

CASE STUDY

Ethical Lens

From Clicks to Conscious Choices.

The plug-in that makes ethical shopping effortless.

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Personal Interest

How this project fits my story

I've always loved fashion as a form of self-expression. But as I learned more about fast and affordable fashion, I became aware of its hidden costs, environmental damage and unethical mass production.

Online shopping makes it easier than ever to buy more without thinking twice. I don't believe convenience and sustainability have to be opposites.

Ethical Lens was born from that tension: my love for fashion and my desire to make conscious choices easier through design.



How Might We?

How might we help online shoppers make ethical choices effortlessly so that everyday purchases have a lower environmental impact?

The Big Idea

What if every product online came with a visible conscience?

Ethical Lens transforms the digital marketplace by embedding real-time ethical ratings directly into the shopping experience.

Without disrupting convenience, it evaluates products based on sustainability, labor practices, and environmental impact, and suggests better alternatives when needed.

It makes ethical awareness effortless.



Finding the Problem

Before looking for a problem to solve, I mapped real shopping behavior.



Key Insight

The pain point wasn't price or convenience — it was information asymmetry. Users suspected brands were hiding something but couldn't verify it while shopping.

Audience Research

Round 1 — Understanding Behavior

- What frustrates people when they can't find products in-store?
- What makes an online store feel like the best place to shop?
- How do discounts influence purchasing decisions?
- Convenience vs. trust: what wins?

Goal: understand motivations, not test solutions

Round 2 — Ethical Shopping Habits

- How do users currently research brand ethics?
- Would they pay more for ethical products?
- What stops them from shopping ethically today?
- Do they trust brands that self-label as ethical?

Goal: validate if the opportunity is real

Competitive Analysis

I paused before ideating — to pressure-test the opportunity.

Direct

Good On You

Large ethical brand library — but destroys shopping flow. Users must leave the store to check.

Direct

DoneGood

Curated ethical marketplace — separate destination, not integrated into existing shopping habits.

Indirect

Google Search

Users manually search 'Is [brand] ethical?' Very few take this extra step. It should be effortless.

Indirect

Reddit / TikTok

Peer advice and creator content — trusted but slow, unsearchable, not available at point of purchase.

Opportunity Gap: No existing tool meets users inside their shopping flow. That gap shaped everything.

The Format Decision

Why a browser plugin — not an app, not a website.

App

✗ Ruled Out

Requires users to open a separate tool before or after shopping. Demands behavior change — users forget, skip, or abandon it entirely.

Website

✗ Ruled Out

Same problem as an app. A destination you have to remember to visit. No integration with the moment of purchase.

Browser Plugin

✓ Chosen

Zero behavior change. Works inside the existing shopping flow. Surfaces information exactly when decisions are being made — across all retailers.

Design North Star: Meet users exactly where they already shop — require nothing extra from them.

Meet Juliana



Juliana Martinez · 25 · NYC

Goals

- Make purchases aligned with her values
- Avoid supporting unethical labor or environmental harm
- Discover ethical alternatives without sacrificing quality

Pain Points

- Feels manipulated by greenwashing
- Doesn't trust vague marketing claims
- Guilty after buying from questionable brands

I want to know instantly whether a brand aligns with my values -- without opening ten tabs or relying on vague marketing claims.

Recognizing the Signal

Julia didn't just stand out in testing — she revealed who this product is actually for.



Already Motivated

She cares about ethics — deeply. She doesn't need to be convinced. She needs a better tool.



Currently Underserved

Relies on Google searches, Reddit threads, and scattered bookmarks to research brands manually.



Would Switch Immediately

The moment a tool exists that does this effortlessly, she's the first to download it.



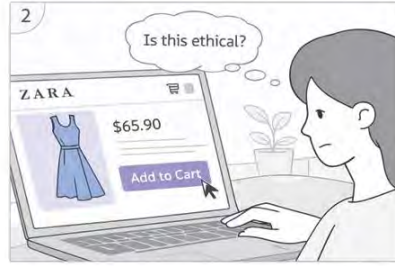
The Viable Niche

Not everyone — but a real, motivated, growing segment. Gen Z & younger Millennials with values.

Storyboard



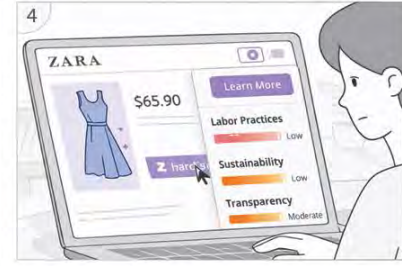
1
Julia unwinds after work, casually scrolling online.



