundings, and interests before they reach the cash register, or they simply forget. In all of these studies, improving the communication of information to consumers was a major recommendation to reduce the attitude-behaviour gap.

2.4 The Knowledge-fix

The suggestion that improving consumer access to information will increase ethical consumption is debated in the academic literature, predominantly by Eden et al. (2008), who label this idea as “the knowledge-fix”. Eden et al. (2008) cite the deliberate, pedagogical approach to re-educate consumers to follow “better consumer practices” (p. 1045) and challenge this by arguing that consumers have complex interactions with product information. First, the authors argue that “information is not a one-way flow to a passive recipient: information…can be re-interpreted, validated, received, resisted and outright ignored” (Eden et al., 2008 p.1047). Second, Eden et al. (2008) theorize that the knowledge-fix exaggerates individuals’ rationality in consumption and ignores the diverse and complex motivations behind consumption choices. This principle of the knowledge-fix is supported by Hall’s (2011) study on drivers behind consumers’ everyday ethical choices. Hall (2011) concluded that consumer decision-making is an interwoven and complex process driven by multiple factors, such as money, health, waste, and dieting. Finally, the knowledge-fix assumes that individual consumers are able to act on preference rather than be
influenced by constraints such as “income, knowledge, personal circumstances, systems of provision and social norms” (Eden et al. 2008 p.1047). However, scholars have suggested that advancements in technology may further facilitate the dissemination of information to recipients, supporting the knowledge-fix.

2.4.1 Role of Technology within the Knowledge-fix

Advancements in technology and the Internet have furthered the debate surrounding the knowledge-fix, as these advancements have enabled “consumers to overcome many of the information asymmetries that characterize traditional consumer markets, and obtain high levels of market transparency” (Watts and Wyner, 2011 p.258). Web 2.0 applications, characterized by user-generated content, participation and collaboration (Beer and Burrows, 2010) allow users to add content to the Internet. Web 2.0 advancements have had significant impact on consumption practices and consumer culture and have advanced the role of consumers from only receiving information from Internet sources to also contributing information (Graham and Haarstad, 2014).

Another key concept of Web 2.0 is its ubiquity, wherever users have access to the web, they have access to information (Wilkins, 2007). The advancements made in recent years to mobile phones enable consumers to access information from anywhere; and further, create a possibility for mobile phones to act as a resource for consumer knowledge and to contribute to ethical consumption activities at the point of purchase (Watts and Wyner, 2011). A study by the Food Marketing Institute (2012) found that 32% of shoppers in grocery stores already use technology more than 25% of the time that they spend shopping, for various reasons such as searching for product information and comparing prices. According to Watts and Wyner (2011), mobile phone applications can be designed to even further serve consumers’ needs and enable ethical consumption. Over 64 billion applications were downloaded by smartphone users in 2013 (Gartner, 2013), and there are approximately 40 applications for the iPhone which claim to address the needs of ethical consumers (Watts and Wyner, 2011).

2.5 Conclusion: Ethical consumption and the Buycott App

To reiterate, ethical consumption has been conceptualized and advocated by some as a means of empowering consumers to assert their power, and possibly, create changes within systems of consumption. Others still argue that consumers also use purchasing as an opportunity to express
moral values (e.g., through boycotts and buycotts). Various critiques of ethical consumption have been introduced: the problem with mainstreaming ethical consumption; the notion that ethical consumption is an independent activity; and, that ethical consumption is a luxury reserved for the elite. Additionally, the attitude-behaviour gap has been identified by some as a key barrier to ethical consumption, which many scholars and firms have attempted to address. Many of the solutions theorized in the literature suggest that consumers require more information in order to make ethical decisions, what Eden et al., (2008) have labelled and critiqued as the knowledge-fix. However, with new developments in mobile phone technologies, it has been suggested that improvements in technology could facilitate information spread to consumers in a way that would influence them to make more ethical decisions. There have been no studies that test the impacts of information facilitated through mobile phone technologies, and yet there are significant claims being made in both the literature and in the media about the potential of these technologies to inspire more ethical consumption practices.

This study explores this gap in the literature through the analysis of the impacts of information on consumer behaviour when this information is facilitated through mobile phone applications, using the Buycott app. The Buycott app is one such technology that has been proposed to empower consumers to create change and increase ethical decision making. Users of the app sign up for campaigns that reflect their values in order to express personal values and politics. When a user scans a product, these campaigns make recommendations for users to either boycott or buycott each product scanned. The Buycott app is designed around the idea that consumers hold power through consumer voting and express ethical purchases through boycotting and buycotting. Further, the app relies on what we have referred to as the knowledge-fix being the solution to promoting increased ethical purchases. The following chapter will introduce the research design of this study, including the case-study research approach, which will introduce the Buycott app, as well as the methods used in this research.
Chapter 3. Research Design

This chapter will first outline the mixed methods case study approach taken in this research. The study site of Guelph, Ontario will be introduced and rationale for why it was chosen as the location for this study will be provided. A detailed description of the Buycott app will follow. Next, the methods used in this research will be described. First, a content analysis was initiated which included an analysis of media surrounding the Buycott app as well as a content analysis of the Buycott app. Once this background data had been collected, surveys were conducted to gather data from the broader Guelph population concerning ethical consumption perceptions and behaviour, and to act as a recruitment tool for focus groups. Each recruited focus group participant then attended two focus group sessions. Between these focus groups, participants used the app for all relevant purchasing and completed (up to three) online journal entries. After the completion of their second focus group, focus group participants were contacted via the telephone for some follow-up questions. Finally, the researcher was also able to contact the Buycott app developer, Ivan Pardo, for an interview over Skype. The second section of this chapter will outline the ways in which these methods were employed and the analysis that resulted in this thesis’ findings.

3.1 Research Approach

Given the types of data required to fulfill the research questions that drove this research, it was determined that a case study approach would best provide the necessary depth and nuance to participant perceptions required. Case studies are an appropriate approach to research when studies aim to develop an intensive understanding of an issue (Gerring, 2007). Additionally, they are relevant when research seeks to be explanatory and not just descriptive (Yin, 2013). For these reasons, this research was chosen to be approached as a case study of Buycott app users in Guelph, Ontario.

3.1.1 Study Site: Guelph, Ontario

The city of Guelph was chosen as the location for this case study because of its various ethical consumption opportunities and the apparent abundance of ethical consumers. Guelph, a medium

---

1 Follow-up phone calls were attempted but were largely unsuccessful and contributed no useful data to the study. Participants seemed less willing to make time to speak with the researcher after honorariums had been paid.
sized city with just over 120,000 residents, has a strong ‘shop local’ movement. The city is surrounded by farm-land and residents of Guelph are very concerned about local food issues. This is evident in the popularity of the local farmer’s market, the abundance of Community Supported Agriculture programs, and a number of restaurants that boast local food choices. Guelph is also known as a liberal environmental community, hosting more than 40 environmental organizations. In terms of ethical consumption opportunities, Guelph residents are able to dine at restaurants with local and sustainable food choices, frequent cafés that serve fair trade coffee, shop at a sweatshop-free clothing store or at the numerous consignment clothing stores, buy organic produce at gourmet grocery stores and the farmer’s market, and can find stores which specifically cater to the ethical consumer. These factors may suggest a greater awareness of the issues regarding ethical consumption held by consumers in Guelph but in the least, ensure that ethical consumption opportunities are available in Guelph. For these reasons, the city of Guelph was considered an ideal location to study consumers’ use of the Buycott app.

### 3.1.2 The Buycott App

On May 14th, 2013 Forbes published an article titled “New app Let’s You Boycott Koch Brothers, Monsanto and More by Scanning Your Shopping Cart” (O’Connor, 2013). This app was the Buycott app, a free application available for iPhone and Android, created by app developer Ivan Pardo in Los Angeles. Although the app was released to iTunes on January 31, 2013 and Google Play on May 9, 2013, the app had yet to gain much attention. However, the same day the Forbes article appeared online, the Buycott servers crashed from the massive number of downloads (O’Connor, 2013). The Buycott app is owned by Buycott Inc. and run by Pardo.

#### 3.1.2.1 Purpose of the App

According to the app descriptions on iTunes, Google Play, and the Buycott website (www.buycott.com), the aim of the Buycott app is to educate consumers so that they may “organize [their] everyday spending to support causes [they] care about while avoid[ing] funding those [they] oppose” (Buycott, 2015). Media sources highlighted the idea that Buycott could provide consumers with the information needed to make a difference with their consumption. One source claimed, “You still need to supply the courage of your convictions, but Buycott can
help to supply the knowledge” (Close, 2013). The app allows users to decide what they want to prioritize and define what is ethical based on their own values.

The app aims to create a critical mass of ethical consumers by providing users with a way to organize their spending and send a stronger message to producers. This type of narrative is frequently propagated through Buycott’s various social media platforms, including in images on their Facebook page (Buycott, 2013) (see Figure 1).

![Image](image.png)

*Figure 1: Imagery from Buycott Facebook Page*

This type of discourse reflects the ethical consumption literature outlined in the previous chapter, and suggests that consumers can collectively create change in the market place by either boycotting or buycotting products.

### 3.1.2.2 Campaigns

The app works by having users sign up for campaigns that represent specific values, such as “Clean and Renewable Energy”, “Demand GMO Labeling”, and “Boycott Koch Industries” (see Table 1). Each campaign falls within one of 16 categories based on its focus.

---

Table 1: Most Popular Campaigns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign Name</th>
<th>Date Created</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Companies To support</th>
<th>Companies To avoid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean and Renewable Energy</td>
<td>15-May-2013</td>
<td>286483</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand GMO Labeling</td>
<td>07-May-2013</td>
<td>248542</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Buy Deforestation Paper</td>
<td>21-May-2013</td>
<td>152609</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Live Palestine boycott Israel</td>
<td>03-Apr-2014</td>
<td>146009</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say No To Monsanto</td>
<td>16-May-2013</td>
<td>137569</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No FRACKING way! Keep Water SAFE</td>
<td>30-May-2013</td>
<td>133268</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say No to GMO - Monsanto Products</td>
<td>17-May-2013</td>
<td>99059</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boycott Koch Industries</td>
<td>11-Mar-2013</td>
<td>98168</td>
<td>Social Responsibility</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid Israeli Settlement Products</td>
<td>08-Jun-2013</td>
<td>74902</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUY Non GMO/Organic &amp; AVOID Monsanto/GMO List Update June2014</td>
<td>21-May-2013</td>
<td>65564</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Campaigns then work by adding companies to support and/or companies to avoid. Targets of campaigns indicate a diverse selection of ethical values held by users of the app. Their focus varies widely from legislation, products, people, sports teams, television stations, to specific ingredients in products. Campaign targets include individuals, corporations, states or locales, and countries. Campaigns can be strictly boycotts (only lists companies to avoid), strictly buycotts (only lists companies to support), or can provide both. Although the name of the app would
suggest otherwise, more than half (n=166/246 or 84%) of the campaigns are boycotts3. Only 20% (n=38/246) of campaigns are strictly buycotts, and 27% (n=57) have targets to both support and avoid. Campaigns exist in at least five languages (English, German, Dutch, Ukrainian, and Spanish).

The most popular campaigns, in terms of membership, (see Table 1) tend to have a direct message in their campaign name (e.g. “Demand GMO Labeling” or “Don’t Buy Deforestation Paper”) or target a specific corporation or product (e.g. “Say No to Monsanto”). Comparatively, campaigns with fewer members tend to contain less clear messages (e.g. “Groen 2.0”), are in a language other than English (e.g. “Бойкот Партиї Регіонів”), have a high rate of repetition (e.g. there are 17 campaigns targeting Johnson & Johnson, and 9 campaigns that target Monsanto (See Table 2), or are simply recently created campaigns (e.g. “Boycott Spanish Products over Gibraltar Tyranny and Fascism” with 71 members created in May 2014).

Table 2: Campaigns with Monsanto in their Name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign</th>
<th>Created</th>
<th>Users</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Say No To Monsanto</td>
<td>16-May-2013</td>
<td>137569</td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boycott Scotts Miracle-Gro for Distributing Monsanto Roundup</td>
<td>17-May-2013</td>
<td>8312</td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say No to GMO - Monsanto Products Boycott; Non-GMO Buycott</td>
<td>17-May-2013</td>
<td>99059</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seed Freedom! Organic + Heirloom Seeds vs. GM+Monsanto Owned</td>
<td>28-May-2013</td>
<td>14107</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUY Non GMO/Organic &amp; AVOID Monsanto/GMO List Update June2014</td>
<td>21-May-2013</td>
<td>65564</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starve Monsanto Owned Food Producers</td>
<td>27-Jun-2014</td>
<td>19599</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keygene, Monsanto, Swedish Meats &amp; Lantmännen importing GMO</td>
<td>28-Sep-2013</td>
<td>3376</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGANIC PRODUCE COSTA RICA + VERDE = NO GMO &amp; MONSANTO</td>
<td>27-May-2013</td>
<td>4753</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVOID Monsanto/GMO &amp; Buy NonGMO/Organic: YOUR SAFE FOOD LIST</td>
<td>21-May-2013</td>
<td>62102</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

3 As of July 31, 2014, the time of analysis.
All campaigns are created by users of the app. The creator of a campaign must choose a campaign category, companies to avoid and/or support, and decides what information to provide for other users. Campaign creators are asked to provide an online source for the inclusion of any corporation/product included as a target in the campaign. This is not a requirement, but it is recommended so that other users have access to the source information and can decide for themselves whether or not they trust the campaign and wish to become a member.

The fact that Buycott does not impose a specific set of ethics on its users, but instead allows them to create or sign-up for their own campaigns based on their individual ideas about what is ethical, is seen as a very positive aspect of the app in the media. For example:

The beauty of this platform is that it’s cause-agnostic. Maybe you can’t afford to care about buying sustainable, local, organic food, but the thought of spending money at an establishment that opposes gay rights is appalling (Griffith, 2013).

This was the most prolific theme throughout media coverage of the app and was a main topic in the interview with Ivan Pardo (more details in methods). The app developer described why it was so important to him that Buycott did not define ethical consumption, he said:

The reason I want people to find their own beliefs in the app is that I think that’s what is needed if you want to grow to the scale that is necessary to actually have a successful campaign. So I don’t think any of the apps that are out there that are specialized, as some of the ones I mentioned, have any chance of reaching 25 30 million users, whereas we can in the foreseeable future hopefully get to that level (Interview with Ivan Pardo).

The Buycott app claims to enable consumers to express personal morals and values by providing them with the information needed to participate in ethical consumption activities. This is reflective of the literature that states consumers can express their moral identities through consumption (Clarke, 2008; Hall, 2011; Wilk, 2001).

3.1.2.3 Use of the App

Once a user signs up for campaigns they can use the app to scan barcodes of products at the store and receive personalized endorsements or opposition to products based on the companies listed as targets in the campaigns with which they belong. This section will follow, step-by-step, the process of using the Buycott app to scan a product.
First, when a user opens the app on their phone, it automatically takes them to scan a product. The user will then scan the product by aligning the red line in the middle of the screen with the product’s barcode (see Figure 2).

![Figure 2: Screen while Scanning a Product's Barcode](image)

The app uses the phone’s camera in order to scan barcodes. The app will then notify the user if the product they have just scanned is in support or against any of their campaigns, and ultimately, if they should support or avoid the product (see Figure 3).
In this example, nine campaigns suggest avoiding this product (see Figure 4).

**Figure 3: Screen Informing User they're avoiding this Product**

**Figure 4: Campaigns Conflicting with Product**
However, two of the campaigns support this purchase (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Campaigns Supporting Product

These recommendations are based on whether or not the product’s company (or parent company) was added as a company to avoid and/or support for each campaign. Much of these recommendations are reflective of the parent company of a product. For example, the “avoid plastic bottled beverages” campaign conflicts with this product because Sun Chips is a Frito-Lay product, which is owned by Pepsi. In this case, the creator of the “avoid plastic bottled beverages campaign” chose to include every product owned by Pepsi as a product to avoid, rather than just selecting the top level Pepsi products. Users can see these connections by selecting to view a product’s corporate tree (see Figure 6). The information for the corporate family trees is entered into a database by the app developers, and is not entered by the users who created the campaigns (Interview with Ivan Pardo). Campaign creators decide if every product that falls under the ownership of a parent company should be boycotted or buycotted based on the grounds of the campaign, or if users should only boycott or buycott individual products.
Finally, there is also an online community aspect to the app. Users sign up for the app, either through their existing social media accounts, or by creating a new online profile for the website/app. On the website users can contribute more to the app than in its application platform. Here, users can create campaigns in addition to what they can do in the app including comment on existing campaigns, send direct messages to other users, and give the developers feedback. However, from my own experience using the app, I messaged many users with questions, suggestions, and complaints, and never once received a response.

