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1   Introduction

This introductory chapter introduces the research background, clarification of the subject as well as relevant definitions of the chosen keywords for the study, in order to facilitate understanding for further reading.

People place extensive pressure on our planet by constantly consuming more in pursuit of a superior lifestyle beyond our basic needs (Lama, 2017). In 2050, the world's population is expected to reach 9.5 billion people where 70 percent are predicted to be living in urban areas with more extensive resource opportunities (Lama, 2017). This means that there will be significantly more people with better living conditions and requirements that will consume more (Lama, 2017).

Research has shown that many of the environmental issues in the world today are related to our increased consumption habits, and it is widely recognized that the individual has some form of responsibility for a more sustainable development (Hanss, Böhm, Doran & Homburg, 2016; Regeringskansliet, 2018). People in today's society are getting increasingly aware of sustainability issues and there is an enlarged pressure on the individual to live healthy and sustainable (Lidskog & Elander, 2012).

One central area related to both the environmental issues and our personal health is the food consumption. Thus, the increased food consumption have a major impact on the environment (European Commission, 2016). This combined, has encouraged companies to launch organic products marketed as sustainable alternatives that are healthy for both individuals and the global society at large (Northen, 2011).

This leads us to conflicts and consumption dilemmas for the consumers, who may embrace or evolve a sustainable identity. According to Hurth (2010), these dilemmas concerns the complexity of individuals' internal process of balancing one's own body and mind in relation to the planet at large when constructing their sustainable identities.

1.1 Background

The final goal of sustainable consumption is that upon procurement, usage, and disposal, the environmental impacts, as well as the social and economic consequences, should be optimized (Phipps, Ozanne, Luchs, Subrahmanyan, Kapitan, Catlin., … Weaver, 2013). During 2016, the United Nation created seventeen different Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the upcoming fifteen years in which they call for action by all countries in the world to maintain and protect the planet (United Nation, 2018).

In goal twelve, United Nation (2018) states that sustainable consumption is about encouraging resource and energy adaptability, green and proper jobs and better quality of life overall. The ambition of the SDGs is to accomplish a reduction in future environmental, economic and social costs, and also improve economic efficiency and diminish poverty. In the end, this implementation aims to as they quote *"do better with less"* (United Nation, 2018). In relation to this societal development towards a more sustainable reality, certain drivers have been identified as central to individuals' consumption behavior and identity construction.

The primary drivers towards sustainable consumption are environmental consciousness, social status, economic awareness, self-concept, identity, ethical values, lifestyle norms and beliefs (Minton, Spielmann, Kahle & Kim, 2018). There is a broad scope of research covering sustainable consumption, but research lacks in defining why consumers commit to sustainable consumption. Therefore, it is essential to expand the research in the field of sustainable consumption in order to identify drivers and reasons of why consumers choose to engage (Minton et al., 2018). Minton et al. (2018) have found that the reasons for engaging in sustainable consumption vary to a great extent between individuals and that the individual identity is the most significant factor influencing the consumer.

Individual identity is referred to the social characteristics that are aligned with an individual (Schlenker, 1978). More specifically, the values and beliefs individuals hold about themselves e.g. gender, ethnicity, their competencies, roles, values, social connections etc. are the main aspects that form individuals' identities (Black & Veloutsou, 2017). A significant concept in the area is social identity, which refers to a

person's view of the social affiliation and place in collective constellations he or she creates and maintains (Black & Veloutsou, 2017). Arnould (2002) claims that individuals have the opportunity to express their uniqueness and identity by choosing certain products or services. Furthermore, the consumption choices people make contributes in establish and define consumers' identities and way of living (Arnould, 2002). With this in mind, understanding the construction of individual identity is essential in order to identify the drivers of sustainable consumption in consumers' everyday life (Arnould, 2002).

An individual's lifestyle concerns their attitude towards his or her life and is a combination of social methods that represent a certain way of living, as well as individuals' creative and ongoing self-identity and self-actualization (Evans & Abrahamse, 2009; Hallberg & Svensson, 2010). Furthermore, Hallberg and Svensson (2010) explains individuals' lifestyle from two perspectives and is either concerned with individuals' behavior or external social conditions. The individual lifestyle could be influenced by outside pressure from, adjoining social groups, role models and socio-economic conditions (Hallberg & Svensson, 2010).

