The impact of videos regarding the diverse consequences of palm oil usage on audiences

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to assess the impact that videos published on Facebook - showing the consequences of the palm oil industry on workers and the environment, have on consumer behaviour. The results of the study were taken and analysed from two focus groups, selected on their level of knowledge and interest regarding the issue. The theoretical framework used to analyse the data collected was mostly based on emotional and guilt appeals, as well as consciousness and cognition, and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Concerning the findings, the participants from the group who previously showed more interest in the environment and their alimentation were more impacted than the others. Indeed, participants of this group all said to be willing to join the campaign and take action, mostly through avoiding products containing palm oil and replacing them with alternatives.
Keywords: palm oil, social media, videos, emotional appeals, impact, audience

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Introduction

The consequences of the palm oil industry on the environment is an increasingly discussed topic on social media. Indeed, videos published by various organisations - mainly on Facebook- have flourished and provoked waves of reactions from users, with some of those videos even going ‘viral’. This virality means that the videos are able to reach a huge number of users online with no definite boundary or ‘link’ to those environmental organisations. In this case, the online network of a person ‘does the job itself’, as the video is shared and spread multiple times; it eventually ends up being viewed by users unaware of the issue, meaning that the organisation publishing it has reached its first aim. Indeed, in the case of these videos, raising awareness is the vital step needed to be able to go further into the process of influencing people to make a change to benefit an aspect of society. The tool used in order to have the best chance of having this effect on viewers is so called ‘emotional branding’.

Although most commonly used in marketing, it is used more generally in the field of media and communication as a way of arousing the viewer’s attention, create reactions and in opposition to the marketing field, the ultimate goal of this technique is not to convince people to buy a product, but rather to propose actions that the viewer can take if the video convinced them enough to do so.

It is important to highlight that depending on authors and articles; ‘emotional branding’ can often be called ‘emotional marketing’, as both are tightly linked. Hence, Chandler & Munday (2011) define branding as “the marketing processes by which a company, product or service acquires a distinctive identity in the minds of consumers- becoming associated with particular values, lifestyle and meanings” (Chandler & Munday, 2011, p. 36). However, in the case of the videos, this definition needs to be accompanied with the definition of ‘emotional appeals’, in order to have a more complete idea of the role of emotions here. Indeed, building a strong identity for a non-profit environmental organisation might not be their primary goal. This can be demonstrated by Chandler & Munday’s (2011, p. 123) explanation, as the videos do not contain “positive emotional appeals deployed in order to develop bonding between the audience and a brand”. One could argue that this ‘strategy’ employed is a combination of a marketing techniques and more general communication techniques. Emotional appeals can be defined as the following: “In persuasive communication such as advertising and political communication, rhetorical strategies intended to evoke feelings in the audience. (…) Emotional appeals in audio-visual are based primarily on visual imagery, connotation, and music rather than information or argument” (Chandler & Munday, 2011, p. 123). It is interesting to see that a third factor – advertising, is added to the equation. Indeed, this reflects a certain technique and model used to ‘push’ the consumer into buy something once the content of the video has persuaded them they needed the product. Although here, these
strong marketing and advertising aspects combined with the emotions are key to having higher chances of generating reactions amongst the viewers, thus increasing the chance of going ‘viral’ and raising support for the cause. Many studies have been conducted concerning emotional marketing –as it is called in the upcoming literature review, but never focused on the communication aspect of this phenomenon, and how far it can impact on a person’s life.

Indeed, these videos are made to firstly go viral in order to maximise awareness on social media platforms, but secondly to make a genuine change in people’s behaviour. Whilst virality is an important aspect of what organisations aim to do with these videos, one could argue that the most important is how these videos affect the behaviour of the audience i.e. do they change their behaviour or attitudes as a result of viewing the videos? An example of this change in ‘behaviour’ could be for example, boycotting a brand that does not want to take part in the process of adapting their production in a sustainable way. Another example could be a change in their habits, for example, checking the ingredients used in the production of their daily products (food, cosmetics etc.).

This is a gap that my research paper aims to fill through results collected from focus groups, in order to see what impact those videos have on viewers once their first step (virality) has been reached. It is interesting to see, once informed, how the media and communication field has the ability to help society in a positive manner, to make a change in people’s lives, without the involvement politics for instance to convince the community to make a positive long-term change.

Background
Palm oil has become a major issue in society in the past few years. Mostly requested for its low cost and identical form to other more expensive oils, “it offers a far greater yield at a lower cost of production than other vegetable oils” (WorldWildLife, 2017); it took over the Western market, not only for food products but also for cosmetics, detergents and biofuel to a smaller extent. It is used in “huge amounts in the production of a wide range of commercial foodstuffs, such as margarine and baked goods, and the vast oil palm plantations established in the tropics (e.g. in Indonesia) to satisfy Western demand present an increasing threat to rain-forest habitats” (Ayto, 2013).

Indeed, this positive economic aspect for big food manufacturers and corporations has outshone the damaging impacts its extraction has had on the environment and also on consumers’ health. This oil seems to only benefit the companies using it, thus making it easy for them to ignore the repercussions it has both consumers and nature. One could argue that this is a reason why the presence of palm oil in products is commonly hidden or ‘discrete’.
It is important to highlight that palm oil, in comparison to olive oil, is part of the ‘bad’ fats group for the human body, and actions are being taken to fight against this and raise awareness amongst the public. In her article ‘Palm Oil Tensions’, Danielle Gallegos, professor in nutrition and dietetics, gives an example of how some organisations have tried to address this issue: “the American Soybean Association called for palm oil to be named on packaging and identified as a saturated fat” (Gallegos, 2011, p. 22). Indeed, some legislation in diverse countries now force brands to answer consumers if they ask what is for example, the precise composition of the ‘vegetable’ oil listed in the ingredients list. On the other hand, to come back to the effect it has on the environment, the main issue is the unsustainability of its production. Mainly produced in Malaysia and Indonesia, local contractors see it as an opportunity to make money, and despite various environmental organisations trying to campaign for regulations, they intend to ignore the consequences of their actions, and cut and burn hectares of rainforest down to make more space for palm tree plantations. This deforestation could result in the ‘imminent’ animal extinction of orang-utans, Sumatran tigers and Pygmy elephants. As an example, organisations such as the ‘Orang-utan Project’ has estimated that “In the last 20 years, over 3.5 million hectares of Indonesian and Malaysian forest have been destroyed”, leading to the disappearance of “almost 80% of orang-utan habitat” in this same period (The Orang-utan Project, 2016). This combination of effects caused by the usage of palm oil on both health and the environment means that this topic has a major place for discussion in society. Thus, consumers can be seen as the ‘key’ to making big corporations change their actions for more sustainable alternatives, whilst at the same time raising awareness of the negative health impacts of palm oil.

This is an issue that cannot wait any longer, and the first step in finding the solution to the problem might be online. Environmental organisations such as Greenpeace for example, have already started this process of raising awareness and holding big businesses to account, through articles, videos and adverts online. The main element helping this movement is the virality of the content published on social media. Indeed, the targeted audience, once ‘reached’ and ‘convinced’, become the new online ‘ambassadors’ of the organisation. As it is in the hands of the users, virality can be aimed at but not planned; although there are ways to increase the probability of content going viral. Indeed, many marketing techniques are used to do so, and some argue that “virality has become the holy grail of digital marketing” (Akpinar & Berger, 2017). The slight difference in this precise case is that the aim is to raise awareness and not to sell or promote products, and hence the technique would tend to reach the user’s emotions rather than showing a product’s qualities.
The aim of this thesis is to see how, once the ‘emotional marketing’ aspects in social media videos have led to virality, it has impacted the viewers at the consumer choice level concerning products containing palm oil.

**Aim and research questions**

Social media is a key platform for charities and environmental organisations who publish powerful videos to show the consequences of mostly food and cosmetics brands’ use of palm oil. Thanks to social media platforms and users reposting or reacting to the content, they have managed to hold big corporations (Colgate/Palmolive, Unilever, Ferrero for example) to account, with the threat of a damaged reputation. These videos end up either pressuring them into ideally finding an alternative to palm oil, or at least pushing them to be more transparent regarding the origin of their palm oil, and to change contractors in order to improve the sustainability of their practices if necessary. However, although this ‘viral’ phenomenon is only possible if users are active on social media, we know very little about the effect this type of content has on users individually. Thus, the aim of this study is to identify, amongst the people that have watched these videos published on Facebook, whether or not they have an impact on audiences’ behaviour, and if it does, to assess the reasoning of the viewers.

**RQ1:** How advanced was the audience’s knowledge of the negative usage of palm oil before viewing the concerned videos? Did they have any knowledge about it?

**RQ2:** How did this Facebook audience react to the content?

**RQ3:** How did it change their behaviour on a personal level?

**Previous research**

Concerning the topic of this thesis, it will touch upon various fields of study such as emotional, social, viral word-of-mouth marketing, viral video content, social media’s effect on audience reception, but also the impact on consumer behaviour. Within this specific topic, numerous studies have been done regarding the sustainability of the palm oil industry or the advertising of brands using palm oil and aiming to conserve a good reputation. However, there was a significant research gap concerning the production of videos made to sensitise people in regard to the use of palm oil, with no definite answer as to whether or not it has an impact on the audience, and how wide it is.
However, studies have been conducted within the different fields mentioned previously and on the same platform (video) as my thesis project; but applied to other areas of research such as the audience’s response towards anti-smoking campaign videos like in the second study for example -which is very similar to the ‘sustainable palm oil’ campaigns in terms of its aim of provoking a change in the audience.