2
A blue dress catches her attention. She hesitates — is Zara actually ethical?



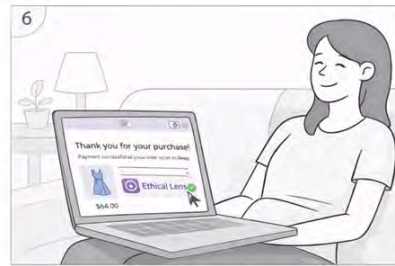
3
A blue dress catches her attention. She hesitates — is Zara actually ethical?



4
A clear breakdown appears — Labor, Climate, Animal Welfare. No extra tabs.



5
She finds a similar dress at a similar price — with a much higher ethical rating.



6
She buys with confidence — aligned with her values.



7
She gets a post-purchase summary: her ethical choice is logged.



8
Over time, she sees her impact grow — purchases aligned with her values.

Concept Sketches

Crazy 8s, sketches, and rapid brainstorming — before any screen was opened.

Crazy 8s

Web	Plug in/ app plug in	Just having an app
Social media	Kinda app	Asking your phone about brand ethics, like an app
App that shows recommendations	based on existing purchases, products that you love	Hiring a personal shopper that knows about ethics
Website demonstrating the terrible unethical practices		videos on spot of every product

Exploration 1

IDEAS

- ① An app where info was available
- ② A plug in that would act immediately when shopping online → show you quick ratings
- ③ A site where people could drop real reviews, verified info, like social media, where you could comment
 - Reddit
 - Twitter
 - Rate my plumber
 } Find reviews
- ④ App where people can easily find friendly products
- ⑤ Educate people about unethical practices
 - ↳ Do it through an app?

Exploration 2

Store here

Product

When hovering

click for more info

8/10

Material

Labor

Environmental damage

good

bad

good

bad

good

bad

see site options >

Happily shopping

Finds a product and notifies it is ethical %/10 ethically

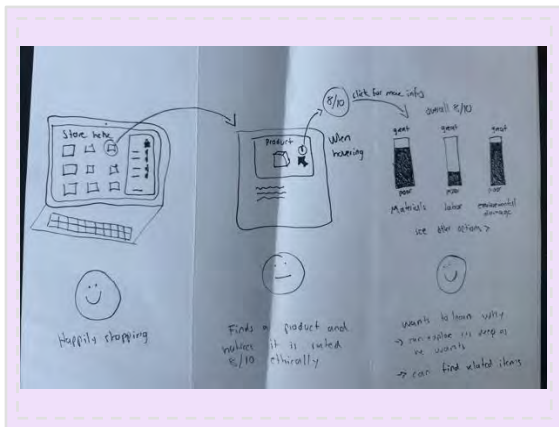
wants to learn why → can explore as deep as he wants → can find related items

Exploration 3

Design Process

From hand-sketched low-fi to a tested Figma prototype — three phases.

01 Low-Fidelity



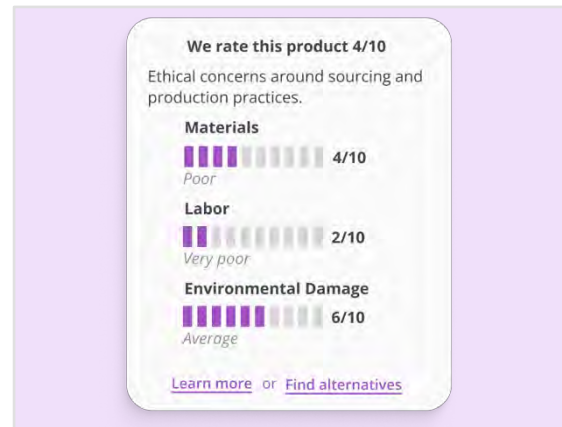
Hand-drawn wireframes. Focused on layout logic and user flow — not aesthetics.

02 Medium-Fidelity



Figma wireframes. Added structure, tested with real users for first round of feedback.

03 High-Fidelity



Polished UI. Refined after testing insights — rating system redesigned for clarity.

