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Is ethical consumerism an oxymoron? Examining emotions towards cruelty free products in the beauty industry.

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Introduction

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- Full-Time Lecturer at York St John University.
  - Course Lead of the Undergraduate Marketing Suite.
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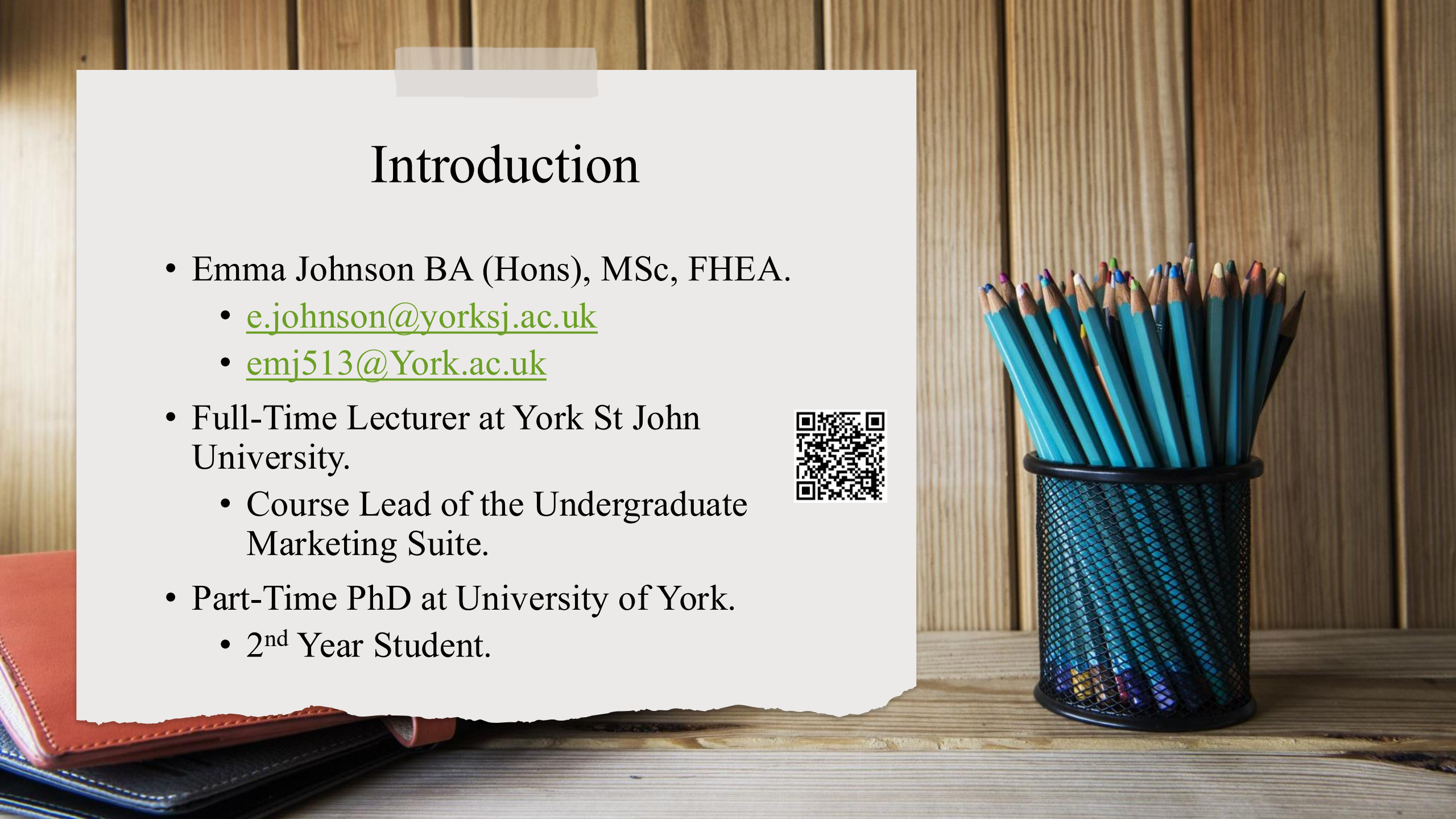

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Research Aim and Objectives

Research Aim: To investigate the role of emotions in ethical consumerism of beauty products in the UK.