‘The Effect of Social Media Marketing Content on Consumer Engagement: Evidence from Facebook’ (Lee, Hosanagar, Nair, 2015)
The aim of this study was to analyse the “effect of social media advertising content on customer engagement using a large scale field study on Facebook” (Lee, Hosanagar, Nair, 2015). Although one could argue that the main purpose of advertising is to convince the consumer to buy a product, in comparison to my research project where the audience is being informed and/or might be influenced to modify their habits for a sustainable purpose, the aims of both studies -although different- join each other. Indeed, in both cases the goal is to analyse the viewer’s behaviour after watching ‘marketing’ videos, and make them change their habits in a positive way rather then make them buy a product.
On the other hand, no matter what is the method used, (persuasion, personality related) the ‘marketing content’ aim is to generate a reaction from the audience. This study treated a large amount of data (“content-code more than 100,000 unique messages across 800 companies engaging with users on Facebook” Lee, Hosanagar, Nair, 2015) analysed by two algorithms (Amazon Mechanical Turk and Natural Language Processing). Despite the fact that the method used was purely quantitative and there was no evidence of theories involved, the amount of data collected allowed the authors to draw some conclusions. Thus, emotional marketing used in the videos making to sensitise audiences on brands’ consumption of palm oil involve “personality-related content” as well as “informative” content (Lee, Hosanagar, Nair, 2015). Those two types of content were found in their conclusion, described as elements which respectively drive “engagement and seems key for long term brand building” and “direct-response and seems key to performance marketing” (Lee, Hosanagar, Nair, 2015).
This is an interesting factor to take into consideration for my own research and see if this applies specifically to palm oil related videos.

‘Antismoking campaign videos on Youtube and audience response: Application of social media assessment metrics’ (Chung, 2015)
The second study’s aim is to analyse the public response towards anti-smoking campaign videos. One could see the similarities with my area of research as they are both based on the same platform (videos) and they both analyse the effect it has on audiences. The particularity of Chung’s study is that she only found her results through one method, the ‘social media assessment metrics’ (Chung, 2015) using only data found on the Internet (in the comment
section). This is where my study differs from that of Chung’s (2015), as I intend to use a qualitative method rather than a quantitative one, to assess the ‘scale of the impact’ those videos can have on the consumer’s behaviour as stated previously. In Chung’s (2015) case, the videos’ aim is to show the negative consequences of smoking and ultimately to persuade them to stop, which would then be identified as the biggest possible impact made on ‘consumer behaviour’ in this campaign. In the case of my study, several feelings and/or changes could be experienced as a result of watching those videos from small to radical ones. Hence, qualitative methods could allow me to analyse how useful these emotional videos could be in the media and communication field as an efficient tool to carry out messages to raise awareness and improve society on a broader scale.

The research questions of this study are the following:

“To what extent do health campaign videos on YouTube get exposed to the audience in terms of the number of views?”, “What is the nature of audience exposure in terms of audience characteristics?”, “To what extent do health campaign videos on YouTube engage audience in terms of (a) the number of audience comments and (b) the number of commenters?”, “What is the nature of audience engagement represented by the interaction pattern amongst commenters?”, and “How do health campaign videos on YouTube influence audiences?” (Chung, 2015).

The sample of the study was six campaign videos published on the Youtube channel of CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). To analyse the audience’s response to those videos, Chung (2015) used the software ‘Webometrics Analyst 2.0’ to download data from the online platform and gather information such as the number of views, ‘likes’, comments, etc. Once this step was achieved, Chung (2015) used a program that could be beneficial for the conduct of my study which is ‘Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count’ (LIWC), “used to examine sentiments expressed in comments. Sentiment analysis extracts positive or negative emotions from texts” (Chung, 2015). Chung’s last step was to divide the comments given through this program (LIWC) into categories to then code them individually. In the case of my research project, the categories could be 1) sensitised by the video 2) neutral 3) denying the content of the video. This study was mainly based on content analysis and there was no evidence of use of theory. In conclusion, Chung (2015) found out that this was a major success as “Among the total of 2782 ratings given to all videos, 92% (2573) of them were positive” and “Among the 1186 comments, 40.8% showed approval with the campaign message and coded as pro-campaign comments” (Chung, 2015). Despite the fact that my study will not use the same method, this helps me to see how audiences react to such impactful videos and their will to make a change, shown through comments analysed by the software she used.

‘Different digital paths to the keg? How exposure to peers’ alcohol-related social media content influences drinking among male and female first-year college students’
Although the topic is not related to my study and I might not be able to apply all of the methods used in this study to mine, the focus here is still on the impact social media content has on people’s behaviour. Their goal was to fill the research gap concerning the fact that “peers’ alcohol-related content on social media sites (SMS) may influence the alcohol use behaviors of SMS frequenting college students” (Boyle, LaBrie, Froidevaux, Witkovic, 2016). They saw a gap in research here, as they stated that “this relationship has not been investigated longitudinally” (Boyle, LaBrie, Froidevaux, Witkovic, 2016).

Indeed, the authors predicted that social media content influences students to drink alcohol, and conducted this study to find out if it was the case or not. Despite the fact that I chose to use a qualitative method rather than a quantitative one – such as SPSS in the case of their study, it could be interesting to see if it is possible to establish correlations between the age or gender of participants and their usage of social media.

Indeed, the frequency the targeted audience who came across a palm oil video checks their social media pages (especially Facebook). The conclusion of this study is that social media content did have a major influence on the audiences’ behaviour, “Among both male and female college freshman, exposure to alcohol related SMS content during the initial 6 weeks of college predicted alcohol consumption 6 months later” (Boyle, LaBrie, Froidevaux, Witkovic, 2016).

Although the study was only based on a quantitative method, it is relevant for me to see how impactful certain content on social media can be on audiences.

‘Social interaction via new social media: (How) can interactions on Twitter affect effectual thinking and behaviour?’ (Fischer & Reuber, 2011)

Following the same idea as the previous study, this research will also focus on the effect social media causes on people’s behaviour, more specifically on entrepreneurs and their decision making, but the method used here is qualitative rather than quantitative. The research aim was to “address this gap by studying how the use of one social medium, Twitter, may trigger effectual entrepreneurial thinking and action” (Fischer, Reuber, 2011). The interview is the main source of data, and is tightly linked to the concept of ‘effectuation’, as it targets the impact the use of Twitter would have on entrepreneurs and indeed on their way of thinking and creativity. Although the effectuation concept is specific to this case, interviews are required for my research project to have condensed opinions before being able to do content analysis. As part of their conclusion, the authors stated that “the impacts of social media are unlikely to be limited to increases in marketing alone” (Fischer, Reuber, 2011). This emphasises then on the fact that social media combined with – in the case of my study –
emotional marketing has increased chances to have an important impact on people’s behaviour.

**Breaking through the clutter: the impact of emotions and flow on viral marketing** (Henke, 2013)

In this study, Henke (2013) said that “Several studies have shown that emotions play a role in whether or not a message will go viral, but there are inconsistent findings regarding which emotions will result in greater pass-along”. This statement and future results are closely linked to my research project, as indeed, the ‘shocking’ content of the videos could increase the risk of users skipping and not watching the content, which would then result as a failure in this emotional marketing situation. Henke’s (2013) method was an ‘experimental design’ employing two variables ‘pleasant’ and ‘unpleasant’ Youtube videos and two ‘levels of perceived flow’ (low or high). The ‘flow’ theory consists of a subjective way of engaging with a matter: “flow as ‘optimal experience’, characterized by total involvement with life” (Henke, 2013). More specifically, the method consisted of making half of her study’s participants listen to a ‘melodic’ song on Youtube, and the other half listen to the same song but added to it a visual factor of an emergency room with people screaming and the sight of blood, the perceived pleasantness of the stimulus is the independent variable, whilst the “likelihood of downloading, passing along, or purchasing the content” (Henke, 2013) is the dependent variable. In the conclusion part of the study, although it was logical to find out that participants who felt ‘high flow’ (engaged) would be more willing to download the video for example, it was surprising to see how the results show that there was no correlation between the perception of flow (commitment) and the pleasant or unpleasant feelings generated by the video. Thus, this method helped me shape my research project in a way that (following this study) no matter if the content is shocking or not, the viewer has equal chances to engage with the content shown in the palm oil videos.

‘Consumer perception of viral marketing- example of Croatian market’ (Krizanec, Dobrinic, 2016)

After Henke’s (2013) study stating that no matter if the content is pleasant or not, it does not stop people from engaging with the content, Krizanec & Dobrinic (2016) focus their study on the factors that produce viral marketing and the perception people have of it. This study is also relevant to my research project as it focuses on the same field of research. The research question of this study was the following: “The article aims to explore the perception of viral marketing in Croatia by consumers and Businesses” (Krizanec, Dobrinic, 2016). The method used was quantitative as it combined two surveys, one filled by the consumers/customers and the other by companies. Krizanec & Dobrinic (2016) define ‘viral marketing’ as a useful tool
only for long-term projects, so, in the case of my study, this would then be applied as organisations publishing those types of videos aim for a long-term change, hoping it would go viral and reach as many people as possible. In the results' section, the authors found out that the surveys participants whose majority knew about viral marketing said the key factors for it to spread on the Web (and consequently provoke reactions within the audiences) were creativity, emotions and “it must have a good ‘bait’” (Krizanec, Dobrinic, 2016). Also, the results showed that participants reached by viral marketing were "young", this is then another important factor to take into consideration in my own research study.

Contagious Content: Viral Video Ads Identification of Content Characteristics that Help Online Video Advertisements Go Viral (Knossenburg & Nogueira, 2016)

This study also focuses on viral marketing and specifically on video content. The authors have used the theory of 'social mechanism' (Knossenburg & Nogueira, 2016) to justify how a video can go viral or not. Indeed, before a video turns viral, the producers have the possibility to modify it for example, but once it is going viral, it is in the hands of the Internet users (referred to as the 'social mechanism') and no more changes are possible. The research question of this study is “to develop an understanding of which content characteristics have a significant positive effect on virality of online video advertisements” (Knossenburg & Nogueira, 2016) and, pushed by emotional marketing, to see the “characteristics of online video advertisements cause viewers to share” (Knossenburg & Nogueira, 2016). The methods used are a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, and the process is realised in three steps: “literature review; focus groups with internet users to check the potential constructs and help building the research instrument and finally the survey with the final participants” (Knossenburg & Nogueira, 2016). Also, the theoretical grounding of the study can be found within the ‘uses and gratifications’, ‘emotional contagion theory’ and the ‘social cognitive’ theories. Added to the previous researches examined about viral marketing, the authors found out in their results that added to the usual main factor of virality, which was the consumer’s engagement, it was necessary to add the ‘surprise’ factor. However, if applied to my field of research, this could be problematic as organisations fighting for the negative aspects of palm oil consumption against brands tend to commonly show the same negative aspects and images, but this is something to analyse and confirm -or not- in my own study. “This can be translated into having elements that attract the viewer's attention (surprise), retain it and make people to share it (engaging)” (Knossenburg & Nogueira, 2016).