The Buycott app is in need of investigation because the discourse surrounding the Buycott app mirrors the literature surrounding the attitude-behaviour gap and the knowledge-fix. This app will be used as a tool to study the impacts of information on consumer decision making and will ultimately test the knowledge-fix and assess the role of technology in facilitating information to consumers in order to promote ethical consumption. In the next section, the methods used to accomplish these objectives are outlined.
3.2 Methods

This study employed a mixed methods framework aimed at answering the four research questions outlined in the introduction of this thesis. Content analysis, surveys, focus groups, participant journals, and a key informant interview were all used to answer these questions, with multiple methods required to answer each question. The media analysis aimed to contextualize the representations of the app in the media and the content analysis of the app was completed in order to understand what was being communicated to and from users in the app, how it was organized, and in general, to provide context to the app content. Surveys were used to collect data on a broader base of consumers in Guelph and to provide context and comparison to data gathered later in this research. The first focus group collected data from before their use of the Buycott app, and the second focus group collected data following focus group participants’ use of the app. Participant journals collected individual participants’ reflections on their use of the app and its impact on their behaviour. Finally, a key informant interview with the Buycott app developer was also conducted to provide context to the information gathered throughout this research. The following table depicts the methodological framework of this study and outlines how each method contributed to multiple research questions (Table 3).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 1</th>
<th>How did participants engage with the information provided in the Buycott app?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
<td>Contextualize the information available to users of the Buycott app</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>Collect data on consumer engagement with information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Round 1</td>
<td>Collect data on how focus group participants engaged with information prior to their use of the Buycott app</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Journals</td>
<td>Collect data on individual participants’ perceptions of their engagement with the information provided in the app</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Round 2</td>
<td>Collect group data on participants’ engagement with information in the app</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Informant Interview</td>
<td>Contextualize the intentions of the app developer in how users would engage with information in the app</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 2</th>
<th>How did the Buycott app influence participants’ everyday ethical consumption decisions?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
<td>Contextualize how the media sees the app influencing users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>Collect data on focus group participants’ consumption behaviour and priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Round 1</td>
<td>Collect data on individual participants’ perceptions of the influence of the app on their behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Journals</td>
<td>Collect group data on participants’ perceptions of the influence of the app on their behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Round 2</td>
<td>Collect group data on participants’ perceptions of the influence of the app on their behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Informant Interview</td>
<td>Contextualize the intentions of the app developer with how the app is expected to influence behaviour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 3</th>
<th>How did participants negotiate between the app’s recommendations and other factors?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
<td>Contextualize how other users of the app (media) negotiate the app’s recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>Collect data on consumers’ (more broadly) priorities while shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Round 1</td>
<td>Collect data on individual participants’ perceptions of their negotiations with the app’s recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Journals</td>
<td>Collect group data on participants’ perceptions of their negotiations with the app’s recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Round 2</td>
<td>Collect group data on participants’ perceptions of their negotiations with the app’s recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Informant Interview</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 4</th>
<th>In what ways did participants consider ethical consumption an effective route to create change?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
<td>Contextualize how the media sees the app making broader social change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Round 1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Journals</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Round 2</td>
<td>Collect participants’ perceptions on what they felt could be achieved through ethical consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Informant Interview</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following sections will describe each method used in this study.

3.2.1 Content Analysis
First, a media analysis was conducted in order to understand how the Buycott app was being represented in the media and what was known about it by the public. An Internet search was conducted by entering the search term “Buycott app” into an online search engine (Google). This revealed 57,200 sources containing the phrase. Of these, an in-depth analysis of 30 media sources published before March 2014 was completed. This date was chosen due to the sharp decrease in publications after this time. These sources included mostly news websites, technology reviews, and professional blogs. Personal blogs and forums were not included in this analysis. However, some analysis of social media was conducted in order to understand how the app was received by a broader base of users and explore celebrity endorsement. Each article was linked to an Excel spreadsheet where author, data, type of publication, overall representation of the app, and quotes were collected.

Secondly, an analysis of the campaigns within the Buycott app was conducted for all campaigns that were created up until July 31, 2014. This was completed by collecting the information of all campaigns within a category, one campaign category at a time. This information was sorted into an Excel spreadsheet to be coded, which included campaign name, campaign creator, number of campaign members, and number of target corporations.

Some of the findings from the media analysis and campaign analysis were used in the previous section to describe the app and provide context for readers. Furthermore, this data was used to provide context for all four research questions.

3.2.2 Surveys
Surveys were used primarily to recruit focus group participants. They were also used to provide demographic information on a broader group of Guelph consumers. Survey results broadly informed the four research questions stated above and focus group discussions by providing information on the general consumption behaviour of a broader population of consumers.

Surveys were designed and disseminated using FluidSurvey software. A total of 211 surveys were completed (see Appendix 1 for survey questions). Eligibility for participation in the survey required that focus group participants owned a smart phone, subscribed to a data plan, and were
at least 18 years of age. This eligibility was based on requirements for further participation in the Buycott app study. Surveys were disseminated both in-person and online.

Five days of in-person dissemination occurred at six locations with the help of one research assistant (see Table 4). Locations were chosen because they were sites of consumption that catered to different demographics. Additionally, online dissemination of the survey occurred via email (for example by asking the University of Guelph Geography department to send it out via their listserv) and primarily through three social media platforms: Twitter, Reddit, and Facebook (see Table 5).

Table 4: In-Person Dissemination of Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (all in 2014)</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th># of Surveys Completed</th>
<th># of Respondents Who Became Focus Group Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday June 4</td>
<td>9am - 3pm</td>
<td>Zehrs&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt; and Food Basics&lt;sup&gt;5&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday June 5</td>
<td>12pm – 5pm</td>
<td>Public Library and Market Fresh&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday June 7</td>
<td>9am - 11am</td>
<td>Farmer’s Market</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday June 9</td>
<td>5pm - 7pm</td>
<td>Zehrs</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday June 10</td>
<td>11am - 3pm</td>
<td>University of Guelph Campus</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Online Dissemination of Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th># of Posts by Researcher per Platform</th>
<th># of Completed Surveys Referred From Each Source</th>
<th># of Respondents Who Became Focus Group Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reddit</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Referral (e.g., email)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>4</sup> Zehrs is a mid-end grocery store, owned by Loblaw Inc.
<sup>5</sup> Food Basics is a discount grocery store chain owned by Metro Inc.
<sup>6</sup> Market Fresh is a local gourmet boutique grocery store in Guelph, Ontario.
Posts were made on Twitter that were targeted at various groups in Guelph and included hashtags aimed at attracting the attention of different social groups (e.g., #Guelph, #EthicalConsumption). Two posts were submitted on Reddit, to the subgroups of Guelph (www.reddit.com/r/guelph) and the University of Guelph (www.reddit.com/r/UoGuelph). Additionally, Facebook posts were made on the researcher’s profile and to targeted community groups. Posts were shared by social media users which increased the potential pool of survey respondents.

The FluidSurvey software automatically collects information on which website referred respondents to the survey link, and in this way, it is possible to determine which platforms were the most successful. However, it is impossible to track all online dissemination as the link could be shared privately through email, or copied and pasted into a new browser, and then would have no referral site. In this way, an additional 32 respondents received the survey link from unknown means. Overall, Facebook and Twitter were fairly unsuccessful, but the most successful online disseminations was Reddit. Table 5 shows a higher number of surveys completed by respondents than the total number of surveys used in this study because any surveys that were incomplete were omitted from data collection for analysis.

Survey questions were designed to collect demographic information, determine how strongly participants identified as ethical consumers, learn more about respondents’ priorities while shopping, and determine how they interacted with information about ethical consumption. Surveys were designed first as a tool for data collection, and secondly as a recruitment tool for focus groups.

Surveys began by collecting demographic information of participants, including their age range, gender, household income, and shopping habits. These basic questions were followed by Likert scale questions designed to assess how strongly participants identified as an ethical consumer and how strongly they felt about ethical consumption issues. These questions asked participants to answer “How strongly do you agree with the following statements…” Respondents were able to answer these questions by choosing a whole number from 1-5 where 1 represented strongly disagree and 5 represented strongly agree. Statements included “I am an ethical consumer”, “my purchases reflect my values” and, “companies hide information from
consumers”. These questions collected participant’s beliefs about ethical consumption, corporations, and information whereas the next group of questions collected information on respondents’ behaviour. These questions asked how frequently they used different media (print, websites, social media, etc.) to learn about ethical consumption. Respondents were able to choose one of four options – never, infrequently, sometimes, or frequently\(^7\) – that best reflected their engagement with this information. Next, participants were asked to rank the importance of specific factors in their decision making process while shopping (such as environmental sustainability and promoting the wellbeing of the next generation). These questions were, again, set up as a Likert scale from 1-5 where 1 was strongly disagree and 5 was strongly agree.

The final section of questions asked participants how many times in the past year they had participated in specific activities. These activities (such as boycotting, buycotting, letter writing, and attending public meetings) were selected based on the work by Schor and Willis (2008) in an attempt to represent both ethical consumption behaviour and what is more often considered political action. Participants could choose one of four options for how many times in the past year they had participated in each activity – zero times, zero to five times, five to ten times, or more than ten times.

Then, survey respondents were asked if they would be interested in further participation in the study. If respondents said yes, they were asked to provide their name, email address and/or phone number. Survey responses were continuously monitored for affirmative responses to this question, at which point respondents were contacted via their preferred method of communication and provided with an information letter regarding the expectations of their participation, and compensation (see Appendix 2 for honorarium schedule). If respondents were still interested in participating in focus groups, they were sent a doodle poll to gather their availability for focus groups.

\(^7\) In the future, I would stick to using a numbered scale so that responses were more easily comparable. When terms such as infrequently and frequently are used, respondents rely on their own interpretation of these terms, and therefore may be different for each respondent. For example, one respondent may feel that reading ethical consumption blogs once a week is indicative of frequent behaviour, while another respondent might read these blogs every day and feel that once a week would fit under sometimes.
3.2.3 Round 1 Focus Groups

The objectives outlined in this study require an in-depth knowledge of consumer experiences and behaviour. Accordingly, focus groups were chosen as the main methodological approach for this study as they promote two-way communication, cooperative knowledge formation, and a deeper understanding of participants’ understandings of the research topic (Bosco and Herman, 2010; Cameron, 2000). Focus groups have been described as “one of the most engaging research methods available to geographers working with qualitative data and approaching geography questions from a critical perspective” (Bosco and Herman, 2010 p. 193). Bosco and Herman define focus groups as “organized events in which researchers select and assemble groups of individuals to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, topics of relevance to different research projects” (2010, p.194). They provide reasons for researchers to use focus groups that are more than an easy way to collect the opinions of a larger number of participants for relatively little time and expense (Clifford et al., 2012). Focus groups allow the exploration of dynamics between social discourse and social practice in relation to the construction of collective meaning (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2005).

This is especially important for this study as it attempts to examine disconnects between social discourse (the high percentage of consumers who claim to be ethical consumers) and social practice (ethical consumption practices) so evident in the attitude-behaviour gap. In addition to this, focus groups provide an opportunity for participants and researchers to work together to re-work the theories and assertions and contribute to knowledge construction together (Bosco and Herman, 2010).

For this study, focus group times were organized around focus group participant availability and groups were organized to be as homogeneous as possible since it is said this is ideal in focus groups as it may improve compatibility between focus group participants (Morgan, 1998). Focus group size can both inspire and impede discussion; large focus group sizes (>9) can limit the contributions of each focus group participant, especially if stronger individuals tend to dominate the discussion (Morgan, 1998). According to Morgan (1998), typical focus group size is from 6 to 10 focus group participants. Bosco and Herman (2010) maintain that fundamentals of focus group organization, such as size, can link focus groups with a positivist view of research that is about collecting representative data rather than conducting research that is dynamic and
motivated by a critical conceptual framework. Based on this critical (post-structural) view of focus group organization, suggestions for focus group organization such as size and homogeneity were endeavoured to be followed, but no focus groups were cancelled due to too few participants or a lack of homogeneity. Focus group size in this study ranged from two to six participants (Table 6). Some focus groups in round 1 and 2 had different combinations of participants due to scheduling constraints and participants leaving the study.

Table 6: Dates and Sizes of Round 1 Focus Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th># of Focus Group Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wednesday July 2nd</td>
<td>12pm – 1pm</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wednesday July 2nd</td>
<td>5:30pm - 6:30pm</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thursday July 3rd</td>
<td>2:30pm - 3:30pm</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Monday July 7th</td>
<td>5:30pm - 6:30pm</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wednesday July 9th</td>
<td>5:30pm - 6:30pm</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thursday July 10th</td>
<td>12pm - 1:30pm</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tuesday July 15th</td>
<td>5pm - 6:30pm</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus groups were all (including round 2 focus groups) held at the same location, a co-working, and community space available for rent in downtown Guelph called 10Carden. This space was not accessible, but it was made clear to all potential participants that an accessible location would be made available if there was any need. Focus groups were digitally recorded and all written elements of the activities were collected for analysis. Complete (un-abridged) transcriptions were completed for each focus group. A research assistant attended the majority of focus groups to provide additional support and to take notes.

Round 1 focus groups were structured around four activities, first an ice-breaker that doubled as a way to collect data on focus group participant priorities, followed by three questions. During the ice-breaker focus group participants were asked to provide their name and explain why they were interested in participating in the study. Next each participant was asked to complete the sentence ‘when I shop, my number one priority is…’ The rest of the focus groups were structured around answering three questions ((i) how would you define ethical consumption, (ii) what do you think about the amount of information available to consumers and (iii) how does the information available to consumers affect you). Each question was written on the top of a piece of chart paper and hung on the wall. First, focus group participants were asked
to think about the first question and then write their answer on a post—it note and stick it to the chart paper. Once all of the focus group participants had posted their answers, each answer was read aloud and the author was given an opportunity to explain or expand upon their answer. Once each answer was read aloud a general discussion followed. Notes from the discussion were written directly on the chart paper. In this way, participants contributed to highlighting what they felt were the most important aspects of the discussion and contributed to preliminary analysis. Next, the same procedures was used for questions two and three. Once discussion had been exhausted for each question, focus group participants received a brief tutorial on the Buycott app and were given instructions for the next two weeks. These focus group sessions lasted approximately one and a half hours each.

The data collected in this round of focus groups contributed to answering two of the four research questions outlined in Table 3 above. This first round of focus groups provided a basis for understanding how participants understand ethical consumption and the role of information, and were used to establish norms of participant behaviour, including where they look for information and characterizations of their consumption habits.

3.2.4 Participant Journals
Journals remain an under-utilized methodological approach in social science research methods, including studies on ethical consumption, but are a relevant approach to capturing experiences of everyday life (Kenten, 2010). Solicited journals requested focus group participants to complete diary entries on specific (researcher-driven) topics in order to generate qualitative data for use in analysis (Kenten, 2010). Journals were a particularly appropriate method to be used in this study, as they are said to capture “an ever changing present” (Plummer, 2001 p.48) and the study aimed to evaluate changes in consumers’ experiences, ideas, and behaviour in response to the use of the Buycott app. Not only does this methodology allow for greater insight into focus group participants’ everyday experiences, but it is also considered an empowering method, where participants act as both observer and informant (Zimmerman and Weider, 1997).

During the approximately two weeks that focus group participants were using the Buycott app, participants were asked to complete a minimum of one journal entry, but were encouraged to complete more. The maximum number of entries completed by one participant was three, and the average number of entries per participant was two. Focus group participants were emailed the
link to complete all entries, also hosted by FluidSurveys. Reminders to complete their journals were emailed to participants after one week if they had completed less than two responses. In total, 53 journal entries were completed. Focus group participants were asked to answer 11 questions in their journal entries.

1. What is your name?
2. How many times have you used the app so far?
3. Have you been surprised by any of the information provided by the app? If yes, please explain.
4. What were your reactions to the amount of information available?
5. How did you evaluate if the information provided by the app is trustworthy?
6. Have you contributed any content to the app? If yes, what did you contribute?
7. Was there anything you normally purchase that you didn't? Why?
8. Is there anything you wouldn't normally purchase but did? Why?
9. Did you ignore the app at any point? What were your reasons for ignoring your campaigns?
10. Do you have any other comments?
11. Do you have any questions?