Research Objectives:

1. To critically review literature surrounding consumer emotions that may occur during ethical consumption of cosmetics;
2. To investigate consumer buying behaviour when purchasing cruelty-free or tested on animal products;
3. To draw conclusions and make recommendations as to whether there are differences in emotions, purchase behaviour and ethical forms of decision making?

Cruelty-Free

Cruelty-free means that no animals were harmed by the companies or suppliers in the creation of the final product (Cruelty Free International, 2023a).

Due to legislation, companies also must declare whether they test on animals, given demand from the public and increased political momentum relating to such issues (Chitrakorn, 2016).

History of Cruelty-Free Movement

1959

Animal rights activists Muriel Dowding founded Beauty Without Cruelty, encouraging companies to manufacture faux fur (Piccioni, 1993).

1980s and 1990s

Cruelty-free language became prevalent, according to Levinson and Horowitz (2016), the term started to refer to animal testing and personal care products.

1987

PETA launched their cruelty-free certification and developed a long-term initiative to dissuade companies from testing personal care products on animals.

1990s

Cruelty Free International created the Leaping Bunny Programme (Cruelty Free International, 2023b).

This needs to stop…

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The Facts

- A total of 3.06 million procedures were completed on animals in Great Britain in 2021 (UK Government, 2022; PETA, 2023).
- Out of the total number of procedures only 10% were required by law, the rest were conducted voluntarily (Cruelty Free International, 2023c).
- In terms of the cosmetic industry, approximately 500,000 animals are used to test beauty products every year around the world (Humane Society International, 2023).
- The animals typically used for the procedures are rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, rats, and mice (De Pauliny, 2021).
- It has been shown that non-animal methods in cosmetic testing have shown better results in predicting human responses in the real-world than the animal tests they replace (Humane Society International, 2023).

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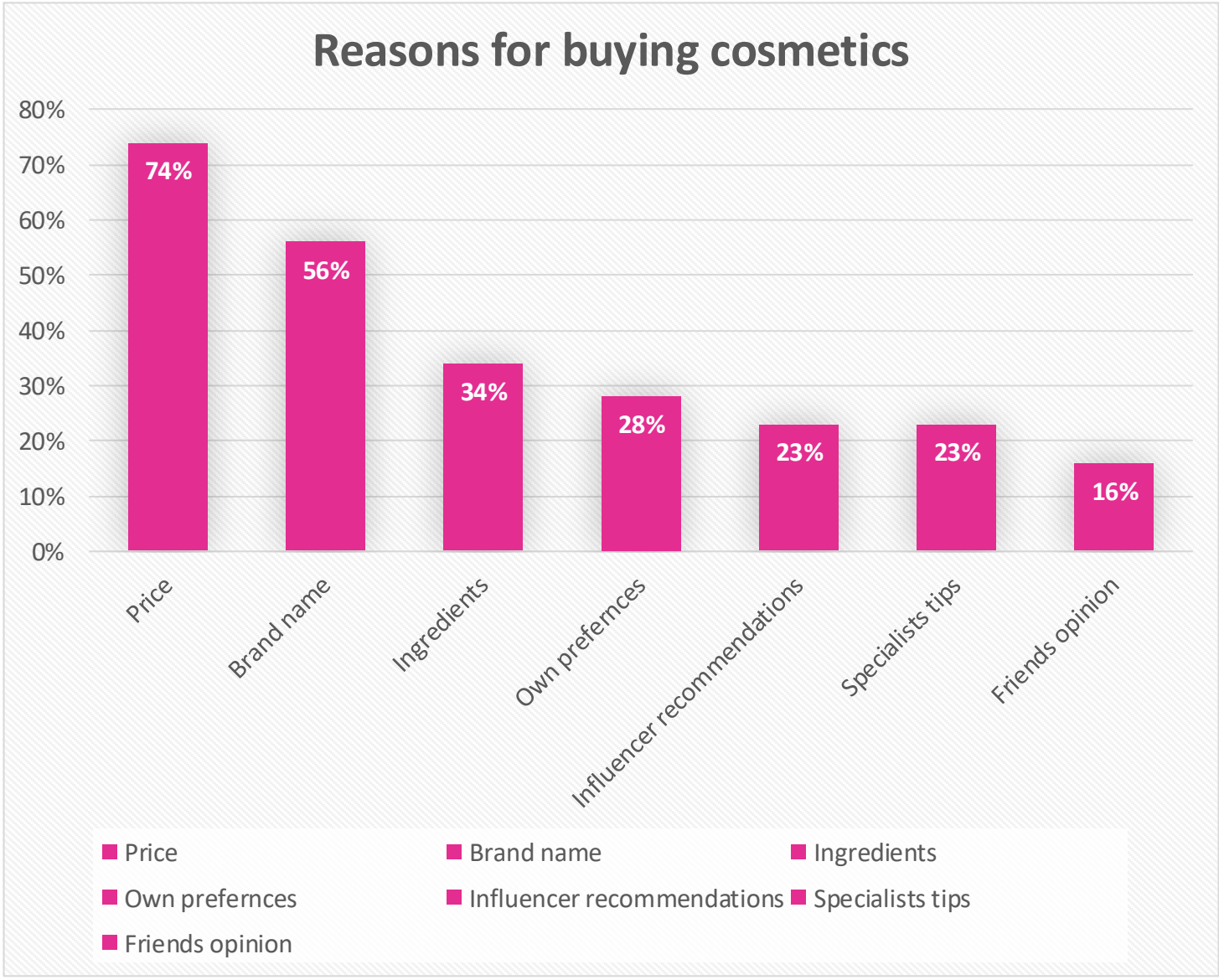
Beauty Industry