‘Exploring the dialectic of charity marketing and the charity ethos’ (Bajde, 2006)
This study is highly relevant to my research problem as most of the organisations—which create and publish 'palm oil videos', are charities and yet still use ‘marketing’ to carry their messages and sensitise people. The aim of this study is to analyse how two contradicting theories such as the ‘marketing philosophy’ and the ‘charity ethos’ which seem to be opposed manage to create the ‘charity marketing’: “this paper studies the roots of this incongruity and the ways in which charity marketers negotiate it” (Bajde, 2006). The study is based on qualitative methods. Indeed, the author took for model “McCracken’s (1988) ‘long interview’ method” (Bajde, 2006), but also used other methods such as ethnography, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Bajde’s (2006) found that the interview process would be the best way to answer the three categories of his study, such as the “charity marketing and its use in general”, “the competition among charitable organisations” and “the perceptions of donors” (Bajde, 2006). In the results, the author saw how close the two previously cited theories were, and how instead of slowing down the charity marketing process, it was found that this type of marketing could contribute to the advancement of the field in general (Bajde, 2006). Also, the essence of marketing at the opposite of philanthropic action was generating a gap with the charity marketing financed by donations and created to fight for causes rather than commercial interests. Applied to my research study, this aspect of the marketing is interesting, especially as the charity marketing (through videos going viral) challenge companies using normal marketing to sell products that for instance might not come from sustainable sources.

‘Emotional marketing: how pride and compassion impact for underdog and top dog brands’ (Staton, Paharia, Oveis, 2012)

This study, based on the emotional marketing, tends to prove how two opposite feelings (compassion and pride) can be linked to favouring either an underdog or top dog company, the whole symbolised by the image of ‘weak’ and ‘strong’.

This aspect of the research shows the importance of the audience’s feelings and the impact it can have towards what will sensitise them or not, and in the case of the palm oil videos, if Staton, Paharia and Oveis’ (2012) theory is applicable, then people willing to show compassion would be more in favour of organisations’ battles for causes such as animal extinctions rather than showing compassion for an international food manufacturer using palm oil to save up as much as they can without worrying about the consequences on the environment. The method of this study is not detailed, however it is said that the participants were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk and were “assigned to one of 4 experimental conditions in a 2 (compassion v. pride) x 2 (underdog v. top dog) between subjects design” (Staton, Paharia, Oveis, 2012). The study’s results confirmed their hypothesis, in the first study, it was shown that “feelings of compassion will lead to higher
attitudes for underdog brands, while incidental feelings of pride will lead to higher attitudes for top dog brands” and in the second study, “we illustrated that for underdog brands, compassion appeals are preferred by low SES participants, however this effect is muted for those with high SES (socio-economical status)” (Staton, Paharia, Oveis, 2012).

**Theoretical frame and concepts**

The predominant themes and concepts, which stand out of from the articles cited in the literature review, are the viewers’ emotions targeted through various techniques, and also the role social media plays, in terms of which reaction does its content generate amongst the audience. On the other hand, also related to my topic but not present in those reviews are the theories of consumer behaviour, emotional and guilt appeals, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and cognitive processes.

Firstly, as previously mentioned in the introduction, techniques from marketing, branding and advertising fields are all used in these videos. The paradox is that their common points in the palm oil videos are also linked with the main difference in their usage, which is to use their ‘convincing’ aspects instead of the traditional ‘push to sell’ aspect. Also, the combination of all were always related to emotions as this seemed to be the key to generating the reactions wanted. Although emotional branding is made and used to create a bond between the brand and the user, the techniques used in the videos are employed to make the viewer remember the content they are watching, and, depending on the emotions the organisation choose to ‘play on’, might have a bigger impact than just ‘something memorable’. Indeed, Ali Ekber Akgün et al. (2013) argues that emotional branding “premises an affective basis of the ties to the brand regardless of its cause” (Ali Ekber Akgün et al., 2013, p. 505), showing that emotional content is an effective way of really ‘touching’ the viewer no matter what the brand or product is.

However, following the same idea, but in this case emotions from the viewer are used to sell them a product and not attach them to a brand, emotional marketing is strongly attached to the consumer psychology. Amongst the emotional appeals present in this strategy, the guilt appeal theory is relevant to this topic. Chandler & Munday (2011, p. 180) define it as:

“A psychological and rhetorical strategy in persuasive communication such as advertising, classified as both emotional and negative, which seeks to arouse in the individual feelings of guilt which the desired response would be perceived as likely to assuage. Guilt appeals are ubiquitous in charitable appeals”

Hence, amongst the negative appeals used in media and communication, the guilt appeal seems to be the most commonly used in videos published by non-profit environmental organisations. This is justified by the studies conducted on the matter, which showed that
feelings of guilt or fear tend to provoke a reaction of ‘action’ amongst the viewers. Indeed, in the chapter ‘Happy and mindless, but sad and smart? The impact of affective states on analytic reasoning’, Schwartz & Bless (1991, p. 60) put forward this idea:

“If negative affective states inform the individual about a lack of positive, or a threat of negative, outcomes, the individual may be motivated to change his or her current situation. Attempts to change the situation, however, initially require a careful assessment of the features of the current situation, an analysis of their causal links, and explorations of possible mechanisms of change and their potential outcomes”.

On the other hand, although some participants might feel motivated to contribute to a change within society and avoid fatal outcomes such as deforestation or animal extinction, one could argue that this might not apply if the participants themselves are not in a position to put their thoughts and energy into it. Indeed, this is where the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs’ theory comes into play, as he argues that the physiological needs have to be fulfilled before an individual can participate in other ‘activities’. For instance, if a person has financial difficulties and struggles to buy food at the end of the month, they might not be interested in taking part in the movement where, in order to boycott products containing palm oil, people might have to spend more money to afford alternative products. Maslow’s theory confronts the ‘emotional appeal’ concept present in the videos. Indeed, in certain cases, although it reaches people’s emotions, their social status or situation might play a big part in assessing the impact it will have on them, “a person who is lacking food, safety, love, and esteem would most probably hunger for food more strongly than for anything else” (Maslow, 1943, p.5).

Guilt appeals and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs are a part of the consumer behaviour research field, as they tend to justify or find factors to determine in this case, why or why not those videos have an impact on viewers, “for example, why people buy a particular product, their decision-making processes, or the desires and needs that products address” (Chandler & Munday, 2011, p.70). Also, as the aim of those videos is still not to sell anything, they alter the cognitive processes of the audience, in some cases, they try to evoke a change in their consumer habits with regards to products containing palm oil. Thus, although consumer behaviour plays a big role, the cognition and consciousness concepts amongst this field are even more relevant. When discussing cognition and consciousness in the context of this study, one considers its effect on the way in which the audience think and feel in relation to the issue of unsustainable palm oil usage.

Although one could argue that emotions play a big role in the effect of the videos examined on the audience, it is important to highlight that in order for a change in consumption habits to take place, cognitive processes have the ability to challenge the thought processes of the
consumer, “distinguishing rational from emotional and impulse-driven mental processes” (Chandler & Munday, 2011, p.52). Indeed, Hansen & Christensen (2007, p. 31) point out that in the field of consumer behaviour research, three different forms of decision-making can be identified, all differing in their complexity and thus the level of cognitive activity involved in final decision.

“In consumer behaviour there is a traditional distinction between simple, semi-complex and extended decision-making. Simple choices may be controlled solely by simple and unconscious processes. The semi-complex choices give rise to more cognitions – possibly conscious – whereas extended decision-making is a highly complex phenomenon, usually associated with conscious and cognitive processes, often extended over time and with rather complex information search and problem solving involved” (Hansen & Christensen, 2007, p.31).

In the case of the palm oil videos intending to change consumer behaviour by using emotional techniques, using the ideas put forward by Hansen & Christensen (2007, p. 31), the case examined in this study is indeed a form of “extended decision-making”.

**Method (and material)**

In order to evaluate the impact that these videos have on consumer behaviour and answer the research questions, I needed to hear people’s personal experiences and opinions on the matter. Thus, it made more sense to opt for a qualitative method, which can be defined in the Dictionary of Media and Communication as “Any interpretive method which focuses on understanding meanings” (Chandler & Munday, 2011, p. 347), rather than going for a quantitative one with the analysis of numerical data. Following this, two choices were possible, either individual in-depth interviews or focus groups, which consists of “a group of individuals engages in an organized discussion of a predetermined topic in the presence of a moderator” (Chandler & Munday, 2011, p. 153).

For this study, I found it appropriate to conduct focus groups, in order to have a richer conversation than would have been possible in a one-to-one interview with precise questions. Also, one could argue that it would be easier to get reasoning from people in a discussion rather than an individual interview. This was added to the fact that people could remember things they wanted to say when listening to somebody else, that would not have come up in a one-to-one interview.

The focus group’s guide still included questions, but ‘general ones’, that would provoke reactions and discussions within the participants, and follow-up questions in case the conversation would slow down. As my aim was to assess how these videos would impact the participants’ personal lives and habits, as a ‘moderator’, I tried to stay outside of the discussion as much as possible to not influence the participants in any way. “Qualitative
research interviewers are more equal partners in an intersubjective story-telling experience (Haynes, 2006; Weiss, 1994) and participate in the joint construction of meaning (Gubrium & Holstain, 2002)” (Rossetto, 2014, p. 483).