Journal entries contributed to a better understanding of individual participants’ perceptions of the changes (or lack of) occurring in their own behaviour and allowed participants to make comments outside of the group discussions. This data contributed to the first three research questions described above, particularly how participants engaged with the information in the app, how they app influenced their everyday ethical consumption practices, and how participants negotiated between the app’s recommendations and external factors. In addition, journals contributed a different type of data to the study as they consisted of non-negotiated individual responses, and focus groups produced mostly negotiated responses of group opinion. Journals were also particularly useful for identifying participants who were struggling with using the app so that intervention and clarification could occur before their next focus group.

3.2.5 Round 2 Focus Groups

The second round of focus groups occurred approximately two weeks after the first round for each participant (Table 7). The participant make-up of some focus groups changed slightly due
to four focus group participants not being able to continue with the study. Rather than seven focus groups, round 2 had five groups, with three to six members in each.

Table 7: Dates and Sizes of Round 2 Focus Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th># of Focus Group Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Wednesday July 16th</td>
<td>12pm – 2pm</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b</td>
<td>Friday July 18th</td>
<td>6pm – 8pm</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b</td>
<td>Wednesday July 23rd</td>
<td>5:45pm - 7:45pm</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b</td>
<td>Monday July 28th</td>
<td>5:30pm - 7:30pm</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5b</td>
<td>Tuesday July 29th</td>
<td>5pm – 7pm</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second round of focus groups also began with an ice-breaker that collected data on what focus group participants considered a good campaign based on campaigns they had come across during their use of the app. Participants were asked to write down three campaigns that stood out for them from their time using the app on one Post-It note each. Participants gave the completed Post-It notes to the moderator who read each aloud and asked the author to (re)introduce themselves to the group and explain why they chose that campaign. Then, focus group participants were asked where they would place the campaign on a continuum of useless to useful.

Once the ice-breaker was complete, focus group participants were given instructions for the rest of the session. They were told that there were four activities spread around the room that they needed to complete. The first two activities were questions ((i) what did you think about the information provided in the app? and (ii) how did your consumption behaviour change while using the app?), set up similarly to the first round of focus groups. Each question was written on a sheet of chart paper hung on the wall, and focus group participants were asked to write their answers on a Post-It note and place it on the paper. The third activity asked focus group participants to vote on what priorities were most important to them while shopping. Each focus group participant was provided with ten stickers which they were told to divide up between five factors (cost, ethics, enjoyment, nutrition/quality, and other). Finally, each focus group participant was given their own matrix (see appendix 4) to complete aimed at uncovering what focus group participants felt they could accomplish through ethical consumption. Participants
returned their handouts to the moderator who then combined all of the results into one master copy to present to the group and to prompt discussion.

Participants completed all activities before returning to their seats to discuss their answers and results of the activities in turn. The discussion structure followed that of the first round of focus groups, and began with reading focus group participants’ written responses to the first question. Each question/activity was discussed in-turn before focus group participants were asked for any final reflection and honorariums were distributed. These sessions lasted from one and a half to two hours.

These final focus groups contributed to answering all four research questions. These data collected through this method provided an understanding of how participants viewed the information in the app, the influence from the app and negotiations they made, and allowed for a comparison of participant behaviour before and after using the Buycott app. Further, this is the only method that collected data on what ways participants considered ethical consumption an effective route to change. This round of focus groups also revealed what participants felt made a good campaign, what barriers they perceived to making ethical consumption decisions, and how they prioritized different factors while shopping.

3.2.6 Key Informant Interview

In addition to these primary methodologies, an interview with the app developer, Ivan Pardo was conducted. The interview began with the same question first posed to focus group participants: How do you define ethical consumption? The remainder of the interview centred on the same three themes of this study’s objectives: information, behaviour, and ethics (see Appendix 5 for interview guide). This audio-only Skype interview lasted approximately forty minutes and was recorded with a Pamela software and was then transcribed in full. This interview provided better insight into the purpose of the Buycott app than I was able to gain from the media analysis, and revealed many future plans for the app that the developer intends to undertake based on user suggestions. Furthermore, an important connection was made in regards to the dissemination of the study results and the potential influence of this study’s findings.
3.3 **Analysis**

Data analysis was an iterative process, incorporating multiple rounds of coding and written analysis. Analysis of each source of data collected aimed to answer the four research questions which formed the purpose of this research. For the sake of describing this process, the analysis can be divided into three stages: content analysis of media sources and the app materials, and two rounds of coding of participants’ materials (focus group transcripts and materials, and journal responses.

First, content analysis was conducted of media sources pertaining to the Buycott app and of the campaign content within the app. Second, each focus group transcript was read in order to answer each question posed to focus group participants (see Focus Group design above). At this time a preliminary analysis was written generating broad answers to these questions (see Table 8). In the next round of coding, transcripts were re-read to add nuance to these responses. In this round of coding participant explanations were grouped into themes and categorized. Journal entries were also included in this round of coding, read one question at a time (each participants’ response to one question) and responses were sorted into themes. Focus groups present unique challenges for data analysis as not all data is comparable and has to be understood as such.

In this case, there were both written responses to direct questions written by individual focus group participants and negotiated responses or shared understandings that were shared, and sometimes agreed upon, by the entire group in discussion. Not only were focus groups coded for content, but they were also coded by type of response, as this has serious implications for analysis. In the findings chapters below, the type of data (individual participants’ oral responses to questions in focus groups, their written responses in focus groups, focus group consensus, or individual journal responses) is clearly stated in order to make these distinctions clear to the reader.

The qualitative software N’Vivo was used to electronically code each source of data, and quantitative software Excel and SPSS were used in order to analyse the statistical data presented in surveys.
3.3.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis involves “identifying essential and significant points in the discussion and categorizing them” (Litosseliti, 2003). The media sources chosen to be included in the analysis were coded based on the type of publication and themes within the articles. The type of publication categories included: blogs, marketing material, mainstream news sites, NGO websites/reports, technology reviews, and social media. The first set of themes identified were whether the Buycott app was portrayed positively, negatively or neutrally in the publication. Next, each source was also coded to identify the themes of each article, which included: voting with your dollars, independent ethics, the role of technology, and the dissemination of information. These themes were used to inform the development of the interview design for the interview with Ivan Pardo, provide context on the reception of the app by the public, and contributed to larger-scale analysis of the Buycott app.

Next, an analysis of the campaigns within the Buycott app was conducted. This analysis organized campaigns based on multiple factors, including their categories, targets, and content. Campaigns were also analysed to draw connections between different factors such as popularity and targets, or popularity and the repetition of campaigns, as well as the number of campaigns created and media attention over time. This analysis provided data on what information would be available to participants while using the Buycott app.

3.3.2 Round 1 Coding

The first round of coding required all data sources (focus group round 1 transcripts, focus group round 2 transcripts, participant journal responses, and interview transcript) to be uploaded into N’Vivo and be organized into folders for each type of data source. This organization allowed each source to be analysed independent of any other sources. Each focus group transcript was read in N’Vivo with the purpose of answering very specific questions. These questions included, for the first round of focus groups: how did participants define ethical consumption, how much information is available to consumers, where did participants look for information, did participants believe the information was credible, and did they find this information accessible? For the second round of focus groups, questions that were answered included: what did participants feel made a good campaign, did the boycott app increase their access to information, did participants trust the information provided in the app, did participant behaviour change, what
were barriers to behaviour change, and what did participants prioritize while shopping with the app? Each of these questions contributed to answering the broader research questions that drove this research.

### 3.3.3 Round 2 Coding

The second round of coding sought to add nuance to the above answers. Rather than reading each transcript at a time, the sections of each transcript pertaining to each question were all read together, before moving on to the next question. Different answers to these questions were grouped into themes and then explanations were explored within each group. Participant journals were also included in this round of coding and were used to compare individual responses with focus group discussions. An example of how these coding processes were used is displayed in the below table (Table 8).

**Table 8: Example of Coding Process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did participant behaviour Change</th>
<th>Round 1 Coding</th>
<th>Round 2 Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Change in where they shopped</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bought new products</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stopped buying products</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ignored the app</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Alternatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cost</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inconvenience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>No Conflicts with app</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Throughout the analysis, data collected from pre-app use and post-app use were analyzed separately in order to draw conclusions about the influence of the app.

### 3.4 Summary of Methods and Analysis

This chapter has outlined the mixed methods case study approach taken in this thesis and has described each method taken in order to collect the data for this thesis and the steps taken to analyse said data. Each type of data that was collected and analysed has been described and
include media sources, app content, survey responses, focus group data, participant journals, and a single key informant interview. These methods and analyses have contributed to answering the four research questions previously described in the introduction of this thesis. The next two chapters will discuss the findings that resulted from the analyses of all data collected.
Chapter 4. Findings I: Pre-app Use Analysis

The following two chapters will report the findings of this study, and are split into findings from before participants’ use of the app, and following their use of the app. These sections correspond to survey responses and first round focus groups (pre-app use) and journal entries and second round focus groups (post-app use). The following sections outline the findings from pre-app use.

4.1 Who are the Participants?

Since surveys were used as both a data collection tool and as recruitment for focus groups, each focus group participant completed a survey; thus, data from the surveys can be used to analyse the broader survey population as well as focus group participants. The demographics of the broader survey respondent population are fairly consistent with focus group participants (see Figures 7 and 8), which means that the focus group participants are representative of the survey population. Both survey respondents and focus group participants were predominantly young females.

![Figure 7: Gender of Survey Respondents and Focus Group Participants](image1)

![Figure 8: Age of Survey Respondents and Focus Group Participants](image2)
However, the sample is not necessarily representative of all ethical consumers as the demographics of ethical consumers are highly contested in the literature. Overall, it is claimed that women are responsible for 80% of consumer purchases (Johnson and Learned, 2004) but this may or may not translate to ethical consumers. Witowski and Reddy (2010) found that many studies claim that women have stronger environmental attitudes and behaviour (Eisler et al., 2003; Hunter et al., 2004; Zelezny et al., 2000). However, in a study by Cowe and Williams (2000) it was established that ethical consumers could not be defined by demographics (gender, class, age, or political affiliations) but were better described by their attitudes and behaviour towards ethical issues. For this reason, both surveys and focus groups opened by asking participants about their attitudes towards ethical consumption.

4.2 Attitudes towards Ethical Consumption

Several questions in the survey and first round of focus groups were designed to determine participants’ attitudes towards ethical consumption. These data can determine how important ethical consumption is to participants and how they define ethical consumption. Further, this information will be used to make comparisons with post-app use analysis.

Although surveys were collected at different locations in an attempt to draw a wide variety of consumers, survey respondents overwhelmingly self-identified as ethical consumers. Survey respondents were asked to rank how strongly they agreed with the statement “I am an ethical consumer” on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). More than half of participants (n=118/212) agreed or strongly agreed that they were ethical consumers (Figure 9).
Figure 9: Survey Respondents’ Answers to the Question: “How strongly do you agree with the statement ‘I am an Ethical Consumer’?”

Survey respondents were also asked to rank how important a number of factors, such as environmental sustainability, promoting fair wages, and supporting the local economy, were while shopping on a scale of one (not at all important) to five (very important). Hardly any participants ranked factors lower than three (indicating a neutral response) (see Figure 10), and in all but three of the cases, the highest number of participants gave each factor a five.\(^8\)

---

\(^8\) Due to a discrepancy in answering these questions, perhaps due to a software malfunction, the totals of each factor are not consistent.
These responses from the broader survey population were consistent with the responses from focus group participants for the same question. It was evident that many of the participants considered themselves ethical consumers. In their first round of focus groups, participants were asked what their number one priority was when they shopped and ethics was the most common priority (n=11/26). For example, one participant stated “…sweatshop free is the main priority for me” (Participant 8, Focus Group Round 1) (See Appendix 3 for participant description). Ethical priorities were almost equal to cost (n=9/26), followed by quality (n=5/26) and one answer for convenience. The bias in respondent attitudes (towards ethical consumption) of those who selected to participate in the survey and focus groups was not a hindrance to this research. Instead, the fact that most participants self-identified as ethical consumers was beneficial to the research design because these participants would be the most likely to have downloaded an app like Buycott on their own. This allowed for the Buycott app to be tested with its intended audience, making the findings more relevant and applicable to ‘real-world’ conditions.

4.3 Defining Ethical Consumption

In accordance with the Buycott app discourse, it was clear that ethics meant different things to different participants. Participants’ definitions of ethical consumption were of particular interest because the Buycott app allows users to create their own ethical priorities. Users decide what...
ethical values they want to commit to expressing through their consumption practices by signing up for specific campaigns. However, it is interesting that even though the app allowed participants to decide what to prioritize, participants still made trade-offs with these values.

Following the ice-breaker, focus group participants were first asked “how do you define ethical consumption?” Just as with all questions posed in the focus groups, participants wrote their responses on a Post-It note and placed their answer on a sheet of chart paper. These definitions most-frequently referred to how a product was made and its impact on the environment and people. Many of the definitions provided by participants suggested that ethical consumption requires consumers to be informed and aware of these conditions. This was discussed at length in the focus groups. Many initial responses from participants included sentiments such as:

Ethical consumption is having knowledge and awareness of a variety of factors regarding one’s consumption. [For example], knowing where your avocado comes from and the conditions of the workers picking those avocados (Participant 22, Focus Group Round 1).

Consistent with Buycott discourse, participants discussed ethical consumption as unique to their own personal values. Buycott app developer Ivan Pardo stated during the interview that:

We want Buycott to be a platform that anyone can use regardless of what their principles are…I feel as though [the definition of] ethical consumption varies depending on what your own moral code is (Ivan Pardo, Interview).

One participant provided a personal anecdote about their own experience:

One thing I’ve noticed owning an ethical clothing store is that everybody’s version of what ethical means is very different. There are people who come in and are really considered about environment, they want it organic, or is a post-consumer waste product, or is it vegan friendly, or is it sweatshop [free]. So that varies widely (Participant 8, Focus Group Round 1).

Participants also noted that your ethical priorities could change depending on the product you are consuming. For instance, one participated said:

I think it really depends on the product. Like what I’m going to evaluate when I’m buying clothes is different from what I’m going to evaluate from when I’m food (Participant 19, Focus Group Round 1).
Although many participants agreed that ethics were defined based on personal priorities and values, some conversations included a discussion of absolute versus subjective morals. For example, after one group was prompted to discuss if their definitions of ethical consumption could apply to everyone, one participant stated:

It should. Ethics should technically be the same for everyone but it doesn’t right, we all have our own priorities, but basically true ethics should be kind of like a law… (Participant 16, Focus Group Round 1).

Another participant in the group further explained,

It’s just the weight that we place on something. There are some people who are going to be more concerned with the environmental impacts or animal rights (Participant 13, Focus Group Round 1).

Participants did not all agree on a concise definition of ethical consumption, but most definitions shared similar aspects, including how a product was made and the impact of its production. Furthermore, participants mostly agreed that ethical consumption depended on your personal priorities. These definitions of ethical consumption have major implications for participants’ consumption behaviour. If ethical consumption is a subjective definition, as Pardo and many participants have suggested, then ethical consumption behaviour is equally subjective and malleable.

4.4 Participant Behaviour

Surveys and the first round of focus groups also aimed to uncover more information about participants’ consumption behaviour prior to using the app. Surveys asked respondents to state how many times in the past year they had participated in given activities. These activities included ethical consumption behaviour such as boycotts and buycotts and other more traditional political actions such as letter writing, signing petitions, and attending public meetings (adapted from Schor and Willis, 2008). These responses are shown in Figure 11.
This graph was created again for the responses of focus group participants only shown in Figure 12.

It is clear that for both the broader survey respondents, and focus group participants, they are fairly uninvolved in activities constituting both consumer activism and broader political activism and community involvement. These findings seem contrary to respondents’ and participants’ self-identification as ethical consumers.
4.5 The Attitude-Behaviour Gap

In these two charts, it is the first two columns that are of particular interest because the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 characterized ethical consumption activities as consisting mostly of boycotts and buycotts. In order to assess the attitude-behaviour gap, a comparison of respondents’ perceptions of themselves as ethical consumers with their frequency of engagement in ethical consumption activities is needed.

As was demonstrated above in Figure 12, over half of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were ethical consumers. The average response by survey respondents to the question “how strongly do you identify as an ethical consumer?” was a 3.5 on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). However, on average, survey respondents participated in a boycott or buycott less than 5 times in the last year.