Testing & Results

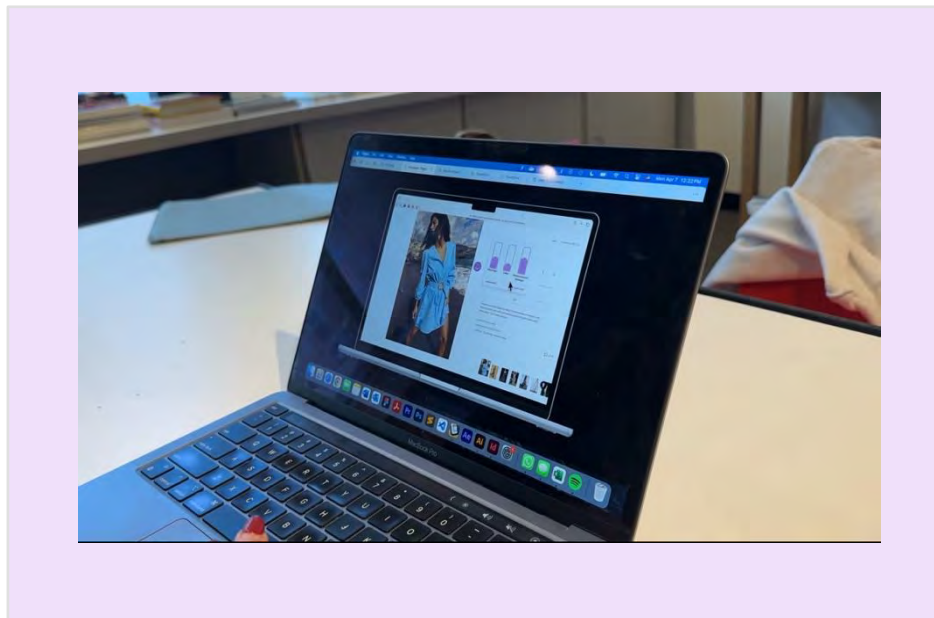
Second Round Testing Insights

After refining the UI based on early feedback, the second round of testing showed clear improvements. Users found the plugin easier to interpret, more intuitive to navigate, and overall more embedded in the shopping experience, exactly what it needed to be.

Conclusion: The UI works.

If this product were launched today, the interface would hold up.

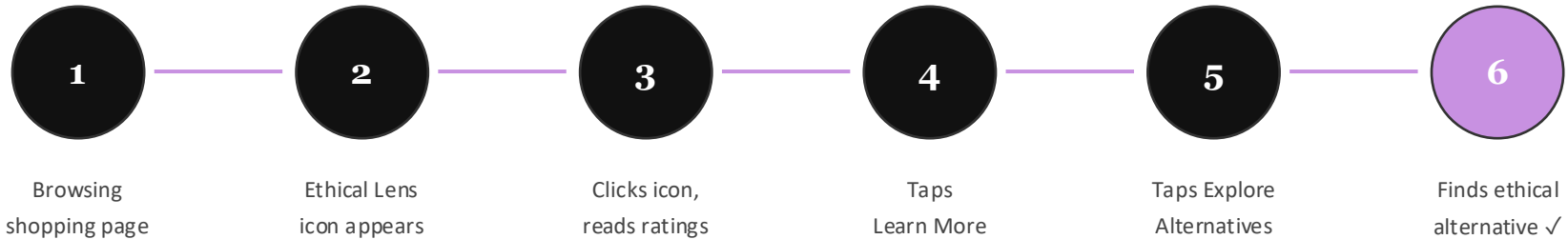
The technical solution now effectively addresses the problem of inaccessibility and confusion around ethical shopping information.



Conclusion: The UI works. If launched today, the interface holds up.

Task Flow

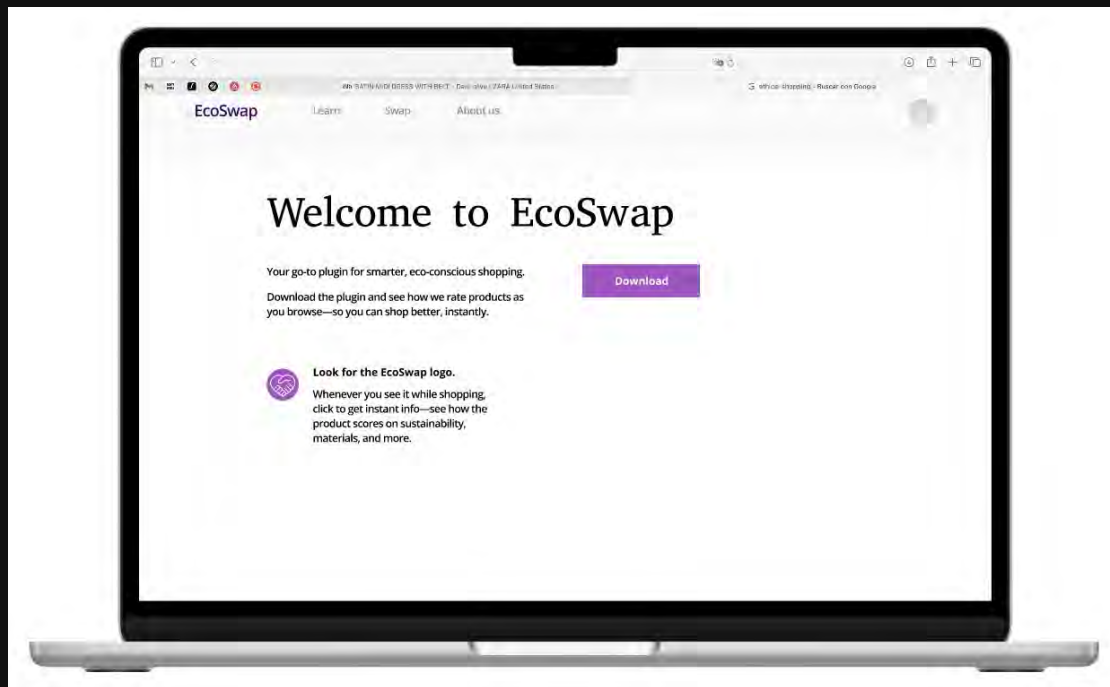
Julia wants to check if a brand aligns with her values — and find an ethical alternative.