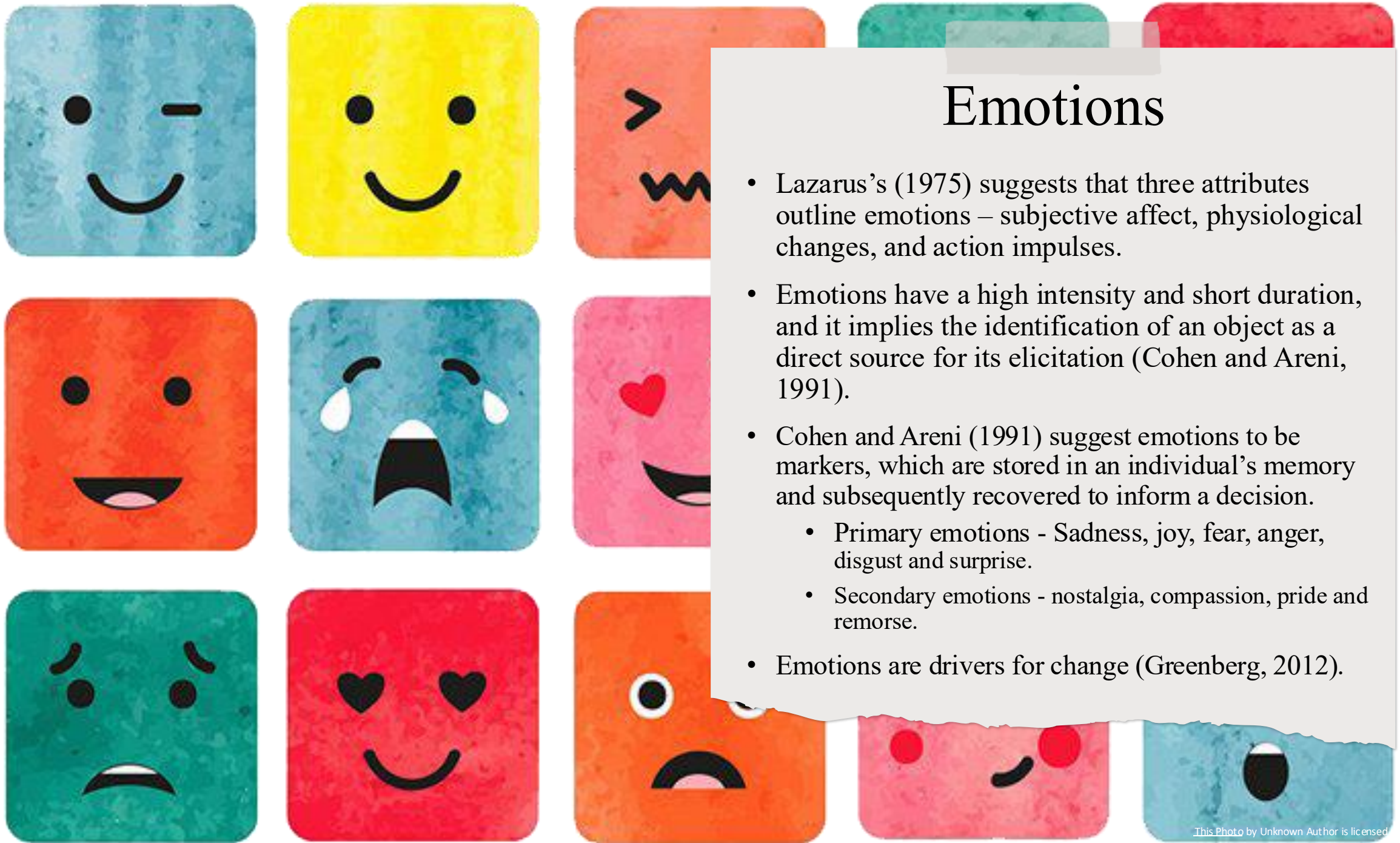
- In 2022, the global cosmetics market experienced a growth of over 16%, compared to the previous year. Skincare, haircare, make-up, perfumes, toiletries, and oral cosmetics are the main product categories of the cosmetic market (Statista, 2023).
- The UK beauty industry is worth £27 billion and is the seventh-largest cosmetics market, with the USA and China taking the two top positions (Johnson, 2020).
- The hair and beauty sector contributes £6.6 billion per annum to the UK economy (British Barbers Association, 2022).
- British women spend on average £400 annually on cosmetics (Read, 2020), the highest in Europe (Statista, 2020) with 60% of women wearing makeup on a weekly basis (Waldersee, 2019).