These findings suggest that although the majority of respondents defined themselves as ethical consumers, only a small percentage of them participated in ethical consumption behaviour (boycotts and buycotts) on a regular basis. Therefore, it can be suggested that this is reflective of the attitude-behaviour gap described in the literature review chapter above. These results provide validation for the study to test whether or not providing consumers with more information can reduce the attitude-behaviour gap as has been suggested in the literature.

4.6 The Role of Information in Ethical Consumption

Overall, there were mixed responses when focus group participants were asked to reflect on the amount of information available to consumers. Participants generally believed one of the three options: there is too little information, there is a lot of information, or the amount of information available is varied depending on the product. However, it was clear that all participants felt that information could have serious implications for consumers.

Survey respondents were asked how often they used specific methods (adapted from Willis and Schor, 2012) to learn about ethical consumption and could answer either: never, infrequently, sometimes, or frequently (Figure 13). It is clear from these responses that respondents were at most only sometimes engaging with information.
Figure 13: Responses to Survey Questions Regarding Information Engagement

It also became clearer in the focus groups that the survey respondents who became focus group participants were more engaged with information than the broader survey population. Every group in the first round of focus groups (n=7) agreed that you have to hunt for credible information. Participants agreed that there are different types of information: what companies choose to share (either on the label or otherwise) and what ethical consumers seek out (that is published independently). Participants shared where they would look for the latter kind of product information, and it seemed that participants overwhelmingly relied on the Internet to seek out information on products. Participants who mentioned searching the Internet for information did not provide specific websites or places on the Internet where they found this information. For example:

Moderator: So if you were to seek out information, where would you go for it?

Participant 5: Internet.

One participant, when asked to expand on her written response to the question “What do you think about the information available to consumers”, commented on how advancements in technology have improved consumer access to information:
I was just thinking of [how] historically it was more difficult to get information, but now with technology we have information at our fingertips, which is great but you have to know what is credible (Participant 17, Focus Group Round 1).

Besides completing basic Internet searches on products, participants also mentioned seeking information in online media and academic sources. However, these sources had some associated negative connotations. One participant noted that media was “biased because they’re reliant on advertising” (Participant 11, Focus Group Round 1). Another participant noted that “you have to do more digging for [academic sources]” (Participant 25, Focus Group Round 1).

In terms of information that corporations were willing to share, participants felt that this was all communicated through product labels. This type of information included ingredient lists, certifications, charitable associations, and country of origin. However, it was unanimously agreed that labels did not provide enough information to make ethical consumption decisions. For instance, one participant, after being prompted to discuss labels, noted:

\[
\text{[Labels] do help for some ethical consumption, but at the same time I think they can be bad too, for companies that use them for their own advantage, they can be misleading (Participant 25, Focus Group Round 1).}
\]

Participants noted that information provided on products is usually presented without context. An example one participant used was the country of origin. After being prompted with a summary of their contributions “…you’re battling with whether or not to trust what is being told to you…” (Moderator) Participant 5 stated:

\[
\text{If you look at a t-shirt and one said made in China, one says made in India, and one says made in Bangladesh, I don’t really know the difference in terms of manufacturing standards between the countries, I don’t know which one would be best if any of them actually are (Participant 5, Focus Group Round 1).}
\]

Another reflected that, unless shopping at a local business, it was almost impossible to ask about the ethics of a product at the point of purchase.

\[
\text{It’s uncomfortable to ask…to go in somewhere that maybe doesn’t say anything [about the ethics of their products] and [ask an employee] is this fair trade? It makes me feel like awkward, and it makes them feel awkward because you’re kind of asking them to tell you no (Participant 8, Focus Group Round 1).}
\]
In addition, each focus group session contained a discussion on the importance of information and its impact on consumers. Participants suggested that too much information could be overwhelming and that a lack of information could prevent consumers from making ethical decisions. For example:

It’s overwhelming trying to figure out if a product is ethical or not. It’s very difficult (Participant 13, Focus Group Round 1).

Other participants admitted that sometimes feeling overwhelmed with information lead to immobilization. For example:

It just sometimes gets too much, like information paralysis. Where you don’t know what to trust and you just kind of give up I guess (Participant 13, Focus Group Round 1).

Even though participants felt that information could be overwhelming and immobilizing, they all agreed that a lack of information would limit ethical consumption, especially for who they called ‘average consumers’. One participant wrote in their answer to how information affected them that,

The lack of information to consumers means consumers will not be able to affect the market as efficiently as with the full information (Participant 12, Focus Group Round 1).

Focus group participants also said that information could be empowering, enabling consumers to be more ethical, and make them feel better about their decisions and they unanimously agreed it was better that there was information than a lack of information. One group was asked specifically “…if all of this information is overwhelming, and maybe immobilizes you…is it still a step in the right direction?” (Moderator, Focus Group Round 1). One participant replied:

I think it’s a step in the right direction because at least the information is there and people are trying to look for it, and they might say what’s the point but I think it’s still a good thing because it’s raised the level of awareness somehow (Participant 1, Focus Group Round 1).

Most research participants admitted to having previously felt the need to seek out information on products on the Internet, and overall, felt that the information provided on product packaging was limited and insufficient. Participants expressed that it was difficult and time consuming to look for product information. Further, participants were already using new
forms of technology (the Internet) to search for information but they did not do this at the point of purchase. Rather they researched products at home, sometimes regarding planned future purchases and sometimes more randomly. The Buycott app presents a solution to this by allowing consumers to easily access information they would previously search for at home at the point of purchase. Overall, The Buycott app aims mirror the logic in arguments supporting the knowledge-fix as a solution to the attitude-behaviour gap. Therefore, these findings permit an empirical study analysing the role of information in consumer decision making, and adds a new aspect for analysis regarding the emerging role of technology.

4.7 Summary of Pre-app Use Findings

Analysis of surveys and the first round of focus groups indicated that survey respondents and focus group participants care about issues related to ethical consumption and tend to identify as ethical consumers. However, an apparent disconnect was evident in both groups’ survey responses: individuals’ strong feelings about ethical consumption did not correspond to their behaviour, i.e., boycott and buycott participation. This data supports the attitude-behaviour gap. Moreover, through their survey responses, respondents did not appear very engaged with information about ethical consumption. Focus group participants who did seem to be more engaged with this information still felt that it took far too much time to look up all the information that was needed to be an ethical consumer. Additionally, these participants noted that this information itself could be overwhelming, as could the process of having to search for credible information on the Internet. This data points to the potential usefulness of the Buycott app in providing participants with easier access to information about their consumption choices in order to change their behaviour. The following chapter will outline the findings from the analysis of participant’s use of the Buycott app.
Chapter 5. Findings II: Post-app Use Analysis

The analysis of the second round of focus groups and participant journals was structured around four questions: (i) How did participants engage with information provided by the app? (ii) How did the Buycott app influence participants’ everyday ethical consumption decisions? (iii) How did participants negotiate between the app’s recommendations and other factors, and (iv) In what ways did participants consider ethical consumption an effective route to create change? Within each question, emerging themes are explored and excerpts from focus groups and journals are used to illustrate participants’ perceptions of these themes.

5.1 Focus Group Participants’ engagement with information provided by the app

There were both positive and negative impressions of the information provided in the app, though overall, journal entries seemed to contain more positive impressions than focus groups. In their journal entries, participants focused on detailing their experiences with the app and focused less on barriers. In focus groups, participants seemed to ‘latch on’ to negative aspects of the app, and discussions would quickly turn to limitations and barriers.

5.1.1 Participants’ Reactions to Campaign Information

The information participants engaged with the most was through the campaigns they signed up for. As was explained above, campaigns develop a list of companies for participants to support and avoid. Campaigns are created by other users of the app, and thus this information is user-generated. During the first exercise in their second focus group meeting, participants were asked to write down three campaigns that stuck out from their time while they were using the app. They were then asked to place these campaigns on a continuum from useless to useful. Overall, there were fourteen (n=14) campaigns considered useless, twenty-three (n=23) that were in the middle, and nineteen (n=19) campaigns that were considered useful. Participants thought campaigns were useful if they provided helpful and credible information, appeared frequently when they scanned products (as opposed to never appearing and being irrelevant), and were connected to their personal ethics. For instance, “End Animal Testing” was considered a useful

---

9 There is evidence that focus groups are susceptible to ‘groupthink’, defined as “a psychological observable fact that occurs within groups of people...[when] group members try to minimize conflict and reach a consensus decision without critical evaluation of alternative perspectives (Boateng, 2012). Further, discussion can be dominated by stronger individuals, and thus may influence the direction of the conversation (Morgan, 1998)
campaign by multiple participants for each of these reasons. One participant explained it was useful because it had well thought out, credible, and helpful information about the practices of companies:

I feel as though they went and did their research on it, when you look at the citations and follow it along... This one was well thought out, well planned, and easy to manage, as a consumer you could easily follow these steps (Participant 22, Focus Group Round 2).

Useless campaigns were those that never appeared or when the campaign did appear it provided no new information or untrustworthy information. The “Buy Canadian” campaign was considered useless by one participant because she “didn’t really find anything really popped up that I scanned to support that product” (Participant 1, Focus Group Round 2). Additionally, one participant believed the “Boycott Coca-Cola” campaign was useless because “you can just look at the bottle and it says Coca-Cola” (Participant 9, Focus Group Round 2) and thus provided no information that was not already accessible to consumers. Finally, “Boycott Companies that Don’t Pay Income Taxes" was considered useless by one participant, illustrated below:

The only product that [I scanned that conflicted with the campaign] was a President’s Choice product, and PC is headquartered in Canada, and it said they don’t pay US income tax, and I was like yeah well they’re Canadian. So I would say that one was useless (Participant 5, Focus Group Round 2).

The resulting discussion revealed that participants were largely concerned with the perceived credibility of campaigns’ information. They questioned why the creators of the campaigns included products or companies to support or avoid. Participants who discussed campaigns they found trustworthy seemed to relate this to campaigns’ ability to link users to external sources. Participants did not take the information presented in campaigns at face value and would discuss the need to conduct their own research to complement or validate the app’s information. For example, when asked if they trusted the information presented in the app, Participant 2 explained “I Googled around a bit just to verify certain things” (Participant 2, Focus Group Round 2). When asked to expand on his Post-It note response “An excellent starting point for further inspection and investigation” (Participant 21, Focus Group Round 2) to the question: “What did you think about the information provided in the app?” Participant 21 explained:

---

10 President’s Choice is the brand used by Loblaws products
I found that it was good to start at, but because it’s all user generated, it’s like Wikipedia… [I] read it and then look into it (Participant 21, Focus Group Round 2).

It was clear that overwhelmingly, participants did not trust the information communicating why they should support or avoid a product. A lot of the distrust in the app seemed to stem from the fact that information in the campaigns is user-generated. Other users create campaigns and decide which products or corporations belong in either support or avoid categories. Participants largely distrusted this type of information and expressed their concern for user bias in both focus groups and participant journals. For example, when asked to expand on his answer (“Some seemed illegitimate and misinformed” (Participant 25, Focus Group Round 2)) to the question: “What did you think about the information provided in the app?” Participant 25 stated:

It seemed as though anyone could really create a campaign so that’s why I found that some were less informed or just didn’t have much to it…so it’s not, I guess it’s not fool proof in that sense (Participant 25, Focus Group Round 2)

When participants’ distrust of the information was discussed during focus groups, participants were asked to share their perceptions of the users, in general, who created campaigns. In all but one of the sessions these perceptions were largely negative and it was agreed that users were mostly uninformed and created campaigns out of personal vendetta. Contrary to the perception of users “with an axe to grind” (Participant 18, Focus Group Round 2), one focus group agreed on positive terms to describe the creators of campaigns such as “activist” and “informed”. It was from this focus group that one participant expressed support in user-generated information, citing its potential for user empowerment.

But in a way it’s great, because it means some poor Palestinian school kid with a bit of gumption could set up a campaign (Participant 26, Focus Group Round 2).

Although some participants discussed the benefits the app provided in organizing information all in one place, many participants complained about the amount of repetition and contradictory information present in the app (recall that there were 9 campaigns with Monsanto in the title alone). For instance, when discussing what made a good campaign, Participant 3 stated:
I found most of the GMO labeling ones, it’s not that they were useless, it’s just that there were too many of them, and many of them have conflicting information (Participant 3, Focus Group Round 2).

Consequently, participants voiced their desire for the app to be moderated or curated. When asked in their second focus group meeting if they had suggestions for making the app more trustworthy, one participant suggested:

I almost feel like if there was a bit of a vetting process, before any company was added if they need to show two things of proof instead of just anyone… just adding it without any [moderation] (Participant 3, Focus Group Round 2).

This mistrust in user-generated information was separate from the information presented in the corporate family tree of each product. The corporate family tree information, rather than being created by app users, is programmed into the app using a database created by the app developer. Users can see the corporate family tree for each product, which simply tells them the parent companies and subsidiaries connected to the chosen product. Although Buycott states “Buycott has a rich, but ultimately limited knowledge base of corporations and products” (Buycott, 2014) users seemed to trust the corporate tree information. Participants had an easier time trusting this information because it was very clear, concise, and easy to evaluate. For instance, in his second focus group meeting, one participant explained:

Part of why I really liked the parent company part of the tree is that a lot of that is really easy to check out and really easy to navigate so I liked that one a lot, and I found that to be a lot more helpful… because then it’s really straightforward (Participant 18, Focus Group Round 2).

Despite liking the design and ease of the corporate tree function and trusting its credibility, participants questioned the assumptions behind it. Participants took issue with one of the main assumptions of the app - that the corporate connections, or the parent company, of a product determine its ethicality. A main principle of the Buycott app is that users aim to avoid supporting the unethical practices of larger corporations by also avoiding their subsidiaries. However, participants felt that this was not always the case. As a case in point, when asked to reflect on their reactions to the amount of information provided in the app in their journals, one participant wrote:

…It's hard to hold the son accountable for the sins of the father. So, for example, Value Village donates profits to local not for profits. It also recycles
clothing and provides a valuable service for the community. However, it's owned by the Walton Family of Wal-Mart fame. Does boycotting a company based on one virtue make sense? (Participant 18, Journal)

Another participant, when asked to expand upon her initial reaction to the information provided in the app (“Overwhelming! Made me research even more!” (Participant 22, Focus Group Round 2)), said:

I feel like painting every company with the same brush might actually leave out some progress that companies within a sister [parent company] might be making. And boycott very much just says oh this is owned by this? Done. And that’s where it leaves room (Participant 22 Focus Group Round 2).

Participants seemed to unanimously feel that subsidiaries being owned by a corporation deemed to be unethical did not mean that they in-turn were unethical. Further, participants actually felt that by supporting ethical subsidiaries of unethical corporations you were sending more of a message than by avoiding these products. This is exemplified by one quandary posed by a participant during the second focus group meeting:

Does supporting the individual brand where they’ve actually sort of diversified… and gone out of the way to create something that follows certain ethics, by not even supporting that is that better or worse? …I feel like it’s still better to go out of your way to support a brand that does go to your values even if the parent company doesn’t because you’re still sending the parent company a message I’m buying this as opposed to your other…. (Participant 3, Focus Group Round 2).

This sentiment was mirrored in another focus group session where one participant, when discussing how to send a message with your purchases, suggested:

If you really want Loblaw’s to change, like wouldn’t it be great if their sales across the board skyrocketed but Joe Fresh11 plummeted then they’d look at those numbers and go right, let’s stop using sweatshop labour. It’s clear people care. Don’t abandon the company altogether, help it in the right direction (Participant 11, Focus Group Round 2).

It is clear that participants engaged with the information provided by the app in complex ways, and even contrary to the expectations of the app developer, such as their reactions to the connections between parent companies and their subsidiaries. Participants did not trust crowd-

---

11 Loblaw's clothing brand, recently in the media for their use of sweatshops.
sourced information and wanted the information in the app to be moderated or curated. While they did trust the corporate tree information in the app, they did not believe that a product’s connections to a parent company determined the ethicality of a product and felt that preference for ethical products could be communicated to the parent company if they continued to purchase ethical products of unethical corporations. Participants’ reactions to information had direct impacts on their consumption behaviour.