Hence, I conducted two focus groups of five participants each. The focus group guide remained the same with identical questions for both sessions. However, it was interesting to have one group with ‘neutral’ participants concerning the environmental field, and another group with people more engaged or interested in issues related to their health, alimentation, and the environment in general. To select the participants, I handed them a screening questionnaire (Annexe 1) to determine what their beliefs and habits were, to decide their place in one group or another. The questions would go from asking about their previous knowledge on the palm oil industry, to the description of the videos in their own words to see what they unconsciously remembered the most, going through the feelings the videos provoked and how far they would feel ready to go to change their habits. The groups were then built according to the answers.

The only conditions for being a part of the focus group was that the participant was aware of the palm oil issue, was a Facebook user (as the videos examined were published on this website), had previously watched at least one video on the topic, and lastly that they belonged to the 18 to 30 age range. Indeed, following Statista (2017), after reading the chart ‘Distribution of Facebook users worldwide as of January 2017, by age and gender’, the majority of users (male and female together) represent a majority of 59% of users between 18 and 34 year old. Thus, this choice is justified by the fact that Facebook users are commonly in this age range and have increased chances to have come across this type of video. This is added to the fact that, when analysing the effect this ‘tool’ can potentially have on people in the media and communication field, it seemed relevant to also choose this age range as it represents the generation that will have to deal with this issue in a near future, and hence observe the tendencies in the discussions. The sample taken was five females and five male students at the university of Jönköping (Sweden) from diverse nationalities and belonging to the age range previously mentioned.

The focus group sessions were both an hour long, and started with few background questions, to have the participants’ neutral and ‘non-influenced’ opinions about their knowledge on the palm oil industry. Then, it moved on the visualisation of three videos published on Facebook (Annexe 2). Each video published by a different organisation was focused on one main impact that palm oil production had (work force, environment and animals).
Indeed, the first video communicates its message in the form of a cartoon and focuses mainly on issues of the mistreatment of workers and deforestation in relation to the palm oil industry. This video is the only of the three examined which mentions the names of individual products associated with unsustainable palm oil usage. The second video focuses mainly on the deforestation caused by palm oil production. It shows images of the rainforest burning down, how the oil is produced and gives statistics on the scope of the damage done, putting forward the figures regarding the scale deforestation in Malaysia and Indonesia and how this impacts on carbon emissions. Lastly, the third video, which also uses real footage, involves, in the main, the endangerment of species living in the rainforest and their predicted ‘imminent’ extinction. In opposition to the two previous videos, this one does not have a narrator, there is only text and ‘sad’ music playing in the background, some of the images could be described as quite ‘graphic’.

The questions for the focus group (Annexe 3) were divided in four main parts: the description of the videos, the participants’ reactions to them, leading to the questions about boycott and to conclude, a ‘thoughts on the future’ part. Transcripts of the focus group discussions will help to determine and analyse the results.

Although the screening questionnaire for the first focus group showed somewhat ‘expected’ responses, such as no radical change in the habits, and indeed honesty from the participants, one main weakness in this method could be the fact that the validity of the results could be altered by the group dynamics. However, the fact that there were two focus groups within which the participants respectively have major similarities of opinions on the matter, the influence of this factor was to some extent minimised. This is also one aspect that motivated the creation of two groups, to avoid a discussion where participants would confront each other on their beliefs, instead of neutrally expressing their feelings.

Lastly, I would like to underline the fact that from this study, I will not know the exact impact that the videos will have on the audience of my focus group, in terms of precise actions. However, I will be able to assess what people are telling me they are willing to do -or not do- after watching those videos, as well as their feelings. The focus groups will allow me to see how people individually justify their habits and choices, although it is important to notice the discrepancy between what people say and what they will do, as my data is only collected during the focus group, and will not be carried out following people in their everyday life to observe if they take the action that they said they would.
Ethics

The screening questionnaire was given to the ten people who took part in the focus groups. Although I did an introduction at the beginning of the questionnaire (Annexe 1) to briefly explain why I was conducting these two focus groups and the topic of the upcoming discussion, I did not need to emphasise much on the technical side of the research method. Indeed, all the participants were university students and all very used to and aware of what a focus group was, as well as its aim. Thus, I ensured that they would all agree to have their words and opinions used in my research paper.

Analysis (and result)

This study will now go on to present and analyse the results of the data collected during the two focus groups. The first group where the participants’ answers to the screening questionnaire allowed me to conclude that they were less concerned, will be placed in the focus group A, whilst the other ‘more concerned’ were placed in group B. Also, the participants will be called by numbers from one to five, and the number will be followed by the letter according to their group, either A or B. In order to answer the research questions and assess the scale of the impact these videos had on the ten participants, the analysis will be divided into three parts. The first part will be focusing on the description of the videos by the participants, then the impact that they themselves said it had on them and to finish, and lastly, what actions the participant’s would be willing to take after viewing the videos.

Previous knowledge of the participants

From the beginning of the discussion - in both focus groups, it rapidly became evident that emotional videos about palm oil and the consequences of its production were efficient in raising awareness amongst the participants. Indeed, the information the participants knew about the matter all came from the videos they had watched on social media. This interactive way of learning seemed to have won against making the conscious effort needed to take the time to seek the information for themselves. Hence, in both groups, the numerous videos published on the social media sphere by individuals or any organisations concerning the amount of palm oil contained in a jar of well-known hazelnut cocoa spread, Nutella had its effect. These videos had clearly been very efficient as they were even able to reach group A, who were categorised by the screening questionnaire as being less involved and concerned regarding their alimentation and what their food contains.

The virality of the phenomenon even made participants that were not looking for this information aware, and in some cases, it was thanks to online campaigns that some
participants from the group A also heard about palm oil for the first time. Indeed, when asked about their previous knowledge on the matter, two participants from group A answered straight away “that there is a lot of palm oil in Nutella” (participant 4A), shortly interrupted by participant 2A commenting “Yes exactly! That’s what I know. It’s the first thing that came up to my mind” (participant 2A). Although it was interesting to notice that the first element to be brought into the discussion was the name of a product from an internationally known brand, the conversation quickly turned towards the environmental issues involved in palm oil production.

Participant 3A added “because huge brands like this need so much palm oil for their products, they burn down the rainforest in Indonesia to have the space to plant more palm trees” (participant 4A). Maybe said unconsciously, the words used connote a sense of causality between the brands’ demands and the deforestation. In focus group B, as much jokingly as shockingly, the first participant to answer the question concerning what came to their mind when I said ‘palm oil’ was “Cancer!” (participant 1B), followed by “Nutella!” (participants 2B and 5B). The health issue dominated the beginning of this conversation, as again, the participants were associating Nutella and indeed palm oil with a negative effect on health, although only few participants brought up this aspect and not the entirety of the group.

Following the impacts that participant 2B brought to the group’s attention, for example: “It’s not good for your health, and also, in order to plant the palm trees, they need to destroy the forest” (participant 2B), participant 3B, who was part of the people that did not put health issues forward as being a major impact of palm oil, reacted to it by commenting:

“That’s really interesting, this last one is the only aspect that I think of, because, so far, I haven’t got that much marketing or material regarding what’s negative health-wise with palm oil. I think more about the orang-utans’ homes which are being destroyed in order to create these palm trees’ fields” (participant 3B).

Lastly, another participant from group B spoke about the ‘social’ aspect involved in the production of palm oil, which relates to the situation of the workers within the palm oil industry: “but also, isn’t it also applicable for the workers that are on the fields and the fact that it’s super bad for their health? That’s really risky for them” (participant 5B).

One can see that all of the main consequences of palm oil production were mentioned during the beginning of the conversation in both groups, although it was noticeable that focus group B was more informed on the matter. This difference in the level of knowledge can be seen as a participant from the group A asked another participant who had previously spoken about animal extinction “What happens to the animals?” (participant 4A). Although a slight difference between the groups in terms of one having basic and one having deeper knowledge
was noticeable, every participant had heard, to at least some extent, about the aspects they were about to watch in the three videos presented in the focus group – workers’ conditions, everyday life Western products containing palm oil, deforestation and animal extinction.

Concerning a ‘common’ personal reaction from participants when watching a video with emotional content, unanimously the response from all participants was positive, none of them categorised themselves as desensitised. Although one could observe another difference between both groups, participants from the group A highlighted the fact that the emotional feelings from the video would not last long in terms of the effect on their behaviour, however this is an aspect that will be covered in the section concerning the impact of the videos.

Description of the videos by the participants
The word ‘describe’ was intentionally chosen during the focus group due to its neutrality. This was a way of making sure that the participants would describe what they remembered the most from the videos they watched objectively, and without trying to give the response that they thought was expected by myself, the researcher.

In the focus group B, the participants recalled witnessing deforestation, animal extinction (participant 4B) and also “the exploitation of labour” (participant 2B). It was interesting to see that none of the participants from group B simply described the content of the three videos they had watched. Instead, they gave a more ‘emotional’ recollection of what the images meant, through their use of language. For example, instead of merely describing trees being cut down which was leading to the extinction of the orang-utan, metaphors and emotionally charged expressions were used by the participants, such as “(...) pretty much lose their homes” (participant 3B). One could consider that the level of emotion expressed in the videos was echoed through the descriptions given by the participants, showing that, to at least some extent, the videos were successful in their aim of sensitising their audience.

However, whilst it was evident that the videos had impacted upon both groups differently, it was also clear that on an individual level, the ‘emotion’ of the videos had affected each participant in a different way. Indeed, this can be seen in the case of participant 3A, who stated the following:

“What we’ve seen as well is the consequence of what has been done in the past two decades or so, and now they start to realise that if people don’t do something now, it’s going to be too late... especially if something is not done within the next ten years” (participant 3A).
Despite participant 3A’s overt awareness and somewhat ‘emotional’ concern, it is clear to see that they did not feel included amongst the “people” who -following their words, need to “do something now” (participant 3A). By not being willing to take action, the participant could be identified as part of the out-group in this case, as they do not identify themselves as being a part of the campaign.