Cosmetic Consumption Attributes



Ethical consumerism

- A voluntary decision by a consumer to buy goods and services, aiming to positively affect certain social and/or environmental issues (Doane, 2001; Jones, 2017).
- Toti and Moulins (2016, p.53), define ethical consumption behaviour “as a way to acquire and use products and brands as much as possible marrying consumers’ moral principles and values ”. What if their moral principles and values are not ethical?
- Ethical consumption can be perceived as a concept of mindful consumption, which is characterised as a sense of caring for community, self and for nature (Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas, 2010).
- Ethical consumption is used to describe consumers purchase and use of products that incorporate a salient ethical or moral dimension. The hedonic function and product usage can be subordinated by concerns about right and wrong and consequences of consumption acts (Starr, 2009).



Emotions

- Lazarus's (1975) suggests that three attributes outline emotions – subjective affect, physiological changes, and action impulses.
- Emotions have a high intensity and short duration, and it implies the identification of an object as a direct source for its elicitation (Cohen and Areni, 1991).
- Cohen and Areni (1991) suggest emotions to be markers, which are stored in an individual's memory and subsequently recovered to inform a decision.
  - Primary emotions - Sadness, joy, fear, anger, disgust and surprise.
  - Secondary emotions - nostalgia, compassion, pride and remorse.
- Emotions are drivers for change (Greenberg, 2012).