1.2   Problem

According to the World's Business Council for Sustainable Development (2018), the present global consumption patterns are unsustainable based on the current market trends. It has been signified that efficiency improvements and technological development alone will not be sufficient to bring global consumption to a sustainable level (WBCSD, 2018). Consumers need to follow companies' effort to match sustainable production with a sustainable consumption to enable a substantial difference (Seyfang, 2006). Previous research presents linkages between sustainable production whilst the impacts of consumption are less prevalent (Connolly & Prothero, 2010).

Furthermore, according to the European Commission (2008), 96% of Europeans argues that protecting the environment is important to them personally. However, the issue of implementing these attitudes and values into a behavioral change in consumer lifestyle remains (Young, Hwang, McDonald & Oates, 2009). Additionally, the interpretation of sustainable goods and practices varies among consumers due to lack of knowledge in the

area, which creates a misperception of what is defined as sustainable or unsustainable (Bogueva, Marinova & Raphaely, 2017).

The motives that drive sustainable consumption are established in the current literature as being related to either environmental, economic or social causes (Phipps et al., 2013; Minton et al., 2018). Minton et al. (2018) suggest that the reasons for engaging in sustainable consumption vary to a great extent between individuals depending on personal values, beliefs, and social trends. Therefore, it is essential to expand the research in the field of sustainable consumption in order to collect relevant insights of why and how consumers choose to engage in sustainable consumption.

It is known that consumers in today's society are increasingly aware of sustainability issues and the attitudes to act upon these concerns are affirmative (Connolly & Prothero, 2010). Despite the positive attitude, people are struggling to act accordingly, which creates a gap between attitudes and behavior. This is supported by previous research, as Cross et al. (2003) argue that self-reported attitudes are being a poor descriptor or predictor of real behavior. This means, that consumers that identify themselves as sustainable do not act in a sustainable manner. Connolly & Prothero (2010) address this issue as the attitude-behavior gap.

However, one significant reason for this gap to occur is the fact that consumers are exposed to this complex reality where they must balance internal and external conflicts in their identity creation on a daily basis (Hurth, 2010). As expressed in previous research, there is a need for more research in sustainable identity creation (Hurth, 2010), this problematization demonstrates a more nuanced debate to clarify the possible dimensions of how individuals construct their sustainable identities.

1.3   Purpose & Research questions

Due to the extensive research already conducted within the field of sustainability, we already know a fair amount. However, there is still room for new contributions to imply valuable and relevant insights for academia and company managers related to consumer behavior. Therefore, this dissertation aims to address Hurt's (2010), call for extensive research regarding the complexity of constructing a sustainable identity.   More

specifically, the primary objective is to examine the various dimensions for why consumers engage in sustainable food consumption from a consumer perspective. In order to understand these underlying motives and the complexity of sustainable identity, the research question is therefore constructed as:

RQ1: *How do consumers construct their sustainable identities?*

Furthermore, to meet the purpose of this study, the sub-question of why has also been taken into consideration, leading us to the second research question:

RQ2: *Why do consumers engage in sustainable food consumption?*

In order to address the purpose of the study, the authors have conducted an exploratory research with an inductive approach that will contribute in the field of sustainable consumption. The analysis is based on two theoretical frameworks: The *Green Purchase Perception matrix* and the *Social Identity theory*, that will be applied to the data retrieved from semi-structured interviews.

1.4 Perspective

This research will be conducted from a consumer perspective to get a deeper understanding of how consumer constructs their sustainable identities and what motives that drive consumers to maintain a sustainable lifestyle.

1.5 Delimitations

Due to the limited time, resources and space, this study has been delimited to a narrow scope of research. The chosen segments will be women in the age from 30 to 60 who considers themselves as sustainable consumers. The results are collected from 8 interviews from the selected segments. The study will focus on few demographics; age, gender, and annual income. The parameters of the population need to be considered since this research is based on a smaller group of respondents. All the informants are Swedish consumers since the research are based on the Swedish market. Lastly, this research is conducted from a consumer perspective, due to the finite amount of resources and time.

1.6   Key definitions

Sustainable consumption

Consumption of products and services in a way that minimizes the environmental, social and economic impact so that human needs can be achieved both now and for future generations (Phipps et al., 2013).