Indeed, Tajfel (1982) puts forward the idea that a ‘group’ is only possibly identified if two factors are taken into consideration, which are either “external or internal”:

“Internal criteria are those of ‘group identification’. In order to achieve the stage of ‘identification’, two components are necessary, and one is frequently associated with them. The two necessary components are: a cognitive one, in the sense of awareness of membership; and a value one, in the sense that this awareness is related to some value connotations. The third component consists of an emotional investment in the awareness and evaluations” (Tajfel, 1982, p. 2).

Hence, following Tajfel’s theory, one could argue that for a reason personal to the participant, the two major components which were not identified in their behaviour, caused them to not feel ‘involved’. However, it is important to notice that the third component involving emotions, which in this case could be identified as the content of the videos, were not powerful enough as an influencing factor for them to see themselves as ‘active’ members of the group. Thus, it is arguable to say that the videos had a mixed effect on the participant.

In focus group B, unconsciously or not, few participants seemed to have interpreted ‘what is the message behind those videos’ rather than ‘what was in the videos you have just watched’.

“I’d say the main message is to buy less things that contain palm oil, just because they are cheap... We have to think about sustainability, and it’s a big shortcut but by doing so, the deforestation could be controlled” (participant 1B).

In opposition to participant 3A, this participant (1B) placed themselves in the in-group, using the pronoun ‘we’, and by somewhat emphasising the importance of every individual’s contribution to solving the issue of unsustainably sourced palm oil. Indeed, one could argue that this shows how the videos had caused participant 1B to become highly motivated and optimistic, suggesting that they had been emotionally affected by the content.

The causality effect mentioned previously can be applied here again, as the participant implies that a decrease in the purchase of products containing palm oil could ultimately cause companies producing palm oil to go out of business and eventually stop cutting down rainforest to plant palm trees. Although one could identify this statement as simple and ‘idyllic’, it shows that the videos gave him a feeling of hope and motivation. On the same idea, after briefly summarising the content of the videos, another participant concluded on what they thought the aim of the videos were:
“It’s 3 videos from three initiatives, which have a different focus, like the first one was most focused on the health and circumstances of the workers, the second and also the third was more on the deforestation and the animal situation, so yeah... but all of them tried to support a better thinking of what to buy and when to buy it” (participant 5B).

Considering the sample’s small size and the type of research method, it is impossible to establish generalisations or patterns, but it is interesting to see the variation of points of view regarding the same content by an audience that share common points, such as their educational background and age range for instance. Indeed, many factors come into play when trying to figure why people react or interpret things a particular way. Particularly in this case, one could argue that even if the videos do not sensitise the viewer enough to make them join an environmental organisation for example, by changing some of their own behaviour, they are indeed starting their own ‘campaign’.

Although it is complex to understand why some participants adhere to the movements thanks to the content of the videos and some others do not, Debra King explains in her book ‘Emotions and Social Movements’ that if activism comes out of those videos, this is or could be an asset in the media and communication field. Indeed, she states that once the process is launched and people are motivated for a complex reason, the field is left to find “ways of sustaining activists” and once done, this could lead to “ultimately, the success of social change” (King, 2005, p. 9).

First reactions of the participants

This paragraph will move on to analyse the reactions that the participants had after watching the videos as well as the impact they thought it had on them. Firstly, through the words used by some participants to speak about what they knew about palm oil, interestingly, some chose to describe images they had from videos they had watched in the past, which taught them about the issue: “When I think about it, I have the image in my head of the rainforest burning, the machines cutting down trees and the orang-utans having no place to go” (participant 1B). One could this as a symbol of the power strong images can have on the viewer and consumer behaviour, as indeed, it was this same participant who had previously expressed optimism and motivation in contributing to make a change in this situation. Thus, videos do have an emotional effect on people, however, nine participants out of ten also said that they did not feel ‘sensitised’ by the first video, for the shared reason that it was a “cartoon” (participant 5A) or a “comic” (participant 2A).
Indeed, one could argue that this shows how the use of a ‘cartoon’ as opposed to ‘real’ images, affected the participants in a different way. In this case, it could be said that the participants were less emotionally receptive to cartoon-style content. The ‘abstract’ side of the drawings -although maybe used to represent palm oil workers as a whole and not specific ones- removed all sense of reality and emotion amongst the participants. It even created a gap for some of them, which made them desensitised from the video:

“You find it really difficult to actually take it seriously. It didn't seem real, because it was a cartoon, if we saw real people that were actually going through it, maybe it would have reached us differently. I think it was really difficult to connect” (participant 5A).

By opting for a rather different design and approach maybe to intrigue the viewer or break the conventions of the average ‘palm oil’ videos, they deepened the gap between a crisis already geographically and socially far from the participants. Hence, because of the ‘simplified’ cartoon format, the participants seemed to struggle even more to envisage the situation in their minds, as it is shown with the verb “connect” (participant 5A). An idea that was also shared with members of the other focus group “it maybe made it a bit more difficult to latch on to personally” (participant 3B), “it’s like we’re living in another world” (participant 1B). Participant 5A also added on behalf of the rest of the group who all seemed to agree, “We find it difficult to connect because we’re here, we’re in a good situation and it’s the same than when you hear there are wars somewhere” (participant 5A). The fact that the example of war came up in the discussion in order to draw the parallel with the feeling of ‘disconnection’, shows that this video, in the viewers’ minds, lacked any emotions or meanings.

The participant 3B underlined the importance that real images had in his case, and how it managed to provoke feelings. Indeed, still speaking about the first video, he compared it with the short sequence he saw of the local workers from another video and managed to make the link:

“The real footages felt a bit more real, but in the 3rd video, you can still see the workers, the smoke of the chemicals, and then I linked it back to the first cartoon video, and then thought ‘Oh maybe his eyes are all red and screwed up as well, maybe he’s having real health problems” (participant 3B).

In comparison, the two last videos showing the deforestation and animals’ extinctions were seemingly more successful in terms of reactions provoked amongst the viewers. Indeed, one could justify this success by the negative emotional appeals present in the videos. Here, the term ‘negative’ corresponds to the type of feeling that the videos aimed to provoke, which in
this case were “frustration” (participants 4B and 5B) and “sadness” (participants 1B, 2B, 3B and 3A).

Commonly used in advertising, several studies have shown ‘tougher’ and stronger feelings tend to generate an impact more important to the decision-making process in consumer behaviour when compared with happiness for example, which is said to have a lesser impact on the consumer because of its regularity in videos. Despite the fact that putting the consumer in a good mood helps to make them buy a product, upsetting the viewer or making them feel guilty for example, tend to motivate the audience to find solutions for the problems being discussed. In this case, one could argue that the videos have done exactly this by using negative sentiments in order to promote action from the viewer.

Another factor which was pointed out as evoking emotions and a feeling of sadness was the selection of music in the third video, which acted, along with the images, as a way of reaching the audience’s emotions. In the case of the last two videos and not in relation to the ‘cartoon’ video, the visual imagery and music were dominant. Indeed, the use of classical music and piano helped to build a specific atmosphere, giving the videos a tragic tone, to emphasise on the dramatic and sometimes shocking images shown. This was highly noticed by the participants which said that it contributed to the impact the videos had on them, in comparison with the first video, which did not: “(...) with the sad music played in the background, in comparison with the first video, it was rather powerful I would say” (participant 4A), “it was attaching to the emotions” (participant 4B) and “everything was linked to the emotions to make us feel this way” (participant 1B).

The audio-visual aspects of the video are meant to, in this case, predominate and by reaching up to the participants’ feelings, have a certain impact. However, it is interesting to see that, in the focus group B, some participants seemed to have also found it vital to have information through text on the videos; in order to experience the full extent of the impact of the videos. One of the participant from group B used some figures given in the videos to speak about the workers’ conditions to apply it to their life, and try to close the ‘gap’ mentioned previously between this situation and the Western world. He goes on to say that “3.5 million people work in this industry, that’s a third of the Swedish population, a third of all the people I know would be working in this if it was in Sweden” (participant 3B). Alongside the emotions targeted through music and powerful images, the figures seemed to have also had an equally big impact on this participant. On the other hand, it is not possible to generalise in terms of
the impact of the statistics used, as they were interpreted subjectively by each participant, just like the images and music chosen.

As for a participant from the focus group A, they discredited the comparison used in the text by the organisation, which aimed to exaggerate and emphasise on the size of rainforest already burnt down in Indonesia and Malaysia. The reaction of this participant went against its aim, jokingly saying “I think it’s really interesting how they make comparisons with the size of Switzerland, because Switzerland is really not big, and it’s not impressive!” (participant 2A). In this case, the presence of text to help support a strong message concerning deforestation failed to impact a participant in the desired manner. This shows again the complexity of these emotional appeals, that they did not automatically work for every participant.

Additionally, to the question ‘would you feel impacted the same way after watching only one of those three videos or all of them?’, nine participants out of ten replied that the three videos were needed to feel the way they felt at the time the question was asked: “No I wouldn’t have felt the same” (participant 1A), “Different, because the three videos really give you more insight” (participant 3A), “After one, it would have been like before: ‘Ok I’ve seen it, now let’s move one’, whereas after the three you really think ‘Wow this is bad!’” (participant 4A), and “also with the mere-exposure effect plus the fact that it’s repeated and repeated, it has a bigger effect at the end; you can record better” (participant 2A).

Although this could oppose the idea following which the overload of information has a negative effect on the participants’ retention of messages, one participant supported this theory: “I feel like after the three of them, it’s just too much. There are too many crises to talk about, you have the human aspect, the deforestation, the animals, so afterwards you’re just sort of thinking ‘there’s no hope” (participant 5A).