Measurable Outcome

Persona identifies a more ethical alternative brand and completes a purchase — within the same browsing session, without leaving the original store.

The Prototype



How I solved the problem

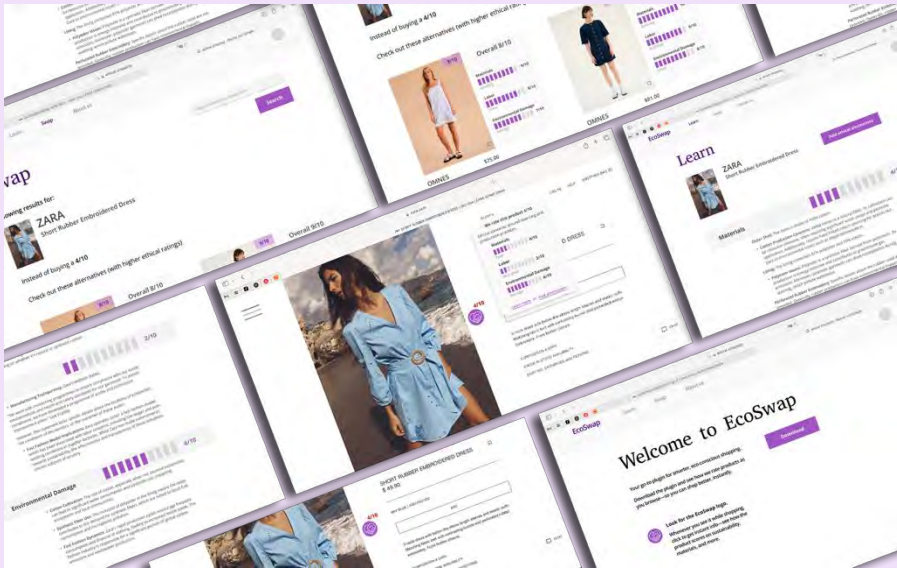
Ethical Lens is a browser plugin that adds consciousness back into consumer decisions, by instantly rating products based on sustainability, labor practices, and environmental impact.

It suggests better alternatives when needed, without interrupting the shopping flow.

Try the Prototype →

Second Design Component

Designing Across Multiple Mediums



[Watch Demo →](#)

Business Considerations

The UX works. But would this be a business?

Monetization

3 models: Affiliate commissions · Freemium subscription · B2B licensing to retailers. Key tension: chosen model must protect rating credibility.

Market Size

60–70% of Gen Z say brand ethics matter in purchases. Comparable tools (Good On You) built real user bases organically — demand is real.

Acquisition

r/sustainablefashion · ethical TikTok creators · Chrome Web Store organic. Freemium + niche community word-of-mouth.

Moat

Not defensible yet. Two paths: community-verified data (Waze model) or exclusive certification partnerships (Fair Trade, B Corp, Rainforest Alliance).

What I Concluded

This is a real product, for a real niche — but not for everyone. And that's okay.

This project taught me that designing for ethical shopping isn't just about presenting information — it's about meeting the right users at the right moment with the right tone. A focused product for a motivated niche is a stronger starting point than a vague product for everyone.

If I were to continue:

- Run screener surveys to size the Julia segment and validate willingness-to-pay
- Validate market size within the niche — behavior, needs, and price sensitivity
- Build dev-ready spec with a clear go-to-market targeting values-driven communities
- Explore a harder question: how do you make people care about ethical shopping?

That clarity is the output.

*Not just a prototype,
a product decision.*

Ethical Lens

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UX Research

Product Strategy

Competitive Analysis

UI Design

Usability Testing

Business Thinking