Individual & Social Identity

Individual identity is the social characteristics unique to every individual. More specifically, the values and beliefs individuals hold about themselves (Schlenker, 1978; Black & Veloutsou, 2017). Whereas, the social identity refers to a person's view of social connections and the place the individual creates or maintains in collective constellations (Black & Veloutsou, 2017).

Lifestyle

An individual's way of living and attitude towards their life. Lifestyle builds on social methods representing a way of living combined with individual self-identity and self-actualization (Hallberg & Svensson, 2010).

2   Literature review

This literature review is a summary of previous research within the field of sustainability in regards to lifestyle, consumption and food consumption. This section will address the most significant areas of prior knowledge in order to conduct this study. The theoretical foundation will be presented in the next chapter.

2.1   Sustainable lifestyle

Rakic and Rakic (2015) describe a sustainable lifestyle as a sustainable pattern of life. It refers to all life activities, consumption patterns, interests and individual behavior. Furthermore, the authors distinguish between sustainable consumption and sustainable lifestyle. The later is seen as a broader concept and is said per definition to include:

"*Activities such as interpersonal relationships, leisure activities, sports, and education as well as, but not limited to, material consumption. Lifestyles are based on past and current consumption and production patterns and are intricately interwoven with people's everyday choices and practices*" (Rakic & Rakic, 2015).

Others view a sustainable lifestyle as explicitly related to the environmental issues (Barr, Shaw & Gilg, 2011). Axon (2017) means that a sustainable lifestyle requires rethinking when it comes to consumers' way of living. Consumers need to develop green awareness, alter and organize their everyday lives in order to create a sustainable lifestyle where it is possible to uphold high standards without harming the environment. A green lifestyle has been mentioned as a sustainable way of living, and focuses more on the environmental footprint individuals' consumption patterns entails (Shirani, Butler, Henwood, Parkhill & Pidgeon, 2015).

Furthermore, this could be conceptualized as a combination of different social practices, which signifies certain ways of life. This approach suggests that lifestyles do not always have to be sustainable, but there is an endeavor to live and consume sustainably (Shirani et al., 2015). In a research made by Evans and Abrahamse (2009), it is shown that people

view a sustainable lifestyle from a wider perspective. A sustainable lifestyle does not only address sustainability but is part of a larger viewpoint that incorporates issues such as health, economic restraint as well as human rights (Evans & Abrahamse, 2009).

Europeans are said to live an unsustainable lifestyle with a twice as large environmental footprint per person than the capacity for these countries allows. The largest areas of consumption with environmental impact are food, housing and infrastructure (Mont, Neuvonen & Lähteenoja, 2014). Anti-consumption methods have been regarded as a way of sustainable living, which includes discarding, decreasing and reusing instead of just consuming new products (Rakic & Rakic, 2015). Previously, technological innovations have been seen as the main strategy for addressing unsustainable consumption and for promoting a more sustainable lifestyle.

However, due to the lack of these advances, research highlights the importance of social innovations as a complement to enable a change in individual lifestyles (Mont et al., 2014). Today, people are more aware of how to live and consume sustainable. Despite this, some things are viewed as a matter of course, regardless of the environmental impact (Shirani et al., 2015). If a consumer feels he will lose flexibility and quality of life by making certain lifestyle changes, he is less likely to go through with these changes and will be resistant towards adopting these forms of sustainable living (Shirani et al., 2015).

2.2   Sustainable consumption

Sustainable consumption is an essential part of the consumer's decision making process in relation to social responsibility (Meulenberg, 2003). As everyday consumption practices are being driven by consumer habits, convenience, value for money, individual health-concerns, hedonism, and personal interpretations of social and institutional norms there is no general perception of the sustainability phenomenon. However, the most significant consumption patterns are based on the consistency in purchasing fast moving consumer goods and the resistance to change those patterns (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

The phenomena of sustainability are now more current and up-to-date than ever before due to the global changes (Seyfang, 2006). Some might even argue for sustainable

consumption as a new environmental policy objective (Seyfang, 2006). Due to the augmented focus on a sustainable lifestyle, research claims that green buying should be viewed from a wider context surrounding a holistic conceptualization of the sustainable way of living (Gilg, Barr & Ford, 2005). The interest for sustainable consumption has rapidly grown as an increasing number of corporations offers consumers sustainable products.