In the book ‘Online Consumer Psychology’, Haugtvedt, Machleit, Yalch (2005, p. 347) state that “As decision complexity increases, we tend actually to use less of the available information”. However, in regard to this topic, some participants even argue that this wave of information coming from the videos enlightened some aspects of the issue they knew little about, “the videos complete each other, they’re all indispensible to have the full picture” (participant 3B), and this seemed to have provoked the curiosity of certain participants: “I want to get more information about what I could do personally” (participant 2B).

Types of impact generated by the videos

‘Guilt appeals’ as previously discussed, are a commonly used technique in the videos. However, the organisations publishing these videos that chose to use such a method, could be said to have reached their goal in focus group B, and lost it in focus group A. The guilt felt in
the group A did not generate enthusiasm and motivation to make a change as it did in focus group B. Indeed, it is difficult to explain why the feeling of guilt conveyed did not have the same effect on the participants in both groups. However one can identify a clear difference between the impact of the videos on group A and group B, the latter of which showed little optimism in finding a solution to the issue.

“Maybe I’ll think of it when I walk in a supermarket, maybe I’ll look to see if the products I’d buy have palm oil in them, not that I will change my behaviour of consumption but maybe I’ll have a look, as they said at the end of one of the video, try to look for the logo for sustainable sourced palm oil” (participant 1A).

Interpretation of this quote is divided between the idea that these words were said because of guilt and a need to relieve their conscious, or possibly because of a sort of ‘shame’ to admit in front of the other participants that the motivation is not present enough to be ready to make a change in their consumer habits. However, the impact that these videos had on participant 1A made them express the desire to check the presence of palm oil in the products they own, but hesitation seemed to remain when came the idea of replacing the products they currently used with alternatives that do not contain palm oil. “I’m not sure I’ll be capable to change although those videos really make me want to” (participant 1A).

This symbol of uncertainty and opposition to a clear drive to take actions was also found when the participants were asked what would be the actions they would take concerning the focus group discussion after leaving the session. Although in some cases the participants from group A said they might speak about it with their peers, the sentences would start with words which connote uncertainty such as “probably speak about it a bit” (participant 4A) or “maybe I’ll talk to my mum about this because she is from Indonesia” (participant 3A).

Added to the ‘hesitation’ aspect, demonstrating that the videos’ informative and emotional content was not impactful enough – once reached the stage of raising awareness, came the ‘priority ranking’ aspect. This also shows how the videos did not manage to convince some participants of the urgency and scale of the issue. Indeed, when answering a participant that had decided to check the ingredients’ list for palm oil presence in products in the supermarket, this participant showed signs of rejecting all information she had always heard concerning the products to avoid in food for health reasons. “But I think you already have to look for so many things in the supermarket, it’s too much for me!” (participant 2A), evoking the fact that they have to take the time to find out if the products are organic, sustainably produced etc. already. The tone of voice employed when enouncing this list sounded longer than it actually was, showing again an exaggeration to show a lack of motivation to take part and indeed to prioritise this issue above others, which one could argue are ‘less’ urgent.
On a broader scale, another participant shared a similar idea concerning brands ‘bad’ actions in general, implying that mere individuals could not fix the problem as the amount of work needed to ‘fix’ society completely seemed overwhelming:

“They have their warehouses in China, like Asos and all these places for manufacturing, they’re destroying the environment, pretty much using slaves, so I don’t think it’s just an issue with palm oil” (participant 5A).

Another factor that the videos did not manage to erase is scepticism towards what actions taken would actually do to help this issue. This is a noticeable contrast in comparison of the quote from participant 1B previously mentioned concerning the exaggeration they used to show that their actions could lead to a bigger change amongst any manufacturers using palm oil and eventually leading to the stopping of deforestation.

“I’m a bit sceptical to whether it does change something for brands or not, (...) my behaviour habits could change, but I’d say it depends on how widely spread the videos are, and how well do they advertise the campaigns and how many people they reach” (participant 4A).

This quote generates a feeling of scepticism wondering whether these videos and actions asked by the organisations would actually lead to a result, but it also shows the ‘fear’ of acting alone in such a big societal campaign. In comparison, participants from group B acknowledged that actions need to start off by being done individually, in order to create a bigger movement, however, in group A, the shared feeling expressed was that: “I’d just feel like ‘okay I stop consuming products that contain palm oil’ but I would feel like there is just me doing it and then it’s not a big change” (participant 1A).

This scepticism also represents a lack of confidence in brands, implying that whatever social movement is happening, the big corporations would never be ethical and respect it as the appeal for money is too tempting. This also implies that the participant feels powerless and that the videos did not give them the willpower to try fight the big corporations –in this case, to make it right:

(…) Although you see at the end of the video ‘join the campaign now’ it gives you a sort of sense that stuff is moving forward but in the end I think it’s too tempting for businesses, the lure of cheap prices and cheap labour … because it’s not just with palm oil that they do it with (participant 5A).

This idea is also supported by another participant, curious and willing to know if “those videos do have an impact and force these companies to behave more ethically” (participant 2A). This suggests that this is almost a ‘condition’ factor for the participant to decide or not if it is worth changing their consumer habits for this campaign.

Although impossible to know or prove definitely, the quote displays much scepticism, implying that they would only consider helping the cause if taking action was proven to change the ethical standpoints of the companies, and thus help to find a solution to the
problem. Still concerning the impact it had on the participants and despite the fact that the impact stays ‘limited’ for each member of group A, some expressed their mixed feelings where guilt is still present but the videos did not manage to convince them to take actions, “you want to but you won’t actually do it, that’s the problem” (participant 2A).

A pattern was identified amongst the consumer behaviour of the participant of this group. The knowledge of the participants before watching those videos was basic and very much turned towards brands. Hence, one could say that the biggest impact the videos had on them was increasing their awareness on the issue. However, it is arguable to see that in this case, the videos did not have a further impact towards a possible change or adaptation of their consumptions:

“I don’t know if I will change, but I will definitely be a bit more careful, or I would try to find out more the issue, but then in a month or so, I would probably forget about it again... But they kind of did something a bit” (participant 1A).

This short-lasting effect also shows how the emotional content of the videos did not deeply reach to the participant. Hence leaving these videos trivialised, it links back to the aspect of ‘priority-ranking’ previously mentioned. Indeed, if judged important enough by the participant, then once they restart their everyday routine after watching the videos, it would alter their behaviour to the point of not forgetting about it. This factor is personal to every participant, as it is showed in a comment from a participant from the group B:

“It also depends on the people. Maybe we are getting emotional about the orang-utans and everything else, but some people are just the contrary I think, it might not be shocking enough for them maybe, or they just don’t care about the animals” (participant 2B).

Thus, one could clearly establish the fact that a limited amount of ‘priority’ given to this issue by the participant led to less involvement.

Interestingly, once the newsworthiness of the content in the videos is gone and gives space back to routine, another factor could be seen to influence the long-term impact of the videos, specifically, that this process of adaption could be identified as ‘time consuming’:

“I think I could be focused but you would have to show me those videos everyday so I remember and apply it when I go food shopping. At the beginning I would try to avoid products containing palm oil, but then I am scared my old habits would come back; especially when you’re in a rush in the supermarket, you just grab what you need, you don’t pay attention” (participant 1A).

Indeed, a participant from the group B, also showing more interest, felt this risk could happen:

“Right now I feel like I really need to engage more, and need to watch out more, I need to be more informed, but I think let’s wait until tomorrow, or the day after... but when I’m busy with other things and just want to go shopping quickly, I don’t know if
I can still keep that promise to myself. But now I feel like I want to do more” (participant 5B).

However, both groups did have one common point that came up in the discussions. Indeed, whether it was from hesitant participants from group A or ‘motivated’ participants from the group B, it was implied that money would be a factor that could restrain any change in their consumer behaviour. “It’s also a problem when people don’t have the money, they cannot afford expensive or at least healthy products” (participant 1B). The priority ranking in the consumers’ mind can possibly be altered in certain cases by the money, which is a rather concrete aspect of the everyday life. This links back to the idea previously mentioned where, although the videos might have impacted the viewer in a way that they are willing to change their habits, the money factor could block them from achieving it. This is when the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs comes into play. Indeed, the emotions of the videos, in the case of both focus groups, did not lead to participants putting themselves in financial difficulties because of the possible more expensive prices of alternative products not containing palm oil. “I’m looking for the price, mostly. I don’t care if there’s palm oil or not” (participant 1B). This is definitely a factor that had to be taken into consideration as all ten participants are students and do not have full-time jobs. Indeed, following Maslow’s theory, the needs are divided between two categories: the deficiency needs and the growth needs. Martin & Joomis (2007) explain that the deficiency category encompasses all the needs “essential for a person’s well-being and must be satisfied before the person is motivated to seek experiences that pertain to the upper levels” (Martin & Joomis, 2007, p. 73). The physiological needs where the primary needs belong -such as hunger, are at the basis of this hierarchy.

One could see why the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs then somehow justifies that students with restricted budgets might be held back in the process of buying alternative products, which may incur more expensive than their current habits: “I have the excuse that ‘okay I’m a student, I have to care about the price’ I will care about this later, when I will have a job and everything” (participant 1B). Indeed, this is proof that in this case, cognition processes won over the emotions aroused by the videos: despite their feelings on the matter, they decided that the priority here was the price.

Despite the money and time consuming factors, both groups’ participants had a different view of the situation they were facing once in the supermarket. Indeed, the general idea in group A was that the alternative products would be too expensive in comparison to the ones they buy now, so they used it as a barrier that was stopping them from being able to change their consumer habits. However, when asked if they knew if the alternative products were all more expensive than the others with palm oil, their words such as “most likely it is” (participant 4A) showed uncertainty and inaccuracy, as they were persuading themselves.
Independently from the financial factor, the fact that the participant shows they did not actually look in the supermarket to confirm or disprove their opinion show that the videos again failed to provide the audience with a wider sense of importance in relation to the issue and a wider interest created amongst the consumer.