5.2 Influences of the Buycott app on Participants’ Everyday Ethical Consumption Decisions

Participants were asked to reflect on the influence of information on their consumption decisions on multiple occasions in their journals and during the second round of focus groups. Journals provided insight into the individual behaviour and thought processes of participants surrounding their own behaviour, and focus group discussions provided an opportunity to explore participants’ answers to journal questions in more depth, and often revealed the strong emotional connections participants felt with their consumption decision-making. In their online journals, participants were asked three questions regarding their daily practices: (i) Was there anything you normally purchase, but didn’t? Why? (ii) Is there anything you wouldn’t normally purchase but did? Why? (iii) Did you ignore the app at any point? What were your reasons for ignoring your campaigns? In the second round of focus groups, participants were asked how did your consumption behaviour change while using the app? In their responses to this question 36% of the participants (n=8/22) wrote that they noticed a change, while another 41% of participants (n=9/22) wrote that their behaviour did not change. Others’ responses were less definitive. The following sections will outline how participants perceived changes to their consumption behaviour, the barriers they felt prevented them from making more changes to their behaviour, and the ways in which they made trade-offs with the information presented in the app.

5.2.1 No Change in Behaviour

Participants who felt their behaviour did not change typically wrote very blunt responses. For example, one participant wrote “Unfortunately it didn’t change anything I did” (Participant 7, Focus Group Round 2). Surprisingly, some (n=3/22) participants revealed that they never scanned a product that conflicted with their campaigns. This can be explained for one of two
reasons. First, it could be that these participants were already abiding by the recommendations of each campaign they signed up for, as was interpreted by one participant who stated:

I already knew what I was buying was local and I already knew the supply chain etc. (Participant 11, Journal).

This would make sense if the participants only signed up for campaigns that reflected their extremely specific ethical values. One participant asked in her journal reflections:

I wonder if I should possibly add more campaigns, but I feel like I've already added the things I am really interested in (Participant 17, Journal).

When this comment was followed up on in the participant’s second focus group meeting, it was revealed that this participant had signed up for 6 campaigns, which was average for that particular group. This data was not collected for all participants, so it is difficult to say whether this is the case, or if perhaps their consumption did already match their ethical priorities reflected in the campaigns they signed up for. Additionally, it’s possible that these participants were untruthful about their use of the app or that they may have only used the app to scan products that they knew would not conflict.

### 5.2.2 Changes in Participant Behaviour

Almost half (n=8/22) of the focus group participants from round 2 wrote that they noticed a change in their behaviour in response to “how did your consumption behaviour change while using the app?” Even more participants wrote about changes to their behaviour in their journal entries. Those participants who noted a change in their behaviour discussed two types of changes: changes in their actual shopping habits, and changes in what they purchased.

#### 5.2.2.1 Changes in Shopping Location

Interestingly, several participants noted a behaviour change in where they shopped. Participants believed that it would be easier to shop at farmer’s markets or local ‘ethical’ shops as they felt there would be less products available at these locations they would need to avoid, and could sometimes save them from needing to scan products because they had no barcodes (such as at the farmers’ market). One participant stated:
In the end I ended up going to the Bulk Barn\textsuperscript{12} and the farmers’ market more often (Participant 9, Focus Group Round 2).

In her journal response she had previously noted that the Buycott app would not work at bulk stores, but in her focus group admitted that she shopped there more often because she felt that the nature of the store ensured that the products were more ethical. Following this comment, participants were asked if anyone else changed where they shopped. Participant 5 stated:

I went to Market Fresh\textsuperscript{13} a bit more often, they tend to have more options that are organic fairtrade, but they’re also like ten times more expensive than going to No Frills\textsuperscript{14} (Participant 5, Focus Group Round 2).

One participant attempted to explain her own rational behind where they shopped:

I feel like… depending on the type of store that you’re in, you just feel like you know it’s all bad, and then I end up at the Stone Store\textsuperscript{15} and I trust them because they’ve curated everything (Participant 8, Focus Group Round 2).

This behaviour was mentioned in three of the five second round focus groups. This change in behaviour was also revealed by a participant after they had been asked if they would continue to scan other brands of an item after a product appeared as a conflict, one participant said: “I tried to avoid barcodes all together” (Participant 5, Focus Group Round 2).

Participants seemed to enjoy shopping at these places, not only because they felt they could trust that the products were ethical, but because without barcodes, they had an excuse to not use the Buycott app. In addition to changing where they shopped, participants discussed changing what they bought.

5.2.2.2 Changes in What Participants Purchased

Many participants noted in their journals that they chose not to purchase a product they would have normally bought because of the information presented in the app. Their explanations for this behaviour generally fell under one of three themes: because the product they had intended to buy was a luxury item, or because there were other options available to them that the app did not

---

\textsuperscript{12} Chain bulk store

\textsuperscript{13} Market Fresh is an upscale, gourmet grocery store located in Guelph.

\textsuperscript{14} No Frills is a budget grocery store, owned by Loblaws

\textsuperscript{15} Stone Store is a small natural foods store located in Guelph.
recommend they avoid, and finally, because they seemed to accept the recommendations of the app.

Participants seemed to be willing to go without a luxury item if it was unethical and did not align with their priorities. For example, one participant wrote in the journal:

I was going to purchase a treat that I sometimes do and I found that I couldn't really find a version [that did not conflict with any of my campaigns], so I just decided to leave it be (Participant 9, Journal).

Other participants wrote that they would go without a product they normally purchase if an alternative existed, exemplified by the following journal excerpt:

I found some products that I normally buy that are part of a monopoly, so I tried some other products that were similar but from a smaller company (Participant 16, Journal).

In another journal entry, a participant wrote:

I didn't buy a Dole salad mix because Dole supported the anti-GMO labelling campaign (Participant 19, Journal).

This response seems as if this participant decided to not purchase a product, only because it conflicted with her campaigns; however, when this case was mentioned in the second focus group meeting, it was clear that she was able to not purchase the Dole salad because an alternative existed. She told the group:

At one point I scanned a salad mix that was a dole salad mix and it was GMO labeling, but then there was a President’s Choice right there so I thought let’s scan this, and it [was] fine (Participant 19, Focus Group Round 2)

In focus groups, discussion focused more on times that they ignored the app. Participants discussed how they would ignore the app if it was a product they needed (as opposed to a luxury item) and no other alternative existed (this is discussed in more detail in section 5.3.1). Finally, some participants gave no other reason for not purchasing a product they would normally, other than that it conflicted with their campaigns. For example:

---

16 Referring to Dole Food Company Inc.
17 Loblaws private label
I did not purchase the Tostitos after learning that they are one of the US companies that financially benefits from labourers in for-profit penitentiaries (Participant 5, Journal).

In her second focus group, this participant chose the campaign which prevented her from buying Tostitos, mentioned above, as one of the most useful campaigns. She explained that she appreciated the campaign because: “every time it actually had an explanation of why it was the case [that a product was to be avoided]” (Participant 5, Focus Group Round 2). In this example, it is obvious that new information did create a change in this participant’s behaviour.

In participants’ journals, it appeared that abiding by the recommendations of the app was the only reason given by participants for buying a product that was new to them or going without a product. However, after a more in-depth exploration afforded by focus group discussion, it’s clear that this was not true. Examples of times when participants chose to purchase something they wouldn’t normally include the following participant’s decision to switch to no name brands:

I actually found myself purchasing a lot of the no name/generic brands. They were the ones less likely to have a conflict, and in the case of something like natural peanut butter there really is no difference in taste or ingredients (Participant 9, Journal).

In focus groups, this participant stated:

I ended up buying a lot of no name [private label] brands, not because I think the no names are better, but because I don’t think their information was on there (Participant 9, Focus Group Round 2).

So where in her journal entry, it appeared that this behaviour was motivated only by ethical values, it was clear from the focus group discussion that private label brands were purchased in order to avoid information, perhaps as a result of the sometimes overwhelming feelings of frustration and guilt associated with using the app. In another group’s discussion about no name products, one participant stated:

I found that a lot of private labelled [no name] products, like for example private labelled ketchup is made by Heinz, but if I checked the one I get from the Food Basics\footnote{Lower end chain grocery store} which is Compliments [stores’ brand] or whatever, it comes up fine, scan Heinz and it’s a different story. It’s the same thing. And so, I
think…that’s because a lot of the information is based less on the product and more on the company (Participant 21, Focus Group Round 2).

Other participants discussed purchasing a new product only if the app told them to actively support (buycott) the product. For example,

I bought a bag of Beanfields unsalted bean & rice chips instead, which I normally wouldn't have purchased. They showed up with no campaigns against them, but were supported by all of the non-GMO product and anti-Monsanto campaigns, which was encouraging (Participant 5, Focus Group Round 2).

It’s clear that participants had very complex interactions with the information presented to them in the app, and their reactions to this information were equally complex. These reactions will continue to be investigated in the follow sections.

5.3 Barriers to Changes in Behaviour

In their journals, participants described times when they had ignored the recommendations of the app. Reasons for ignoring the app were very diverse and emotionally charged, compared to when participants followed the recommendations of the app. The focus groups allowed a deeper discussion of times when participants ignored the app, and provided insight into the barriers to behaviour change that participants faced. Barriers included the lack of available alternative products, the price of ethical alternatives, and the time it took to use the app while shopping.

5.3.1 Lack of Available Alternatives

The most cited reason for ignoring the app was that no alternative product existed. For example, one participant wrote in her journal:

I bought the batteries. I scanned a few options and they all conflicted with campaigns. I needed the batteries so had no alternative (Participant 8, Journal).

Many participants mentioned wanting chocolate in their journals but not being able to find an ethical alternative, like one participant who explained:

I had a chocolate craving and caved. I bought the one that had the least conflicts. The store didn't sell the ethical chocolate I can buy (Participant 9, Journal).

The same theme appeared in focus groups. One participant, when asked if they had any insight to why their behaviour may not have changed, or to why they ignored the app, said:
Well I think I wouldn’t have ignored [the app] if it had given me an option. So if I scan something that I need on a daily basis and it comes up as flagged… if it had suggested an alternative that was right there, then I would have felt better about it (Participant 10, Focus Group Round 2).

Participants of another group revealed that sometimes they chose not to scan a product. When asked what would make them choose not to scan something, one of the participants said she would not scan a product if she knew there were no alternatives available to her:

If there’s only one almond milk and I really want almond milk, I’m not going to scan it because… no matter what I’m buying the almond milk so I don’t want to know. There are no alternatives this is what I’m getting (Participant 22, Focus Group Round 2)

Here it is clear that participants could become frustrated when there was a product they believed they needed but could not find an ethical alternative. In these cases, it seems that most participants ended up purchasing the unethical product rather than going without. Participants had many reasons for this behaviour, including nutrition, demonstrated in the below quote, where a vegetarian participant discusses her need for eggs in her diet:

Eggs are largely factory farmed and I did scan my eggs. And I still bought them. Absolutely. Need protein somehow (Participant 22, Focus Group Round 2).

Often, participants would discuss not wanting to know the information about a product they knew they were going to buy because they did not want to feel guilty. For example:

One time I was at the airport and I had no choices. So it wasn’t [that] I’m not going to buy [water]… there are no water fountains in the states so I’m going to go thirsty? No. So I’m going to scan it be and like, man now I’m drinking my non-LGBTQ friendly whatever it is and now I just feel bad about it (Participant 18, Focus Group Round 2).

Other participants in the focus group were very sympathetic to this feeling. Immediate responses to this story included: “You might as well enjoy it” (Participant 20, Focus Group Round 2), to which there seemed to be unanimous agreement.

When participants wanted to purchase a particular item but did not think there were any alternatives, or did not want to take the time to find an alternative (more in 6.3.3), they did not want to use the Buycott app to scan the product in fear that they would be told information that would make them feel guilty. This resulted in participants choosing to not use the app. If they did
scan the product, then rather than lead to a change in behaviour, it lead to negative emotions such as guilt.

5.3.2 Price of Ethical Alternatives

Price was mentioned as another prime reason for ignoring the recommendations of the app. For example, one participant noted in her journal:

I ignored the app when it came to buying eggs. Free range eggs are simply too expensive even though I supported the campaign stop factory farming (Participant 22, Journal).

Another participant, when asked why she ignored the app, explained:

It [was] cost for me because, for instance I want to buy butter, I’m going to get the 3 or 4 dollar butter because the ethical organic stuff is 10 bucks (Participant 26, Focus Group Round 2).

Other participants talked about how shopping at new locations, mentioned above (such as Market Fresh and The Stone Store), often meant that they were faced with higher prices. One participant explained,

It became overwhelming if I wanted to shop at these stores, I can’t afford to buy anything else, because like the $20 sun screen and $6 for a thing of lettuce that I have to eat within two days. It’s a big change in behaviour (Participant 14, Focus Group Round 2).

To which another participant replied “It’s expensive” (Participant 15, Focus Group Round 2). The first participant continued to explain:

I just wanted to do it all, like I thought I’d only shop here, but it was like I can’t afford to do that so you just do your best I guess (Participant 14, Focus Group Round 2).

For this participant, that meant prioritizing her ethical values, or “supporting local and [the] farmers market…it might not be organic but at least its local” (Participant 14, Focus Group Round 2).

Not only was price mentioned as a barrier throughout the focus groups, it was also listed as a main priority for participants. One of the activities in this round of focus groups asked participants to reflect on their priorities while using the app. Participants were provided with ten stickers and asked to divide these up as if they were ‘votes’ between five factors (cost, ethics,
quality/nutrition, enjoyment, and other). Cost was the third most important priority for participants, behind ethics and nutrition/quality. Even though participants said that ethics was a stronger priority in their shopping, the price of ethical products was still a barrier to them following through with their priorities.

5.3.3 Time Required for App Use

Finally, participants referenced lack of time as a barrier to both using the app and to the app changing their behaviour. As was mentioned above, participants did not always use the app. In addition to not wanting to learn negative information about the products they felt had no alternatives, they also did not use the app if they felt they didn’t have time. Multiple participants admitted to not using the app because they were rushed to finish their grocery shopping. For instance, one participant admitted:

If I was just getting a couple of things I would take the time, but when I was doing big grocery shopping I just didn’t have time for it (Participant 18, Focus Group Round 2).

Another participant in the group agreed “yeah I checked when there were fewer items to buy” (Participant 21, Focus Group Round 2). Making more ethical choices while shopping was also seen as taking up more time. In one participant’s journal she reflected:

It is time consuming and overwhelming when you feel like you can't buy most things in the grocery store (Participant 14, Journal).

Others talked about how using the app was still like doing research, and took too much time to sort through the campaigns and validate the information. To this point, one participant said:

I could probably join more campaigns, it just took so much time to see if they were trustworthy or not (Participant 13, Focus Group Round 2).

And another explained why she thought she ignored the app and continued to buy mostly the same products:

I think it falls back to the time, I didn’t want to take all that time to read everything, I’m a student right now so I’m reading a lot anyway. You only have 24 hours a day, I’m a student I can’t do all that stuff (Participant 15, Focus Group Round 2).

Time acted as a barrier to behaviour change in multiple ways. First, the amount of time needed to use the app while shopping prevented participants from even scanning products. Second, the
changes that participants felt were required to shop more ethically, such as changing where they shopped, were too time consuming. Finally, participants felt that to use the app fully, and validate the information so that they could sign up for suitable campaigns, took too much of their time.

5.3.4 Summary of Behaviour Change

Participants described a complex behavioural reaction to the information provided in the Buycott app. Participants changed their behaviour in some situations, when they felt that changes were easy enough to make and were not limited by any barriers. They bought new products they had never tried before and stopped buying others when a product conflicted with their campaigns. However, there were also many times when participants either ignored the recommendations of the app, or chose not to use the app at all. Participants described a lack of alternatives, the high cost of ethical products, and the increased amount of time required to participate in ethical consumption, as barriers to their behaviour change. Journals and focus groups also revealed more nuance in ways that participants made trade-offs with the information presented to them.

5.4 Participants’ Trade-Offs with Ethical Priorities

Discussion in focus groups revealed how participants prioritized based on the information provided in the app and coped with the feelings they encountered while using the app, including feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, and immobilized. Participants would make trade-offs with their purchases if there were competing priorities, if the app’s recommendations were based on the ethics of a product’s parent company, and because of social pressure or obligation.

5.4.1 Trade-Offs Based on Competing Priorities

Many times, participants said they would scan a product and find that they were forced to prioritize their various ethical commitments because their campaigns would conflict with each other. One participant discussed how she would frequently find products for which she had both supporting and opposing campaigns. She explained.

It would be like well there’s one campaign that it supports but there’s also one that it doesn’t, so I’d have to go ok which one do I care more about? The GMO labeling or the LGBTQ thing, and then make a trade off based on that (Participant 19, Focus Group Round 2).
Participants often described this as a type of ‘making the best of a bad situation’. For example, when Participant 9 was asked to expand on her written response to this question, she expressed being overwhelmed with the information and explained how she dealt with this feeling:

The other GMO one was just too much, it got to a point where everything was conflicting, so I had to pick the best worst choice I guess (Participant 9, Focus Group Round 2).