Previous research within the field of sustainable consumption implies that the consumer tends to focus on environmental issues from a supply rather than demand perspective (Connolly & Prothero, 2010). Connolly and Prothero (2010) continues by describing that consumers in general, are significantly superior regarding recycling and operating towards waste minimization than to modifying their habits concerning the consumption itself. Furthermore, research implies that the existing green beliefs and attitudes that the consumer obtain usually reflects directly on that individuals' lifestyle and values (Connolly & Prothero, 2010).

For instance, in the context of sustainable consumption and ecological citizenship, it is established that both the organization and their consumers share common grounds in conveying ecological citizenship values. Which in turn are expressed in their daily initiatives actively promoting the growth of ecological citizenship in a social context (Seyfang, 2006). However, another study advocated for conventional forms of green consumption being correlated to other forms of environmental action and that at least four different types of environmentalist can be identified; committed, mainstream, occasional and non-environmentalists (Gilg et al., 2005).

Another concept that is normally discussed in current sustainable consumption research is the attitude-behavior gap or also known as the values-action gap (Young, Hwang, McDonald & Oates, 2009; Connolly & Prothero, 2010). Yet, 30% of consumers are aware of and concerned about environmental issues but are still struggling to enhance these values in their purchasing behavior (Young et al., 2009). Essentially, 'being green' is a long-term objective that needs to overcome lots of barriers to become a natural part of increasingly busy consumer lifestyles (Young et al., 2009).

Hence, the primary influence of consumer behavior when motivating environmental influences has far been acknowledged (Jackson, 2008). Although it may have been proved impossible so far to agree on a precise definition of the term sustainable consumption, the realization that consumers' perceptions, behaviors, attitudes, and lifestyles do play a fundamental part when operating for sustainable development is one of the relatively few points of mutual agreements that emerged from debates over the last decade (Jackson, 2008).

Current research within the field of sustainable consumption has made several attempts to compare consumers' information search and decision-making process in different product categories to examine if there are any substantial differences between various products and services. The result identified that the green consumer does not have consistency when selecting information sources or even decision-making criteria from one product to another, making it difficult to draw parallels and conclusion across product categories (McDonald, Oates, Thyne, Alevizou & McMorland, 2009).

Lastly, several researchers have identified that the majority of consumers who strives for and considers themselves living a sustainable lifestyle, primarily focus on their food consumption. Sustainable food consumption is seen as the most important issue as well as a general mindset of shopping with the planet in mind (Black & Cherrier, 2010; Mont et al., 2014; Shirani et al., 2015).

2.3 Sustainable food consumption

Both food production and food consumption are raised as a problematic issue due to its wide scope involving actors of high diversity (Reisch, Eberle & Lorek, 2013). Due to demographic changes, and an increasing growth in the global population, sustainability issues arising from food consumption is creating circumstances that need to be acted upon in the future (Reisch et al., 2013). For instance, the agricultural production deals with various matters regarding the impact of climate change, land-use conflicts and health and social cost on both an individual, organizational and societal level (Reisch et al.,2013).

The sustainability issues arise due to industrialization, globalization, shifting consumption patterns, the emerging heavily processed products, the growing gap in social status and lastly, the lack of food security and abundance of food (Reisch et al., 2013). Reisch et al. (2013) continue by arguing that the most effective way to diminish the harming environmental impact is to change consumer behavior and their diets as to reduce meat and dairy products consumption, favor organic vegetables and fruit, and to avoid goods with a long transportation distance.

Reisch et al. (2013) did a research reviewing the relevant literature to outline sustainable food consumption practices and define the major issues in the field. They concluded that to prevent unsustainable food consumption it is vital to incorporate an integrative, cross-sectoral, and population-wide policies to address the full range of drivers for production and consumption of sustainable food. Hence, green purchases are negatively related to the frequency of visiting supermarkets as well as time barriers. Previous research implies that green purchases are not substantially linked to ethical or moral thinking, nevertheless monetary barriers or the socioeconomic characteristics of the consumers (Tanner & Wölfing Kast, 2003).