One could see that the mind-set created by the emotions from the videos played a big role. Indeed, participants from group A which were not reached deeply on an emotional level and expressed a limited impact within their consumer behaviour suggest the possibility that there might not always be alternatives for palm oil free products. Although one could see it as a neutral statement, another could see it as another way of them ‘holding onto’ their previous consumer habits:

“If you get to the supermarket and when facing the shelves you think ‘this one has palm oil, this one too and this one’, and you can’t find an alternative, what do you do? I guess I am just going to buy the original one I usually buy” (participant 5A).

In comparison, statements such as “I think these videos force you to look for another product, similar to them, like a substitute, an alternative” (participant 1B), showed how this was not even a factor that was considered in the mind of this participant from group B. Indeed, the availability of alternative products was not questioned. One could argue that in this case, emotional appeals win over the ‘rational’, as their state of mind undeniably influenced their way of thinking and finding solutions.

Also, in the case where there might not be an alternative in a supermarket with palm oil free cookies for example, a participant from group B suggested to “start making your own cookies!” (participant 1B). This is another example of how the motivation, attitude and desire of the participant influence their consumer behaviour. Other participants agreed, adding that this would also be beneficial for their health and financially.

This type of behaviour shows how the videos had a strong impact: indeed, the various causes generated by palm oil production seemed to be placed high enough in their priorities that their mind-set is determined to work in order to contribute to it. Indeed, in opposition to the problem of participants from group A feeling hopeless when they might not be able to find alternative to their products:

“Do I really want to make the effort in the supermarket to look for all these kinds of products without palm oil? and what if they don’t have these alternative products? You think ‘oh okay I’m just won’t buy anything then’, but you need it in order to cook and feed yourself!” (participant 4A),

the participants of group B did not think about it this way. They seemed to have assumed that the choice in the mass distribution was large enough so they would at least have one alternative. When speaking to a participant willing to change their shampoo habits but
wondering if there would be an alternative, another one replied “There are so many kinds of shampoos, it shouldn’t be that hard!” (participant 3B).

Lastly, one could observe the difference between the scepticism of participants from group A, and the motivation leading to various solutions and optimism of the group B. However, it is important to highlight that participants from the group A considered that the videos were doing the best of their ‘ability’, as if they were more ‘cruel’ or using even more graphic images, participants said they “would not even watch it!” (participant 3A).

On the other hand, some spoke about the fact that if the videos contained images and information about possible negative effects on their health, the impact on their behaviour would be much bigger. Indeed, one could argue that in some cases, despite emotional appeals, the human self might win over the animals or environmental’ situation:

“(…) what I want to know is if this palm oil does something to us, by eating it. I know the kind of things they use because it’s cheap are not so healthy, but maybe if I knew it did something bad to me and my body, I would then stop buying products containing palm oil” (participant 1A).

This health aspect for the consumers - which was not present in the videos- was also mentioned in the other group:

“I think as long as it doesn’t affect people personally, or as long as they do not find out that it affect their health and create diseases, people won’t be aware of the problem or takes actions, they won’t care and will still buy products containing it, because they don’t feel concerned” (participant 1B).

On the same idea, participant 3B argued that this could be an asset for the organisations publishing videos on this campaign. Following this idea, that would be a new aspect that could appeal more people to make them feel more concerned and possibly join the movement:

“They need to be attacking from many different angles. For example, the person’s health who consumes it, no videos challenge that. Like you said, you haven’t found any. So they need to go from that direction as well, and they need to not make the message boring” (participant 3B).

On the other hand, although the members of the focus group B claimed to feel sometimes “helpless” (participant 4B) after watching the videos, this negative feeling was contrasted with their positive reasoning. Indeed, not only did they still said that these videos encouraged them to be part of this movement, but the feeling to want to do even more was also present:

“I feel of course sad, but right now, after watching these, I also feel more helpless because I know all this, and I knew it before that there is this situation, and that this palm oil isn’t only bad for the environment but also for animals, for people; but I was missing the message like what can we do again? And now, I feel like when I check
what do I buy, it doesn’t feel big enough anymore, not good enough. Of course I try to look at the ingredients, but as you say, we can never be sure as whether or not there is palm oil in something because all of the names they give to it” (participant 5B).

This opinion connotes that negative appeals from the videos “frustration and helplessness” (participant 3B), did not ‘resigned’ the participants to see it as a fatality ‘where nothing can be done’, but rather a frustration where the feeling of willingness to take actions with a bigger impact dominates their consumer behaviour. Indeed, a participant who said they were feeling helpless after watching the videos, however underlined the fact that he would not give up the cause: “I’m still going to look for it, in pretty much every product I buy” (participant 3B).

In search of solutions and actions to take to ultimately act until “palm oil production is sustainable, or completely terminated” (participant 2B), the participants soon came to the conclusion that, in their opinion, an important part was missing in the videos in order for them to have a bigger impact on their behaviour, and possible adaption of habits. In their opinion, the lack of clear message was obstructing the actual goal of the organisation publishing the videos. Indeed, for the part of the viewers who are already aware of the issue and had knowledge about it, they felt frustrated after watching them, as there was no “how to solve this problem” (participant 4B). Although they knew the individual actions they could take personally, they were for instance willing to discover in those videos names of brands to avoid, who were producing unsustainable palm oil.

This idea came when a participant said they stopped eating the KitKat chocolate biscuits – containing palm oil, after watching the advert video denunciating the link the brand had with animal extinction. Indeed, the video was showing a working man opening the KitKat bar on his break, and finding an orang-utan finger instead of the biscuit in the packaging. The man went on to eat it anyway, showing blood on his face and clothes. Effectively, this video published by Greenpeace went viral and supposedly had an impact on viewers. Participant 5B went on to comment:

“That was gross! But there you see that’s what missing in those videos, we don’t have this message, we need to learn it ourselves, we need to look at which brands do or not contain it; but still we don’t have this strong picture that had a big impact on us like you mentioned it before. So I think that’s the major problem probably in the videos that you don’t get that, if they would have a Doritos bag and an orang-utan that’s getting killed next to it because I’m eating my Doritos or whatever, you know, these are the big images that would keep me from buying Doritos but it’s not happening yet, so I just have to do so much with myself”.

Despite the negative aspect of the videos that they are required improve in order to have a bigger impact, the participants still seemed ready to take action in the future if videos with clear messages were published.
In comparison with participants of group A who were more sceptical and less ready to change their habits, participants of group B all seemed part of the movement. Indeed, although my study can only analyse their words and reasoning, two participants had already changed their consumer habits long before the focus groups, and the three others were willing to join the campaign, although in that case, I can only base it on their words and not future actions. The impact that those videos had on the reasoning of the participants goes from checking the presence of palm oil in products to boycotting a brand that sells products containing palm oil. Indeed, most participants from group B argued that they were already aware of the issue thanks to videos they had watched in the past, that had already modified their habits (for some). However, for some, the viewing of the three videos in the focus group emphasised the willingness to act by avoiding palm oil:

“I will try to avoid it even more now, I will try to eat more fruits, more vegetables instead of stuff with palm oil and use more olive oil, which is good for me” (participant 1B).

For the others that were less impacted in the past by the videos, whether it is the overload of emotions and information accumulated by the three videos of the focus group or another factor, they also showed motivation: “the problem is that I already looked at this kind of videos before, and it didn’t really change my consumptions but now I feel really concerned and that I decided I will take some actions” (participant 2B).

Boycott vs. brand attachment

The discussion then turned to the boycott of brands selling products containing palm oil. Despite the two participants already doing it for a certain period of time, participant 5B, who used to avoid palm oil when doing food shopping felt frustration after watching these videos. Indeed, as previously quoted, the participant expressed frustration after the viewing of the three videos in the focus group, as she realised that the situation was still the same as when she first watched videos on the matter. One could argue that this time, the videos impacted her behaviour on an upper level, as she said:

“I think I could stop eating different kind of chocolate brands or Nutella, or whatever. I think I would be ready to change that. And also, I think I wouldn’t mind buying something else than Ikea furniture” (participant 5B).

One could argue that this is a rather ‘radical’ decision to take, compared to trying to avoid products containing palm oil. For participant 3B, the videos fully impacted them and had a clear influence on their consumer’s habits:

“It has had an effect on my actions. For example, I can’t buy my favourite cookies anymore, because they contain palm oil, plus it was the cheapest brand in the supermarket, so it was probably not sustainable palm oil”.

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That was also the case for participant 5B, who particularly boycotts brands in the cosmetics industry, such as “Nivea” (participant 4B) for example, and added that she “already buy palm oil free cosmetics, most of the time from the brand Yves Rocher. There you have the insurance that they don’t use palm oil, and all the bad stuff”.

One could observe a main difference between the reasoning of participants from both groups. For example, the participant 4A showed that the temptation of buying a familiar product would win over picking an alternative product without palm oil. Indeed, this shows that the videos in this case did not highly impact the participant:

“I’m probably still going to buy the products I used to buy, but maybe I’ll go and check which products contain palm oil to make myself aware or be surprised! But then I would ask myself if I should stop buying that or not, but if it’s too good for me I’ll just want to stick to that” (participant 4A).

Thus, one could argue that this quote shows a limited impact on the participant and the strong attachment to a product or brand that the emotions failed to interfere with. Indeed, this same participant earlier in the discussion mentioned that a main reason why he would not be able to change their consumption habits was that the prices of the alternative products would be too high. Then, when asked what they would choose between Nutella and a cheaper alternative, the answer was firstly “it really depends because I think you got so used to the taste of Nutella...”. Then, participant 4A came back to his answer and evoked a ‘risk-taking’ that did not seem worth taking in his opinion: “let’s say you take the alternative one, you try it and you realise it doesn’t have the same taste!”.

This product attachment with Nutella in this case, seemed to predominate the behaviour of the consumers, stopping them from making any changes: “with Nutella it’s hard!” (participant 1A), jokingly, participant 3A commented “maybe another example with another brand maybe the choice would be easier to go for the alternative, because everyone knows how good Nutella is... so any other product but this one!”.