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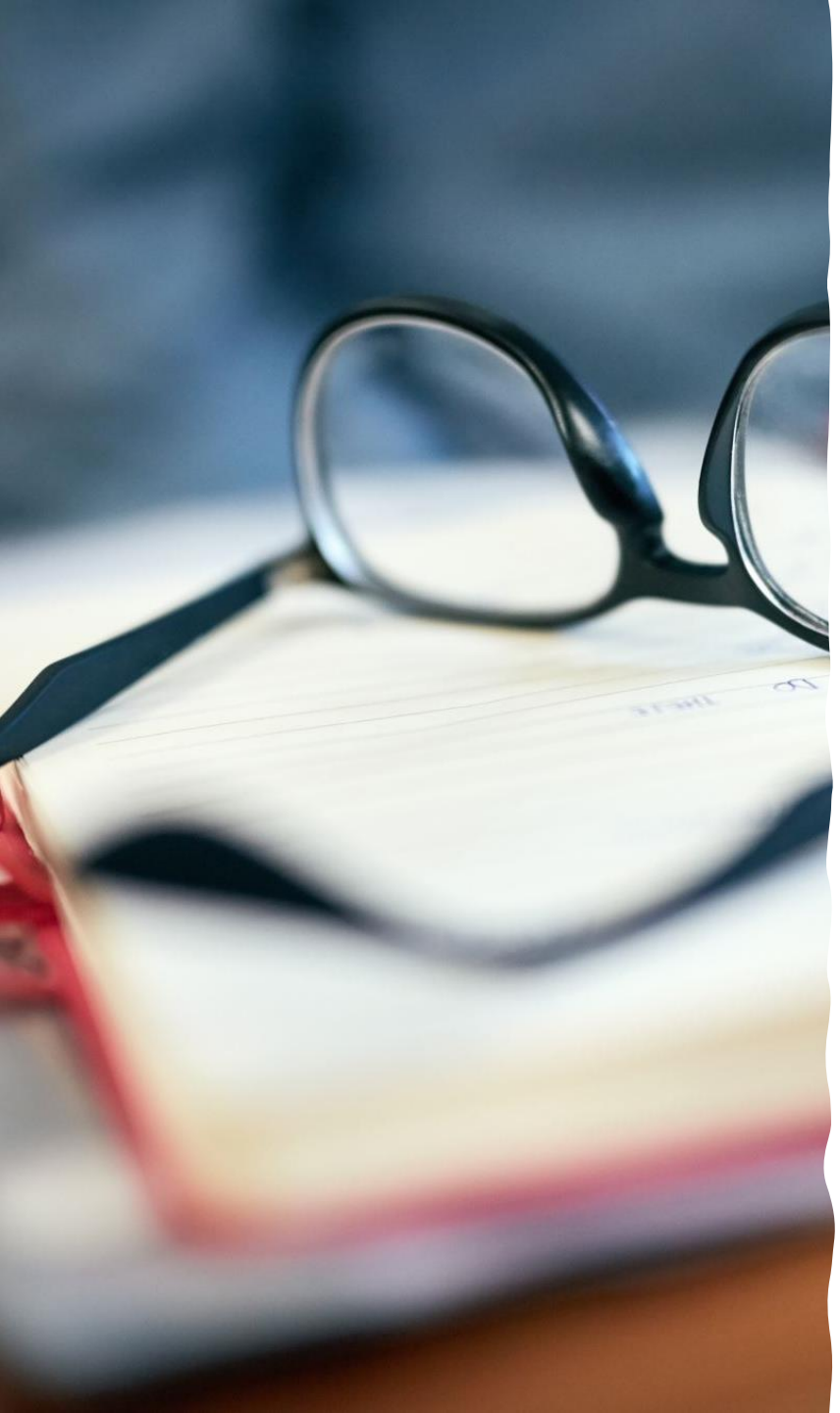
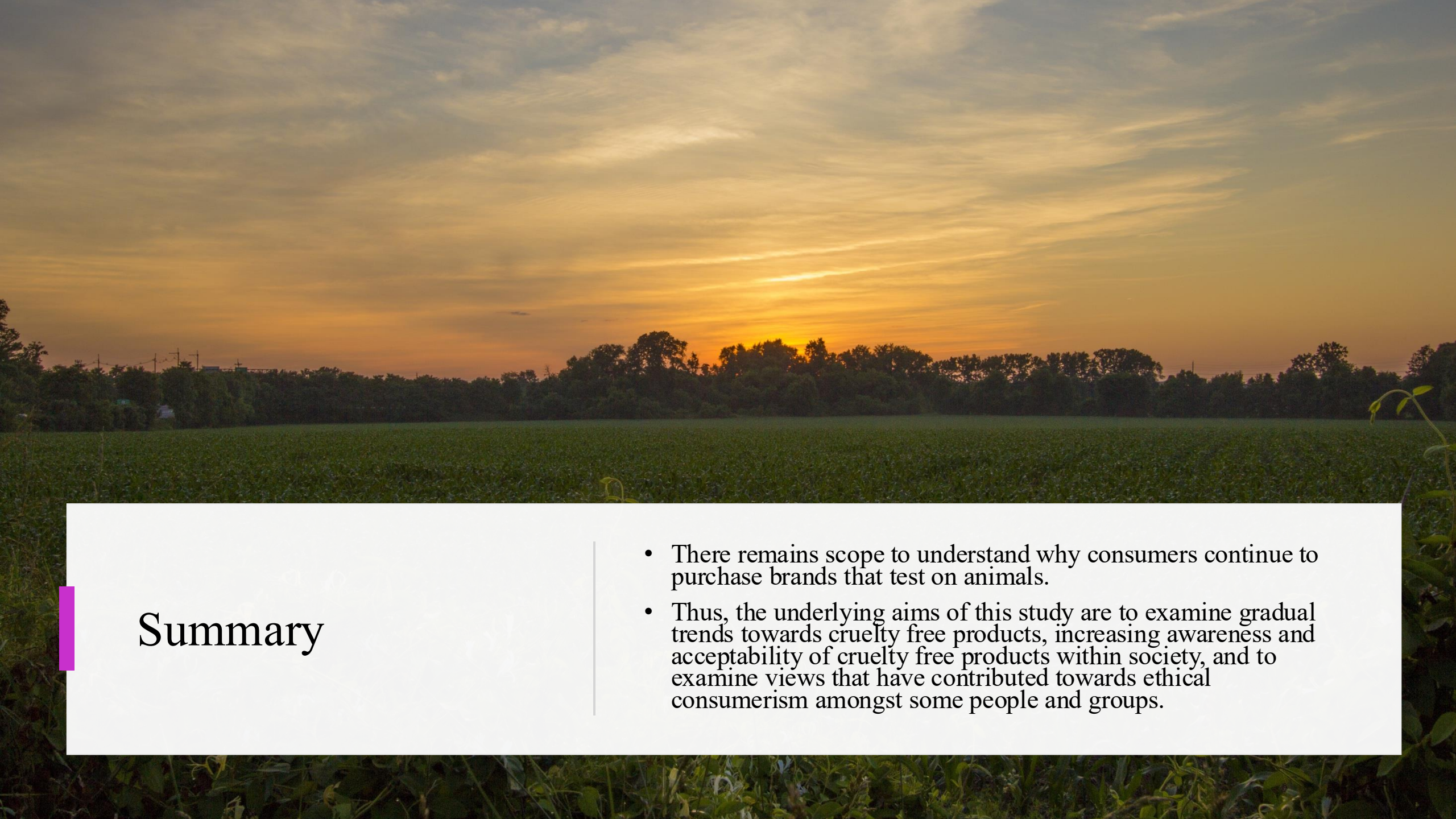
Summary of Purpose