When asked if anyone wanted to expand on the overwhelming feelings they experienced, Participant 15 expressed how the amount of information lead to also feeling demotivated:

It’s demotivating for me… like I just kind of stopped really caring. For me, there’s so many issues in the world… (Participant 15, Focus Group Round 2)

And continued to explain how she dealt with the extensive amount of information and these feelings:

I focus on one [priority] that is tangible for me, so I like agriculture, that’s my domain, so I think with this I’ll probably end up doing the same thing… I’m just going to have to focus [my campaigns] more (Participant 15, Focus Group Round 2).

It seemed that many participants experienced these competing campaigns, and were forced to prioritize which of the campaigns they felt most strongly about. In order to avoid feeling overwhelmed and immobilized, participants chose to concentrate their efforts on the campaigns they cared about the most, or tried to choose the ‘best worst case’ in each scenario.

5.4.2 Trade-Offs Based on Parent Companies

As was mentioned earlier, participants did not always believe that an unethical parent company meant every product was unethical. When the Buycott app informed participants that they were avoiding a product, and participants could tell that it was because of the parent company, and did not reflect the ethics of the product they had scanned, they made trade-offs with their ethics to purchase the product. Even though, according to the app, the product they scanned went against their values, participants felt that they could make more of a statement by supporting what they thought were ethical subsidiaries of unethical parent companies. As one participant explained, when you purchase an ethical product owned by an unethical parent company:
It’s like it almost pats them on the back for doing something good and it could change the direction that their company goes in (Participant 14, Focus Group Round 2).

Participants would make a trade-off with the recommendations of the app if they believed the campaign was only reflecting the poor ethical practices of the parent company and not the individual product by purchasing the product in hopes that it would send a positive message to the parent company.

5.4.3 Trade-Offs Based on Social Pressure

Trade-offs with information about the ethical values of a product were also negotiated depending on the reasons for purchasing a specific product. For example, social pressure and/or obligation seemed to influence one participant to dismiss her ethical priorities in one scenario. This participant was discussing how shopping took much longer now that she had to consider the ethics of every product. She discussed debating with herself over chocolate chips, and said:

Eventually I just bought the decadent ones because I was like you know what I need to make these chocolate chip cookies and I didn’t want to spend a lot of money…I was going somewhere and said I’d bring chocolate chip cookies. I had to bring a lot for people that I didn’t really know (Participant 1, Focus Group Round 2).

This participant felt obliged to bring the chocolate chip cookies she had promised, even though she had since learned that she should avoid purchasing chocolate chips. Another participant explained in a journal entry that they ignored the app because there were no alternatives to a recipe:

I ignored [the app’s recommendations] because I went shopping once for ingredients for a certain dish I was making, and some of the items I could not find an ethical solution for. Since I wanted to make the dish, I just ignored those campaigns for those items (or picked the least worst out of the bunch, i.e. donated less to the cause I was against) (Participant 9, Journal).

In these scenarios, participants made trade-offs with their own ethical values, as represented in the app, because they felt pressured to fulfill their social obligations.
5.5 Summary of the Influences of the Buycott App on Participants’ Everyday Ethical Consumption Decisions

The information presented to participants in the Buycott app influenced participants in complex ways. In some ways, it influenced participants’ behaviour to change, such as changing where they shopped and buying new products or different brands. However, participants only refrained from purchasing a product that they felt they needed if an ethical alternative was available. A lack of alternatives was the most widely cited barrier to following the recommendations of the app, in addition to the increased price of ethical products, and the time required to use the app while shopping. Further, participants were frequently making trade-offs between the information they were given and other factors, including competing priorities, connections to parent companies, and social pressure.

5.6 Participants’ Thoughts on Ethical Consumption as an Effective Route to Create Change

As was discussed in the literature review chapter of this thesis, many scholars characterize ethical consumption as a way that consumers can create change in the market place, express personal values, and as a method of consumer activism. Some scholars even claim that ethical consumption can be considered a political act. In order to explore how participants perceive the political nature of ethical consumption each participant completed a handout with a table (Appendix 4), adapted from Schor and Willis (2008). This table was formatted with a preliminary sentence “When I make ethical consumption choices I feel that I can effectively…” and then each row was a separate statement:

i. Make social change
ii. Directly support fair wages
iii. Support innovative businesses
iv. Protect the environment
v. Communicate to corporations that people will pay more for products that serve our values
vi. Boycott or punish products, industries, and businesses that I disapprove of by spending my money elsewhere
vii. Live in commitment to my values
viii. Educate the younger generation
ix. Participate in a community of people working for change
x. Communicate what I think is important to the government
xi. Communicate what I think is important to corporations
For each focus group, individual participants’ responses were combined onto one piece of chart paper and displayed to the group. This section outlines the results of these matrixes and the discussion that ensued.

Each participant ranked each statement on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The results are summarized in Figures 14 and 15.

![Figure 14: Matrix Results I](image-url)
In all but three cases (support innovative businesses, communicate what I think is important to the government, and communicate what I think is important to corporations) at least half of the participants chose a 5 or higher. The same three cases were the only ones in which some participants strongly disagreed (indicated by a 1). Overall, it appears that research participants were fairly positive about what they could accomplish through ethical consumption. The greatest number of participants strongly agreed that through ethical consumption they could support innovative businesses, and also live in commitment to their values. It is no surprise that these options with the strongest reaction were also some of the most widely discussed. Participants’ solitary reflection collected in the handouts were again more positive than the resulting discussions. Most of the discussion focused on the following table options: boycott or punish products, industries, and businesses that I disapprove of by spending my money elsewhere; communicate what I think is important to the government; communicate what I think is important to corporations; protect the environment; and create social change.

Throughout the discussion of participants’ responses to these statements there were a few predominant themes, mainly: the insignificance of individual consumers and the need for critical
mass, the need for additional acts that complement ethical consumption, and the preference for boycotts over boycotts. These are explored in more detail below.

5.6.1 Feelings of Insignificance and the Need for Critical Mass

A predominant theme throughout discussions regarding the handout revealed that most participants questioned their ability to make a difference as an individual consumer. They asked, ‘do companies notice?’ and debated over the need for a critical mass. Similar to the ways that focus group discussions were more negative than journal entries, even though participants seemed to agree that they could effectively boycott or punish companies, the discussion regarding this statement was fairly negative and allowed participants to express their feelings of insignificance. For example, after one participant stated that she felt she was able to make a difference through her boycotting another participant replied:

I just think I’ve been boycotting Nestle since I was twelve and what has it done? (Participant 3, Focus Group Round 2).

There were sentiments like this expressed throughout the discussions. Many participants expressed that they felt individual consumers, acting alone, would not be able to make a difference. Participants overwhelmingly felt that a critical mass was needed to inspire change. There were many instances when participants expressed feeling overwhelmed or insignificant.

One participant, when asked why she disagreed with the statement, said:

I was one of the [participants who gave this a two (disagreed)] because it feels so overwhelming, we have such big companies that you’re just a drop in a bucket, and you’re doing your part but it doesn’t feel as powerful (Participant 9, Focus Group Round 2).

Another participant mirrored these sentiments and explained her disagreement and corresponding belief that critical mass was needed:

I’ve had so many years feeling like an only child in the wilderness with these kinds of things. I don’t feel like we’ve got a critical mass yet...It has to be a large number of people not purchasing, like my little purchase is not going to register. It would have to be large enough to get their attention (Participant 7, Focus Group Round 2).
Participants also questioned if the messages they had hoped to send to corporations through their ethical consumption were the same message corporations received. For instance, one participant stated:

There are a lot of variables...do you send a message when you buy a product? Absolutely. But sometimes the message you really send is I like this product, but the reasons why [you like the product] don’t necessarily matter (Participant 21, Focus Group Round 2).

However, some participants felt that corporations would properly interpret these messages. For example, one participant, when discussing why he felt boycotting was an effective way to inform corporations of their failings, stated:

Coke knows when you don’t buy from them. They spend millions on market research to know exactly how much [consumers are] buying...what they’re thinking when they’re buying...if you stop purchasing their products they’ll keep changing gears until they find out what you’re looking for (Participant 11, Focus Group Round 2).

The same participant, when discussing how ethical consumption could communicate to corporations, stated:

You are a part of it and I think that’s what most people forget, if everybody thinks that [consumers are powerless] then [companies] win. The easiest way to take someone’s power away is to tell them they don’t have any (Participant 11, Focus Group Round 2).

Participants seemed to agree that ethical consumption was a more effective way to communicate to corporations than to governments. Indeed, participants questioned how their consumption choices would communicate to the government. One participant, when asked if she felt ethical consumption was able to communicate to the government, questioned:

I don’t know if the choices would actually make their way to the government, I don’t know how that would happen, I don’t understand how that would happen, I would like to hope it does (Participant 1, Focus Group Round 2).

Overall, participants undervalued their importance as individual consumers and felt that critical mass was needed in order to make any significant changes.

However, there were a few instances where participants felt that they could easily make a difference as an individual, such as: living in accordance to their values, directly supporting fair
wages, and supporting innovative business. Discussion based on these options was much more positive, as participants felt that their individual purchases translated into a direct response in these areas. Participants were always more positive when they believed they were able to see the results of their ethical consumption. One participant reflected on why she often felt more positive about what ethical consumption could accomplish compared to others in her focus group:

I think part of it is because I do put local ahead of everything else. So not only am I sort of choosing my values over something else, I also get to see the results. So I can see a social change, I can see when more people shop at the store that I support. And when I’m out in my city and people are talking about it. I hear people sitting in a café talking about this great coffee share program and I’m like I’m part of that and I know that my having been part of that for a year and a half has helped that person get to that point now where a stranger on the street will also do it. For me I think it’s also because the local is so important, so that is why I can see that I’ve made social change. Because it’s right here (Participant 3, Focus Group Round 2).

Since this is not the case with most large corporations and international movements, it is understandable that participants felt less assured that their ethical consumption decisions were creating change. This local-global gap points to a significant disconnect between the prerogatives of participants in this study and the focus of the app. The Buycott app has a very corporate focus, evident in the connections being made in campaigns between subsidiaries and their parent companies and the corporate family tree; however, participants have constantly challenged this and have continued to express local priorities. This conceptualization of local as ethical is not reflected in the app.

5.6.2 Complementary Actions

In accordance with participants’ reservations regarding their power as individual consumers to communicate to corporations and government, they felt that sometimes ethical consumption alone was not enough. For example, one participant expressed:

I do think that small stuff creates big change, but I think what’s important is advocating, because if you’re just [an] individual boycotting a company, I think advocating and spreading that is going to be important, because large companies can find a way around (Participant 25, Focus Group Round 2).

This participant suggested that although corporations may receive ethical consumers’ demands, they would not be forced to pay attention to them, because there was not a large enough audience
to hold them accountable. When another participant was asked if she believed that ethical consumption alone was not enough to communicate to corporations and government, she responded:

Yeah for sure. And I think how many people are going to join this app…the big majority of people [will not]…they need to hear about it to read about to it to make a big difference (Participant 14, Focus Group Round 2).

A third participant in the same session agreed that activities that she considered to be political actions, such as: “Writing letters, or something more drastic like protests…” (Participant 9, Focus Group Round 2) were required in order to create social change. This was especially true when participants discussed how their ethical consumption decisions could communicate to government, with one participant declaring:

The way I buy something isn’t going to change the government, the way I vote is going to change the government (Participant 18, Focus Group Round 2).

The need for complementary actions was discussed in some way in each second round focus group. Not only did participants feel that boycotts and buycotts alone could not communicate to corporations or government, they also felt that broader political action was required.

5.6.3 Boycotts vs. Buycotts

Finally, participants seemed to believe that positive actions such as buycotting were more effective at communicating messages and creating social change than boycotting. Not only did participants feel that buycotting was more effective, they also felt it was more empowering. One participant explained the different feelings she associated with buycotting over boycotting:

I would say it’s more empowering buying from the little guy than not buying from [a corporation]. And I think why [is because] not buying that product doesn’t feel very empowering…that’s why people don’t go without, it feels good to do the right thing, but it doesn’t feel good to do nothing (Participant 8, Focus Group Round 2).

Other participants discussed how buycotting would more effectively contribute real benefits to smaller retailers than boycotting could effectively change corporations. Participants were asked if they believed there was a difference in the type of message that was communicated to ethical and unethical corporations, and one participant replied:
If you buy from the small guy they’re going to know, and if you buy from the big guy they’re probably going to outsource to the other thousand drones that don’t know what they’re doing (Participant 10, Focus Group Round 2).

Finally, some participants just felt that it was easier and less overwhelming to boycot. For instance, when asked about the differences between buycotting and boycotting, one participant stated:

I think it would be easier too, because if there is one good choice then there’s probably seven bad choices. So it’s more focussed I’d say, which is probably easier. And not nearly as overwhelming” (Participant 13, Focus Group Round 2).

Although participants indicated that they agreed they could accomplish many things through ethical consumption, they also experienced feeling overwhelmed or insignificant. Participants did not believe ethical consumption could be used to address larger scale problems and felt that a critical mass and additional political actions were needed to influence change. Participants also felt that ethical consumption could be used to effectively create change at the local level, particularly through buycotts, rather than boycotts.

5.7 **Summary of Findings**

This analysis has demonstrated that participants engage with information in complex ways and overwhelmingly did not trust crowd-sourced information. Participants’ trust of the information provided in the app had significant impacts on how they negotiated their reactions to the information. Participants experienced changes in their everyday consumption practices but did not feel that they experienced significant behavioural changes, perhaps due to the large amount of perceived barriers they faced in their everyday shopping routines. Participants employed various strategies to address the recommendations of the app while frequently making trade-offs with their ethical values. Finally, participants were largely positive about what they felt they could accomplish through ethical consumption but often felt insignificant when facing large corporations or international problems. The implication of these findings will be further discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter 6. Discussion

This section will discuss two broad themes revealed in the findings and make connections with the literature. These broad themes are (i) information and behaviour, and (ii) information and technology. Following this analysis, future directions for technology to facilitate information to consumers in order to promote ethical consumption will be explored.

6.1 Information and Behaviour

This study revealed some common traits about how participants interacted with information. These included participants’ tendencies to make negotiations or trade-offs between the information they received through the Buycott app and their various priorities, often leading to participants questioning or ignoring the information provided by the app.

6.1.1 Negotiations between Ethical Priorities and Information

It became obvious in hearing participants discuss their experiences with the app that they were constantly negotiating between their ethical values and the information presented by the app. Participants identified this as making trade-offs. Hall (2011) also found that participants were in constant states of negotiations, and noted that consumption is often “a negotiation between money, ethics, convenience and past experience” (p. 632). This study found that negotiations were made by participants between competing ethical priorities, competing interests, based on the trust of information, and the perceived impact of their purchases.

6.1.1.1 Competing Ethical Priorities

This study was particularly well-suited at discovering instances where participants would negotiate their ethical values in light of or despite information, as the Buycott app necessitates that users identify their ethical priorities before using the app by joining campaigns. Sometimes participants would scan a product and find that they had campaigns that both supported and opposed the product. Here it was clear that aspects of their ethical values competed with each other and participants were forced to prioritize. Recall when Participant 19 had to choose between their support of GMO labelling and of LGBTQ rights. This participant did not reveal how this affected her behaviour, but it does highlight the internal struggle participants faced because of competing ethical priorities.
The idea of competing ethical priorities appeared in Eden et al.’s (2008) study as well, which she described as “not so much ‘no logo’…[but] as ‘which logo’” (p. 1053). In Eden et al.’s study, participants were also found to be negotiating between different ethical factors that they deemed important. For these participants, these related purely to food, such as “low food miles or localness [versus] …being fairly traded or organically grown” (Eden, 2008 p. 1053). In this study, participants were faced with an even wider set of ethical criteria to choose from because of the diversity of products and campaigns engaged through the app (e.g., from labour rights to animal welfare), and thus this type of scenario was potentially encountered even more often. Eden et al. (2008) proposed that this demonstrates the importance of characterizing consumption a comparative practice rather than an either/or state.