Also, the branding seemed to play an important role in the consumer psychology. Participant 5A qualified Nutella as a “really strong brand”, and justified in a certain way the type of behaviours mentioned above:

“(…) so when you see them, you see the Nutella logo next to... I don’t know, a green jar of another brand, you automatically go towards the Nutella one, but I don’t even think at that stage you would look at the price of the other one, I think you would just assume it’s more expensive because it’s ecological”.

In opposition, only one member of the group B showed a sign of brand attachment, which seemed to quickly disappear in their reasoning. Indeed, participant 5B previously expressed their will to boycott brands such as Nutella or Ikea, but honestly explained that her
boycotting process could be occasionally weakened for their favourite product, ‘Kinder Bueno’:

“I would try to boycott Kinder as they use palm oil in their products, but for example, I love Kinder Bueno, and I would probably make an exception for some times or special occasions...”.

Before shortly adding “But I actually know that there are really good alternatives to Kinder Bueno so I think I could even boycott the Kinder brand, because there are always alternatives”. Indeed, the consumer psychology seems to be rather personal to each participant as to whether or not they are highly attached to a brand. However, one could argue that the emotions and information from the videos helped certain participants to break their attachments to brands or products. This seems to be the case of participant 3B “Yes I changed my habits, but maybe it’s individually how easy you do that” and participant 4B who when speaking of boycotting a brand, stated: “that was easy, I would never go back to it!”.

**Conclusion**

Firstly, one can conclude that participants from group B were to an extent more impacted in their consumer behaviour than the group A. Indeed, there could be a correlation between the knowledge and interest of the participants, and their reactions to the videos. The screening questionnaire showed that they gave more importance to their alimentation than the other group for example.

That being said, the videos seemed to have had an impact on every participant’s behaviour in the group. As the study is only based on their opinions and feelings expressed in the focus group, and not following them in their everyday life to see if their actions match their words, it is only possible to base any conclusions on what they said. However, two participants were already boycotting brands selling products containing palm oil prior to the focus group. The fact that they said the emotional videos published on social media informed and convinced them to come to the stage of boycotting brands, one could firmly assume that these videos and their content are impactful on certain people, and go further than only taking part on the social media sphere by liking or sharing the content.

Concerning the factors that seemed to have provoked an important effect amongst participants of both groups were the negative feelings such as sadness and frustration for example. Indeed, emotional appeals and audio-visual tools such as music and real footage seemed to have been key in generating a reaction amongst the participants. It was said almost unanimously that the first video in a cartoon format did not connect with the
members of both focus groups. On the other hand, amongst emotional appeals was the guilt appeal, which was highly used in the videos.

It is interesting to see that this technique did not create the same expected result in both groups. Indeed, in the case of group A, the feeling of guilt was felt in the way the participants expressed themselves. They used many words connoting uncertainty when explaining what actions they would be ready to take. Despite the fact that I stated that I was not looking for any particular answer, either they would express themselves in such a way to keep a good image in front of me and the other participants, or maybe towards themselves, as they felt guilty but not enough to take firm actions. The main difference with the other group is that members of group A underlined the fact that factors such as time and brand attachment would stop them in this process of behavioural change.

The videos stirred their curiosity in a way that most of them were willing to check the presence of palm oil in their everyday products. However, when asked what they would do once they found out some products contained it, they did not express a clear will of intending to replace them with alternatives, as their habits and attachments to some products such as Nutella were too strong. This symbolises that their interests were placed higher up in their consumer psychology than the cause itself. On the same idea, some participants expressed that routine and time would make them forget about the issue and would go back to their old habits. One could argue that this also shows that the videos did not manage to impact enough the participants.

On the other hand, despite a limited impact on members of group A, they all put forward the idea that if the videos showed that the consequences of palm oil were bad for their health, their behaviour would be very different. Indeed, some of them said that would be a deciding factor in boycotting products containing it.

The fact that some participants judge that the environmental cause, for example, is important enough to take actions whilst others judged that it will only be done if it touches their health is an issue concerning the consumer psychology that my study revealed without being able to explore it further.

Concerning the other group, guilt appeals had another impact on their behaviour. Indeed, it generated a feeling of frustration that lead the participants to feel even more active in order to improve this situation. Although some said they felt helpless, every participant were willing to avoid as much as possible products containing palm oil by replacing them with alternatives, whilst two were already boycotting brands selling products containing it. In opposition to the members of group A, who said to feel isolated in their actions, participants of group B were advocates of the fact that every individual had to take actions in order to make a big change. On the same idea, whilst participants of group B highlighted the
importance of speaking to their peers about the issue, the group A who showed scepticism few times were not willing to do the same, as they did not judge it ‘worth it’.

Lastly, the fact that the emotions from the videos would ‘win’ over the consciousness and cognition in the consumer’s mind is a complex idea that could be studied further. My study showed that despite having a seemingly similar sample, both groups’ participants were impacted differently. However, amongst the participants receptive to the content of the videos, one could see that it led to greater actions in their consumer behaviour and did not stop on the online sphere.
References


Participants 1B, 2B, 3B, 4B, 5B (2017) Focus group B, 4 May.


Annexe 1

Screening questionnaire

Thank you for taking part in this questionnaire. The aim of my thesis is to analyse the impact of emotional videos showing the consequences of palm oil usage, on consumer behaviour. Indeed, I will send you three videos to watch before attending the focus group so we can discuss their content and your personal experience regarding the topic. Also, this questionnaire will help me to decide whether you correspond more to focus group A or B (depending on your habit). This will potentially allow me to establish correlations between people with similar or different interests and reactions to the material.
1. Are you concerned about the environment?
   - Very concerned
   - Somewhat concerned
   - Not concerned
   - Not at all concerned
   - Other

2. You pay close attention to what is in your food.
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree
   - Other

3. Are you interested in knowing the source of your food (fair trade, organic)?
   - Very interested
   - Somewhat interested
   - Not interested
   - Not at all interested
   - Other
4. If you are interested, is it a major factor in your decision to buy a product or not?  
- Yes  
- No  
- Sometimes  
- Other

5. Do you use Facebook to find out more about the palm oil sourcing issue?  
- Yes  
- No  
- Other

6. Do you follow Facebook pages related to this issue?  
- Yes  
- No

7. Would you change your consumption habits if you found out its production had a bad impact on the environment, society or animals for example?  
- Definitely  
- Maybe  
- Not at all  
- Other
Annexe 2

First video

https://www.facebook.com/raINFOrestactionnetwork/videos/10154298793595960/

Second video

https://www.facebook.com/grist.org/videos/101545893791999809/
Third video

Annexe 3

Focus group guide

Hi everyone. Thank you very much for taking the time to be here today. Before we start watching the videos about palm oil that show the different impacts it has: environment, health and social I’d like to ask you a few questions.

DESCRIPTION

1. Do you have any questions to start with concerning palm oil and its consequences?

2. What did you personally know about the palm oil issue before watching those videos?

3. Would you say you’re usually moved and receptive to ‘emotional’ videos on Facebook?

Now, let’s watch the videos and then we will discuss your feelings towards it, your personal experience and opinions.

I just want to say that there isn’t a right or wrong answer, I’m interested in the discussion, and it is really to see the impact (if there is one) that it has on viewers and explore the differences depending on people, so just say what comes out of your mind and how you feel! I am interested in seeing if, once a video goes viral, it has a further effect on people, or if it just stays on the social media sphere.

4. Could you describe briefly what you’ve just seen (in the videos) in your own words

5. If there is one, what would be the aspect that you will remember the most out of those videos? (there can be several ones of course! → forests burnt down, animals extinction, local contractors’ treatments, etc. // the “cartoon” abstract videos or the images taken from Indonesia of animals?)

REACTIONS TO THE VIDEOS

6. After watching the videos, what are your feelings towards it? (anger, sadness, hopeful/hopeless, mad or betrayed by big brands)

7. Hopeful or hopeless? And why?

8. If you would have stopped after watching one video, would you say you would feel the ‘same’ way than after watching the three? (did the big amount of information and the different aspects help you to understand/see the scale of the issue?)

9. What would you say the aims/goals of those videos are? (awareness, boycott, etc.)

10. Would you say that they’ve achieved their goal?
11. What will you do -concerning what we just spoke about in the FG- once you will leave this room? (speak about this with your peers for example? or it wasn’t really ‘shocking’ and you will ‘move on’ with your life?)

12. To what extent did this video have an impact on you? (Does it make you want to change something in your life? Take actions? Check what’s in your food/cosmetics products? React on social media? Find out more? Become an activist?)

13. How much importance do you give to this issue? (is it worth it?)

14. If you are part of the people that want a make a change, for which aspect would it be? (Personally for your health? to stop big brands to make so much money on our backs? to stop deforestation and animal extinction?)

BOYCOTT

15. How far would you be ready to change your food/consumer habits? (Radically stop buying products containing palm oil for some that do not?)

16. Which factors could stop or slow you down from this process of adaptation? (money?? No time when food shopping?)

17. In your opinion, how hard is it to replace a product with PO with one that doesn’t contain it? (Nutella jar from Coop as expensive than Nutella but organic and fair trade BUT sustainable palm oil)

18. If you decide to buy another product without P.O, would you still consider the price? Or would your conviction be so strong that you would ignore the financial aspect?

19. Would you be ready to even boycott a brand that uses palm oil? Why?

20. Amongst the three videos watched, if you only watched the one that now you know was less impactfull for you, would it still have the same effect on you it has now after the three?

THOUGHTS ON THE FUTURE

21. What is your opinion about what should be done regarding this issue? (tax brands? Politics involved? Boycott?)

22. Concerning the brands’ responsibilities, what do you personally think they should do for the long term? (produce palm oil in a sustainable manner or stop completely and replace palm oil with existing oils for example)

23. Which consequence do you think boycotting brands that do not join the ‘sustainable movement’ will have on them?