- We as consumer are influenced by our emotions.
- Emotions can impact our buying behaviour.
- We need to start with the consumer which necessitates an understanding of how emotions drive behaviour.
- Gain an understanding of the emotions that drive consumption of cosmetic products.



Methods

- Philosophical approach – Interpretivist.
- Ontological approach – Subjectivism.
- Data Collection – Qualitative.
  - The interviews will be conducted with female participants, with 60% of women wearing makeup on a weekly basis (Waldersee, 2019).
  - British women spend on average £400 annually on cosmetics (Read, 2020).
  - The semi-structured interviews will be comprised of open-ended questions, as these permit participants to discuss their feelings, experiences, and suggestions on the surrounding topics.
- Sample Size - Depth of research needing to be gathered on this topic area, it is suggested between 15 – 30 interviews will be conducted or until saturation is reached.
- Data Analysis – Thematic analysis.
- This research will aim to provide an in-depth insight into ethical consumerism, to understand participants buying behaviour towards products that have been tested on animals.



Summary

- There remains scope to understand why consumers continue to purchase brands that test on animals.
- Thus, the underlying aims of this study are to examine gradual trends towards cruelty free products, increasing awareness and acceptability of cruelty free products within society, and to examine views that have contributed towards ethical consumerism amongst some people and groups.

Any questions?

Thank you for listening.

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