6.1.1.2 Competing Interests

There were also many instances where users had to negotiate their ethical values with external competing interests. For example, recall the participant who wanted to make chocolate chip cookies for her friends, but knew that the chocolate was unethical. In this scenario, the interest of baking for her friends won out over her ethical commitments. Hall (2011) illustrated how factors such as money, waste, health, gendered and parental responsibilities, and social and environmental concerns are entangled in ‘ethical everyday’ decision-making by families. For example, one family in Hall’s (2011) study had a family member with an illness requiring a specific diet and found that they were required “to care less about morals in consumption choices…Therefore, as part of [the mother’s] gendered responsibility to feed her family, [the mother] was required to adapt or find ‘alternative ways’ of cooking for [the father]” (p. 634). These findings are consistent with the complex negotiations participants spoke of in focus groups and journals, where ethical priorities alone did not guide all consumption decisions.

6.1.1.3 Trust of Information

Another reason that participants provided for ignoring the app, and causing them to negotiate with their identified ethical values, was their distrust in information. Consumers’ lack of trust in corporations’ and their ethical claims is commonly discussed in the literature (Bray et al., 2011; Eden et al., 2008; Hawkins, 2010; Micheletti and Stolle, 2003; Watts and Wyner, 2011). There are also studies that suggest consumers show more trust towards other people than institutions and corporations, such as Stoll et al.’s (2005) study that found “while [consumers] are critical
and even distrusting of political institutions, at the same time, they have a rather trusting and positive outlook toward other people” (p.261).

However, in the case of the Buycott app, it was not distrust in corporations that caused participants to ignore the information they were given, but a distrust in other users of the app who created the campaigns. Participants admitted to buying a product that a campaign may have been opposed to because they were “not 100% convinced by the information” (Participant 19, Focus Group 2). Participants did not trust the information provided in campaigns because it was user generated and had the potential to be biased or inaccurate. However, participants did trust the information in the corporate family tree, provided by the app developer, but did not believe that parent companies or subsidiaries were the best way to evaluate a product’s ethics.

6.1.1.4 Perceived Impact

Participants, like some scholars (Binkley, 2006; Maniates, 2001), characterized ethical consumption as an individual action. A common reason for ignoring a campaign’s recommendations and purchasing a product they knew went against their ethical values was that their individual purchase would not make a difference. In a 2009 study, CONE Communications found that almost 40% of participants surveyed did not trust that their effort would help the cause they wanted their ethical purchasing to support. Vermeir and Verbeke (2008) refer to this as perceived consumer effectiveness and define it as “the extent to which the consumer believes that his [sic] personal efforts can contribute to the solution of a problem” (p. 184). They concluded “consumers who believe in their personal consumer effectiveness are more positive towards sustainable products and have more intentions of purchasing them” (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2008 p. 184).

This empirical test using the Buycott app may support Vermeir and Verbeke’s (2008) hypothesis to prove that consumers will dismiss information if they felt their purchase would not make a difference. In addition, participants may have ignored information because of the guilt more information caused. This is supported by Bray et al. (2011), who found that participants in their study “tended to suppress their feelings of guilt…by expressing doubt whether their purchase would have actually made a difference” (Bray et al., 2011 p. 603). This finding is especially problematic as the participants from this thesis’ study identified themselves as ethical consumers and thus it raises more concern for those consumers who do not consider themselves
ethical consumers in that they must feel even more powerless. Furthermore, this finding is contradictory to the main premise of the app, that using the Buycott app will allow consumers to collectively organize their spending to make a difference.

However, this may speak to a larger problem with participants not seeing or receiving feedback on the impacts of their ethical consumption practices, evident in the local-global divide previously discussed. This refers to the difference in reactions by those participants who prioritized local development and those who prioritized international development. Participants who prioritized local were much more confident of the changes their purchases influenced because they spoke of being able to see the impacts on a daily basis. However, when participants’ ethical priorities reflected a global imperative, they often felt that they were not making a difference, and this could be because consumers are not receiving any feedback on the impacts of their ethical consumption decisions.

6.1.2 Avoidance of Information
In addition to ignoring information, participants would avoid information if they felt that there were no ethical alternatives available to them. This is clear in the example where one participant bought bottled water in the airport and did not scan the bottled water because he felt there were no other options and would rather not know how unethical the water was. This is clearly driven by the desire to avoid feeling guilty while simultaneously feeling helpless. In addition to simply not scanning a product when there were no alternatives available to them, participants would also avoid information by buying products they knew were not in the app’s database.

A few participants mentioned that they started to buy more no-name (private label) brands, not because they felt that their absence from the app meant that they were ethical, but because it was easier to not face the potential realities of the unethical nature of other products or need to scan multiple products to find an appropriate product. If consumer decisions were purely rational, then increasing consumer access to information would result in positive change; however, it’s obvious that consumer decisions are not purely rational and are in fact also emotionally charged, and thus sometimes information is avoided because of these or emotions or potential emotions consumers face at learning new information. To my knowledge, this behaviour has not been discovered in any other similar studies.
Finally, participants also avoided information by changing where they shopped. Participants noted going to both locally-owned small grocery stores as well as the local farmers’ market. This is consistent with Eden et al.’s (2008) findings where she found that participants would trust products in the supermarket’s organic section, not because of the information on the products, but because of the message established by the space. Eden et al. (2008) explained that “the space is the proxy and makes life easier because everything therein can be quickly picked up without further analysis… [and that] even where more information… is provided within this demarcated space, consumers…do not read them for information…” (p.1051). Participants in this study felt similar about these local stores and the farmer’s market. Participants felt that they could trust that the products available to them were ethical because they had already been evaluated by the store owners, or; in the case of the Farmers’ Markets, they ultimately felt that their purchases were ethical because vendors were local producers, even though many participants questioned this assumption. Smithers and Joseph (2010) revealed that local food was one of the most widely cited drivers behind consumer visits to farmers’ markets, however they found that only half of their surveyed vendors sold local food, and both consumers’ and vendors’ definitions of what is meant by local were malleable and fluid.

Additionally, participants preferred these locations because of a type of freedom offered by the lack of barcodes in these spaces, and thus proves that participants were actively avoiding information. This study revealed the complex interactions between consumers and information and in particular, when this information was facilitated through technology.

6.2 Information and Technology

This study also revealed some connections between information and technology, and in particular it provided an opportunity to test the potential of a mobile phone application technology to promote ethical consumption. As outlined in Chapter 2, many scholars have suggested that advancements in technology, in particular mobile phones (Watts and Wyner, 2011) and web 2.0 platforms (Beer and Burrows, 2010; Graham and Haarstad, 2014; Wilkins, 2007) can better mobilize information, and address the need for consumers to have “up-to-date and accurate information in order to make ethical choices… in such a form that it easily reaches them and does not cause them any inconvenience” (Uusitalo and Oksanen, 2004 p.216). However, this study found that the information presented to participants in the Buycott app, a
mobile phone application utilizing web 2.0 features, was not trusted and considered inconvenient by participants.

There is a plethora of literature available on user-generated information and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in the tourism industry in terms of reviews, recommendations and social networking sites. This literature (e.g., Litvin et al., 2008) supports Stolle et al. (2005), who claimed that consumers would trust other people. However, the Buycott app cannot be typified as either recommendations or social networking. To my knowledge, there have been no studies that discuss consumers’ reactions to user-generated information specifically from mobile phone applications.

In other applications, user-generated information has been effective at disseminating information to other users, and is considered trustworthy, such as in hotel reviews (Ye et al., 2009). However, there is a significant differentiation between the trust and distrust placed in for example, hotel recommendations made by other users, than in the campaign information in the Buycott app. The latter is personal and deeply connected to consumers’ systems of values. Thus, when a Buycott user is told that a product they typically purchase, or want to purchase, is against their ethical values, it may cause feelings of guilt or dissonance, as was discussed above. As was suggested earlier, participants may have aimed to avoid these feelings by dismissing the information as untrustworthy or avoiding the information completely.

In addition to not trusting the user-generated information provided in the Buycott app, participants did not always use the app at the point of purchase, as was suggested they would by Watts and Wyner (2011) and Buycott app developer, Ivan Pardo. Participants cited that sometimes they found using their phones to scan products while shopping to be too much of an effort, and sometimes they waited to scan products until they were home. Recall the study by the Food Marketing Institute (2012) which found that only 32% shoppers in grocery stores already use technology more than 25% of the time that they spend shopping. It seems that participants did not find it convenient to use the app while completing a typically time-constrained activity such as grocery shopping. This is significant as it may even refute claims that web 2.0 and mobile phone technology can be an effective tool for ethical consumers if consumers are meant to engage with these technologies at the point of purchase.
In the first round of focus groups, participants agreed that information was needed in order to make ethical consumption decisions. However, even though the Buycott app provided participants with information aimed at improving ethical purchases, participants sometimes found this inconvenient. As well, participants did not always trust the information they were given or felt guilty after reading the information. Participants admitted that when they had no alternatives to a product they would rather avoid any new information in case it lead to feeling guilty about their purchase. Despite these negative consequences of using the app, there is potential for mobile phone technologies to increase ethical behaviour since many participants did change their behaviour in some ways, such as purchasing new products and changing where they shopped. For this reason, improvements to these technologies could advance their attempts to increase ethical decision-making among consumers.

6.3 Future Directions for Mobile Phone Applications/Web 2.0 in Ethical Consumption

As was highlighted above, consumers often do not follow through with their ethical purchasing intentions because they do not feel that their individual actions will make a difference or because they have no alternatives available to them. Even though some participants in this study did not perceive significant changes to their behaviour from the Buycott app and sometimes found the app inconvenient to use while shopping, almost half of participants noticed changes in their behaviour. Participants actively searched for alternative products, shopped at local stores, and questioned their consumption choices. Moreover, participants did agree that information was important for ethical consumers and that access to information needed to be increased. Thus, there is potential for mobile phone applications to inspire more ethical purchases, but these apps need to be improved based on the findings from this study. There are three ways that this problem could be targeted using mobile phones or web 2.0 applications. The following recommendations for the future directions for mobile phone and web 2.0 applications should also consider that applications should be designed in a way that they can be effectively used anywhere and not rely on place-based used.

First, there is potential to provide consumers with feedback on the effects of their ethical purchases. Just as some water fountains count how many plastic water bottles have been avoided, a barcode scanner could provide users with tangible effects of their purchases. Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that consumers do not receive enough feedback about the effects
of their ethical consumption purchases, and this prevents them from continuing to make ethical consumption decisions. For instance, recall the participant who had been boycotting Nestle for years and felt that it hadn’t achieved anything, or the participant who felt like her ethical purchases were only “a drop in a bucket” (Participant 9, Focus Group Round 2). Participants believed that a critical mass was needed in order to get the attention of corporations and create real change. Based on these findings, it possible that if ethical consumers could be reminded about the positive impacts of their purchases they would be motivated to continue making ethical purchases. Further, participants discussed how negative information about products’ impacts dominated the information they received. This feedback would help to offset the dominating negative information available to consumers as well as the feelings of guilt that consumers experience.

Similarly, the app could be redesigned to provide producers with feedback, which may increase the importance given to individual consumers’ decisions by informing producers each time a consumer put down their product because of its (lack of) ethical merit. This might include a feature on the Buycott app that would automatically contact (either through an email or social media) a corporation/producer when their product was scanned and showed a conflict with a user’s campaign. Imagine if a company’s Twitter feed or inbox was dominated by these types of messages. The demands of ethical consumers could not be avoided, and would bring their concerns to the attention of producers in a more efficient way. Participants felt that consuming alone was not enough to send a message, and suggested that other actions such as letter writing needed to complement everyday boycotts and buycotts. This new feature would incorporate this finding and allow consumers to increase the strength of their actions by communicating with producers through more than just their purchases.

Second, web 2.0 could be used to create a social network of ethical consumers. In focus groups, participants revealed that not only were they unaware of what their individual purchases accomplished, but they felt that they were alone in their intentions to consume ethically. When testing the Buycott app, it was found that other users did not reciprocate any invitations for discussion or collaboration. If a network was developed that could connect consumers engaged in the same causes, and inform them of each time someone made a purchase they would support, it could help alleviate the loneliness felt by ethical consumers and inspire more ethical purchases.
These types of spaces are already being created by transnational advocacy networks, networks made up of a wide variety of actors and institutions with common goals (Keck and Sikkink, 1999). Graham and Haarstad (2011) report that “this organizational model has been seen as a new form of collective organization …[and that]… these “convergence spaces” represent what is new about Internet enabled politics—a decentralized and non-hierarchical structure, immediate solidarity, communication and alliance-building across space, and a diffuse networked force that challenges neoliberal globalization” (p. 5). These networks, such as the Save Darfur Coalition19, not only have the potential to unite ethical consumers but also to increase the effectiveness of their actions. In the Buycott app, campaigns could serve as the centre of this networking if more social networking aspects were included in the app design. For example, a campaign could simultaneously provide users with the information they already do, but could also act as a hub or forum for users to communicate, collaborate, and mobilize.

A third suggestion is something that could easily be incorporated into the Buycott app, and was in fact something discussed during my interview with the app’s developer, that is to provide consumers with alternative ethical products to products they scanned. In his interview, Ivan said:

> What we’re going to put out very soon is a feature that…if you scan a product and we’re telling you to avoid it, we’ll look through your campaign commitment[s] and we’ll find a product that’s a better fit for you. It’s basically suggested product alternatives. And that took a while to build that, but the reason that we’re building it is because tons of people have requested it (Ivan Pardo, Interview).

Many participants voiced that they wished the app would provide them with available alternatives, so that rather than scanning every brand of a product, the app could simply tell them which product they should purchase. The application could provide them with unique recommendations based on the campaigns to which each user belonged. For instance, if a user scanned Kraft Peanut Butter and found their campaigns conflicted with this product, the app would automatically go through that individual user’s list of approved and conflicting companies and products, and would find a peanut butter that was not in conflict with their campaigns. This may reduce the amount of frustration felt by users, reduce the time needed to shop while using

---

19 An advocacy network of activists, students, faith leaders, artists and genocide survivors that ran from 2004-2011 with the goal of ending genocide in Darfur and surrounding countries (savedarfur.org, 2013).
the app, and improve the overall convenience of the app. At the time that this thesis was published, this new feature had not been added, but was in the prototype stage.

Perhaps this would not always work as there may be no peanut butter that does not conflict, depending on how many and which campaigns the user had signed up for. At this point, the app could recommend users try making their own peanut butter, or that they go without the product. Pardo revealed in his interview that it was not his intention, when creating the app, to make it easier for consumers to purchase ethical products, but that it was his intention for them to go home without making purchases. He said:

It’s not that I always wanted to find a better product for [users], that’s not really what I was thinking about building it…one other thing that I see on Twitter is that a lot of people are like oh great I went to the supermarket and I came home with nothing, that was sort of, in my mind, was the way to go, rather than having people still leave with their carts full (Ivan Pardo, Interview).

It is interesting that given the app’s name (Buycott), the majority of campaigns consist mainly of boycotts, and even more interesting that Pardo intended users to use the app to reduce overall consumption. This study found that participants overwhelmingly agreed that boycotting was more effective than boycotting in creating change, and thus this recommendation is particularly important.

Arguably, the Buycott app did not work to change participants’ behaviour in the ways the app discourse and relevant literature suggested that it could. However, there is promise that mobile phone technologies can influence consumer behaviour based on the changes participants observed. In order to overcome the challenges participants faced while using the app, such as a lack of feedback, feeling insignificant or alone, and being unaware of ethical alternatives, mobile phone technologies must be adapted to address these challenges.
Chapter 7. Conclusions: Contributions, Limitations and Future Research

The following section will outline this thesis’ contributions to the literature, including a broader contribution to scholarship on the attitude-behaviour gap, the knowledge-fix, and the role of technology, as well more specific understandings of consumers’ interactions with information and mobile phone applications, negotiations made in everyday decision making, and the ability of ethical consumption to effect change. Limitations of the study and proposed future research directions will follow.

7.1 Theoretical Contributions

A significant amount of ethical consumption literature focuses on the gap between consumer attitude and the reasons consumers do not follow-through on their intentions with actions (Boulstridge and Carrigan, 2000; Bray et al., 2011; Carrington et al., 2010; Kollmus and Agyeman, 2002; Nicholls and Lee, 2006; Papaoikonomou et al., 2011; Uusitalo and Oksanen, 2004). A lack of accessible consumer information is cited as a major barrier to ethical consumption (Bray et al., 2011; Kollmus and Agyeman, 2002; Padel and Foster, 2005; Uusitalo and Oksanen, 2004). Watts and Wyner (2011) present a unique approach to this problem and suggest that the advances in technology, and in particular mobile phones, could facilitate ethical consumption by minimizing consumer effort in accessing information, improve credibility, and increasing transparency of information. However, there have been no empirical tests of this theory. This research has contributes to filling that gap by addressing the following four questions.

7.1.1 How did Participants Engage with the Information provided in the Buycott App?

This research helps fill the aforementioned research gap by testing the ability of mobile phone applications to provide product information to consumers. Analysis of participants’ experiences found that the mobile phone application Buycott did not act as a convenient or trustworthy source of information to consumers. In addition, participants challenged the basic assumption of the app, that a parent company’s ethical qualities were spread down the corporate tree.

Furthermore, this research found that participant distrust of user-generated information is a significant barrier in the effectiveness of web 2.0 technologies to promote ethical purchases. Further research is needed to determine whether or not improving the social network aspect of
mobile phone apps would help generate more trust between users. As was discussed in chapters 5 and 6, consumption choices were often met with very emotional responses. Therefore, information may never influence consumer behaviour change, unless it were to induce consumers with the parallel emotional response.

7.1.2 How did the Buycott app influence participants’ everyday ethical consumption decisions?

This research provides a significant contribution to ethical consumption literature by concluding that the attitude-behaviour gap cannot be resolved by providing consumers with more information. This conclusion supports Eden et al.’s (2008) study on the attitude-behaviour gap and the knowledge-fix. The intimate exploration of a small group of consumers revealed that consumers interact with information in complex and nuanced ways that prevent consumers from acting on information with every purchase. Providing consumers with more information is not enough to change consumer behaviour as participants faced barriers such as the high price of ethical products, and inaccessibility, as well experienced negative feelings which made them avoid information.

This study found that consumers will avoid information if they feel there are no alternatives available to them. Additionally, consumers will ignore information if they do not trust it completely or if it provides conflicting advice. These findings support Eden et al.’s (2008) critique of the knowledge-fix by showing that information is not a one-way flow to recipients, participants are active recipients of information and frequently ignored, manipulated, and resisted the information they received from the Buycott app.

The suggestions based on this analysis (outlined in section 6.3) do not reflect the above-mentioned inherent issues associated with increasing information to reduce the attitude-behaviour gap. Rather, these suggestions address the fact that ethical consumption is still often inaccessible, due to the high cost and time required to make ethical consumption decisions. While applications could have features such as an ethical consumption map to help consumers access ethical products, it does not reduce the price of these products.
7.1.3 How did participants negotiate between the app’s recommendations and other factors?

The findings associated with this question contribute to a better understanding of how consumers interact with product information and make consumption decisions. This study has revealed that consumers will negotiate their ethical values both in light of and despite the information they are given. Participants felt forced to make trade-offs with their ethical priorities because of various reasons. Participants felt they had to prioritize which ethical values they cared about most because they could not possibly consume in a way that reflected all of their ethical values. Often, participants belonged to campaigns that both supported and were in conflict with a single product, and consequentially, participants felt they were forced to make trade-offs with their values. Furthermore, participants would make trade-offs based on competing interests such as social obligation. These findings support Hall’s (2011) findings that consumers are in a constant state of negotiation and that the drivers behind everyday consumption choices are complex and personal. Additionally, this research expands on Hall’s (2011) findings by actively adding information to the factors that affect consumer decision-making considerations.

These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact of guilt on consumer decision making. Bray et al. (2011) found that feelings of guilt primarily occurred in retrospect. This research contrasts this conclusion by establishing that guilt was felt by participants at the point of purchase in addition to in retrospect. Participants may have felt guilt at both of these times because of the information conveyed to them while shopping, through the Buycott app. In addition, participants made negotiations with the information presented in the Buycott app and their ethical values because of their emotional responses to the information provided. Participants in this study often discussed the various negative feelings when learning more about products. The most frequently cited feeling was guilt. In addition to making trade-offs, participants would ignore or avoid information so that they could avoid these negative feelings.

Further, this study creates a better understanding of how consumers’ perceived the impact of their ethical purchases. Notably, participants would purchase products that did not represent their values if they felt that their individual purchase would not accomplish anything. This finding builds on Bray et al.’s (2011) results, where their participants would use this type of cynicism to justify their reluctance to purchase ethical products. This study adds to this
understanding by demonstrating that feedback on the impacts of consumers’ ethical purchases is critical. Further, the findings suggest that there is a local-global gap in the feedback of impacts, where consumers who prioritize local as an ethical value receive more feedback than consumers who prioritize international issues.

7.1.4 In what ways did participants consider ethical consumption an effective route to create change?

Participants noted that they felt that individual ethical purchases were not effective in creating change. Participants expressed a need for both a critical mass of ethical consumers and complementary actions, such as letter writing, voting, petitions and protests. These findings are contrary to studies that claim ethical consumption is comparable to a political act (Clarke, 2008; Mansvelt, 2008; Stolle et al., 2005). However, these findings do support Clarke et al. (2007)’s findings that ethical consumption is seen by political consumers as an action complementary to mainstream forms of political participation.

These findings suggest that in order to influence change through ethical consumption, technology would need to improve feedback to consumers about the impacts of their actions, create networks between ethical consumers, and provide information on better alternatives, addressed issues of accessibility, and improve users’ trust of user-generated information.

7.2 Limitations of Study

The main limitation of this study was its short timeframe. First, this timeframe led to a small pool of research participants. Although this research provided an in-depth analysis of how consumers interact with consumer applications and information, it was from a shallow sample. The experiences of these participants cannot be generalized for all consumers. If there had been more time to conduct additional focus groups in order to increase participant numbers, a wider and more diverse participant base could have attempted to be recruited. However, even if this had been accomplished this research would not have attempted to be representative of all consumers. Second, the limited time frame of the study only allowed for participants to test the app for two to three weeks. When asked for feedback, participants sometimes said that they would have liked more time between focus groups so that they could use the app for longer before reflecting on its impact.
Furthermore, follow up with each participant after the completion of focus groups was attempted in order to ask if they had continued to use the app and see if they felt that they had anything else to add. However, this proved extremely difficult, as participants seemed to be less interested and available once their honorariums had been paid. In the future, it is recommended that all potential participant activities would be included as a formal requirement of the study and wait to provide participants’ honorarium until after this had been completed.

In addition, survey design could have been improved to ensure that each question was comparable to other questions. Although the survey was tested with a number of volunteers, analysis was not attempted. It was at this point in the research that inconsistencies were discovered, because of their different scales (e.g. 1-5 or 1-4 (never, infrequently, sometimes, frequently)) not all responses could be easily compared.

7.3 Future Research Directions

This research reveals several areas where future research should be directed. First, it reveals the need for a wider analysis of web 2.0 and mobile phone applications for ethical consumption. Since this research has begun, another dozen or more applications designed to meet the needs of the ethical consumer have been developed. Further research exploring a more diverse sample of applications or other platforms should be conducted before it can be confirmed whether or not mobile phone technologies and web 2.0 platforms can facilitate consumer behaviour change and increase ethical purchases. For instance, it would be interesting to compare applications that support the individual ethical values of users (such as Buycott) with applications that use their own standards to assess the ethics of a product (e.g., Skin Deep, GoodGuide).

Second, a more in-depth analysis into the emotional reaction of consumers to information is necessary. This research could and should take a variety of approaches. For instance, one could explore these reactions by using a daily journal of feelings. Or, this research could employ a feminist methodological framework to explore the reactions on a deeper scale using an ethnography of one individual or a small group.

Third, changes in behaviour discussed in this research were extremely subjective and based on participant perceptions. In order to more objectively assess changes to consumer behaviour while using mobile phone applications such as Buycott, one could collect receipts
from participants before their use of an application and while using the application to objectively assess consumption changes.

Finally, more insight is needed into consumers’ interactions with user-generated information. It was suggested in this study that improving the social networking aspects of an application may improve users’ trust of other users’. This needs to be tested specifically for information on consumption.
References

https://www.facebook.com/buycottapp/timeline


Boateng, William. 2012. “Evaluating the Efficacy of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in
Qualitative Social Research.” *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 3(7):
54–58.

Bosco, Fernando and Thomas Herman “Focus Groups as Collaborative Research Performances
Making a Case for Focus Groups.” In DeLyser, Dydia, Steve Herbert, Stuart Aitken,
Mike Crang, and Linda McDowell. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative geography.*

Responsibility? Highlighting the Attitude-Behaviour Gap.” *Journal of Communication

Bray, Jeffery, Nick Johns, and David Kilburn. 2011. “An Exploratory Study into the Factors

Cameron, Jenny. 2000. “Focusing on the focus group” in Hay, Iain (ed.) *Qualitative research

Consumers Don’t Walk Their Talk: Towards a Framework for Understanding the Gap
between the Ethical Purchase Intentions and Actual Buying Behaviour of Ethically Minded Consumers." *Journal of Business Ethics* 97: 139–58.


Schor, Juliet B., and Margaret Willis. 2008. "Conscious Consumption: Results From a Survey of New Dream Members." Center for a New American Dream


Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey

Ethical Consumption: Recruitment Questionnaire

You are invited to participate in research at the University of Guelph. The goal of this research project is to better understand the role of information in consumer decision making related to ethical consumption. This research is being conducted by Naomi Horst, a Master’s Student in the Department of Geography, University of Guelph and will be used towards her thesis. This project is funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council. To be eligible to participate in this study you must be at least 18 years of age, own a smartphone, and subscribe to a data plan.

Participation in this study involves your completion of this survey. This survey will ask you about your consumption habits and experiences with ethical consumption. There are no foreseeable risks or harm in completing this survey, and your contribution to this study is important because it will help the research team to understand the role of information on consumer decision making as related to ethical consumption. Although there are no direct benefits for your participation in this study, you may find it beneficial to reflect on your personal consumption habits.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You can withdraw from this survey by closing your browser. Data from incomplete surveys will be discarded. Once you
submit the survey you cannot withdraw from the study, because your survey cannot be identified.

This survey uses FluidSurveys, all data entered into this survey remains the property of the research team and is not used or shared by FluidSurveys. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed while data are in transit over the internet. You may print this information by selecting print in your browser menu. You may also print or download your completed survey after completion. The researcher will undertake to publish the results of the project in a peer reviewed journal. The data you provide will be kept for up to 10 years, and may be used in future studies to answer similar research questions by Dr. Roberta Hawkins, and Ms. Horst

If you choose to complete this survey, please do so by June 12th, 2014.

If you have any questions or would like additional information about the study you may contact either Naomi Horst at nhorst@uoguelph.ca or faculty supervisor Dr. Roberta Hawkins at rhawkins@uoguelph.ca.

This study has received ethics clearance from the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions about your rights as a research focus group participant, please contact S. Auld, Director, Research Ethics at reb@uoguelph.ca or 519-824-4120 X56606.

By continuing with this survey you are providing consent for your participation in this study.

Accept and Continue
Decline

Do you own a smartphone?
Yes
No
Do you have a data plan?

Yes
No

How old are you?

18-24
25-29
30-34
35-39
40-44
45-49
50-54
55-59
60-64
65+
Prefer not to disclose

Which gender do you self identify with?

Male
Female
Other
Prefer not to disclose
What is your household income range?

<$25,000

$25,000 - $50,000

$50,000 - $75,000

$75,000 - $100,000

>$100,000

Prefer not to disclose

What % of household consumption are you in charge of?

0-----------------------------------------------------100

How often do you go shopping (for essentials, e.g grocery store, pharmacy, etc.)?

>2 times per week

1-2 times per week

Once a week

< Once a week

Never

How strongly do you agree with the following statements?

I am an ethical consumer

1--------5

My purchases reflect my values

1--------5
Companies hide information from consumers
1--------5

The market is a democracy where every penny gives the right to vote
1--------5

Individuals should be responsible for creating change
1--------5

Corporations should be responsible for creating change
1--------5

Governments should be responsible for creating change
1--------5

How frequently or infrequently do you engage in the following activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Infrequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Read books and magazines about ethical consumption issues

Watch/listen to documentary films, TV, and/or radio shows about ethical consumption issues

Use email lists to learn about ethical consumption issues
Use blogs, online videos, and / or specialized news websites to learn about ethical consumption issues

Use social media to learn about ethical consumption issues

Attend public educational events, workshops, trainings, or courses on ethical consumption issues

When making purchasing decisions, how important are the following factors to you?

Environmental Sustainability

1---------5

Promoting fair wages and incomes for workers and producers

1---------5

Promoting the well-being of the next generation

1---------5

Supporting the local economy

1---------5

Supporting alternatives to the dominant consumer culture

1---------5

Reducing overall consumption

1---------5
Seeking quality products (i.e. craftsmanship, nutrition, etc.) 1---
-----5

Promoting personal health
1--------5

Price
1--------5

How many times in the past year have you participated in the following activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>5-10</th>
<th>&gt;10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boycott of a product/company</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buycott of a product/company</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written a Letter to a member of the government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signed a paper petition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signed an electronic petition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered for an organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted in an election (in the last two years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donated to a charity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donated to a political party/group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a public meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which social media platforms do you use?
Are you interested in further participation in this study?

Yes
No

If yes, please provide your name, email address, and/or phone number.
### Appendix 2: Honorarium Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Completed:</th>
<th>Amount of honorarium to be paid:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group I</td>
<td>$10/$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 3 uses of the app (diary submitted to researcher)</td>
<td>$30/$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group II</td>
<td>$50/$50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 3: Participant Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Group # in Round 1</th>
<th>Group # in Round 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>&gt;$100,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>&lt; $25,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>$50,000 - $75,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>$50,000 - $75,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>&lt; $25,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>&lt; $25,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>$75,000 - $100,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>&lt; $25,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>&gt;$100,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>&gt;$100,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>$75,000 - $100,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>&gt;$100,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>&gt;$100,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>&lt; $25,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>Prefer not to disclose</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>&gt;$100,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>&lt; $25,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>&lt; $25,000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>&lt; $25,000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>Prefer not to disclose</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 4: Round 2 Focus Groups Handout

**“When I make ethical consumption choices, I feel that I can effectively…**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make social change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directly support fair wages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support innovative businesses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect the environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate to corporations that people will pay more for products that serve our values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boycott or punish products, industries, and businesses that I disapprove of by spending my money elsewhere</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live in commitment to my values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate the younger generation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in a community of people working for change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate what I think is important to the government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate what I think is important to corporations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5: Interview Guide

Hi Ivan,

Thank you so much for taking some time out of your busy schedule to talk to me. I really appreciate it and I’m very much looking forward to hearing your thoughts on my research. I’m a master’s student in geography at the University of Guelph, and I study ethical and political consumption and the role of information. I’ve been using the Buycott app as a tool to test some theories about the role that information plays in consumer decision making. So what I’ve done is had small groups of consumers first meet to discuss ethical consumption and the availability of information to consumers, then they all downloaded the app and use it for all of their shopping for two weeks, then the groups met again and discussed how the information provided by Buycott has influenced their consumption.

I’ve only begun some preliminary analysis, but I really wanted to have the opportunity to talk to you about some of my ideas and get your take on the role that Buycott can play.

I wanted to start with the same question I start my focus groups with: how would you define ethical consumption?

1. Ethics

Why is it important to you that Buycott does not define what is ethical consumption?

2. Information

There is some debate about whether or not information actually makes a difference in peoples’ behaviours. Do you see Buycott as a tool to spread information so that consumers can shop more ethically?

- Who is the intended audience of the Buycott app? Any idea who’s actually using it?
- Do you think that users generally trust the information provided in the app?
- Actually a lot of my focus group participants asked about whether or not the information was being vetted by anyone. What are your reasons for not having a moderator, or allowing peer moderating like on Wikipedia?
- How fluid are the campaigns? Do most of them get updated on a regular basis? Do you think the comments section influences the campaigns?

3. Politics
There is a debate around whether individual consumption is enough to affect social change. In a 2013 interview you said “I don’t know whether my hypothesis is right, it’s still too early to say, but the premise of the app is that organized people can effect social change if they target their spending.” Any closer to answering that hypothesis?

- Who is the intended target of ‘voting with dollars’ how will that make change, and what are the roles of various actors.
- Buycott embraces the idea of ‘voting with your dollars’ which refers to something political, but there’s a lot of debate about whether or not ethical consumption is political or not. What do you think?

Thank you for your time, I know that you’re very busy, and I really appreciate having the opportunity to talk and hear your thoughts. Do you have any questions for me?

- My focus groups just ended this week and I still have some interviews to conduct, so I really only have a general idea of some themes have emerged, but there has been a lot of focus on trust and convenience. I would be happy to share more of my findings with you once I’ve completed my analysis. Maybe we could schedule another chat in October?