However, the empirical result from a different study showed that green perceived value has a positive impact on green trust and purchase intentions, while green perceived risk would negatively affect both concepts. It is demonstrated that the link between green purchase intentions and these two antecedents; perceived value and perceived risk, are moderately facilitated by green trust (Chen & Chang, 2012). Moreover, as a result of companies attempts to develop their environmental performance, the green consumer has evolved into the main character in the expansion of social marketing. Both marketing practitioners and academics in the field continuously tries to identify the needs and values of the green consumer to develop market offerings targeting these needs (Peattie, 2001).

Unfortunately, the consensus regarding green consumers are limited and the attempts to pursue them have yet been a disappointment to the marketers (Peattie, 2001). A study made by DiPietro, Cao and Parlow (2013) revealed that green consumers have knowledge to a certain extent but not enough to change their behavior in all food consumption situations. Customers are generally positive towards restaurants that are environmentally

conscious and that use organic products. Furthermore, female customers and people with higher education are the consumers that are the most environmentally conscious according to previous research in sustainable food consumption (DiPetro et al., 2013).

A study regarding sustainable food consumption for Swiss consumers suggested that green food purchases are enabled by the affirmative attitudes of consumers towards protection of the environment, organic food, fair trade, local products, and relevant knowledge (Tanner et al., 2003). Which makes this study especially interesting to conduct on the Swedish market, to identify possible similarities or differences between the consumers.

3   Theoretical framework

The following chapter introduces the chosen theoretical tools that are used to analyze the empirical data of this study. The Social Identity theory and Green Purchase Perception matrix will be the foundation for understanding the research topic in order to answer the research questions further on.

3.1   Theoretical tools

The Social Identity theory (Tajfel, 1979) and the Green Purchase Perception matrix (Peattie, 2001) are used as theoretical tools in order to interpret and analyze the empirical data of this study. These theories become relevant to the study as they can be used to analyze different motives and tactics within consumer behavior. Additionally, the theories are applicable to the empirical data collection when the aim is to further investigate the respondents' perceptions and real-life experiences. However, through this analysis, the theories are the primary tools to evaluate all dimensions of sustainable food consumption when exploring the different trends and directions the responses progress. More specifically, the Social Identity theory describes the possible causes for why individuals are motivated or not to act in a sustainable manner. Hence, whilst the Green Purchase Perception matrix can identify possible inconsistencies between the attitude and behavior gap. A detailed explanation of the two theories follows below.

3.1.1   Social Identity theory

The Social Identity theory is based on social psychology in relation to self-concepts, cognitive processes and social beliefs when interacting in various social contexts such as intergroup relations. The theory was originally introduced in the early 70s and has developed into becoming significantly extended through a range of sub-theories focusing on for instance leadership, group norms, uncertainty reduction, self-enhancement and social influences. Furthermore, the framework of social identity has been applicable to analyze intern conflicts and deviance within groups (Guan & So, 2016).

The basic concept of the Social Identity theory refers to an individual process of forming a unique self-identity that will evolve to a social identity based on the group circumstances to whom the individual feel commitment and belongingness to (Glassner & Tajfel, 1985). To illustrate this further, one example could be that a consumer's view of sustainability in any social environment is an interactive composite of his or her personal values, the values of the influence group, as well as the values of the industry, organization or business in which the person is employed (Pearce, 2013).

The Social Identity theory framework consists of several components that each plays a vital role explaining why individuals think or act in certain ways. When Tajfel (1979) first introduced the theory of social identity he suggested that groups in which people belong to are a significant source of pride and self-esteem. Groups help us to create a social identity: a sense of comfort and belonging to the social world (Tajfel, 1979). In order to impact our own self-image, we start by embracing the status of the group to which we feel committed.

On the other hand, one can increase his or her self-esteem by discrimination against the so-called "out-group", which is the group we do not belong in (Tajfel, 1979). Therefore, individuals tend to divide the people in their environment into "us" and "them", which are referred to as in-group and out-group in the social categorization (Tajfel, 1979). According to Social Identity theory, the in-group will discriminate the out-group to boost their own self-image. Therefore, one central part of the theory is that members of an in-group unintendedly seeks to distinguish negative aspects of an out-group and vice versa. Hence, when groups are acting in that sense, they end up in the state referred to as intergroup comparison (Tajfel, 1979).
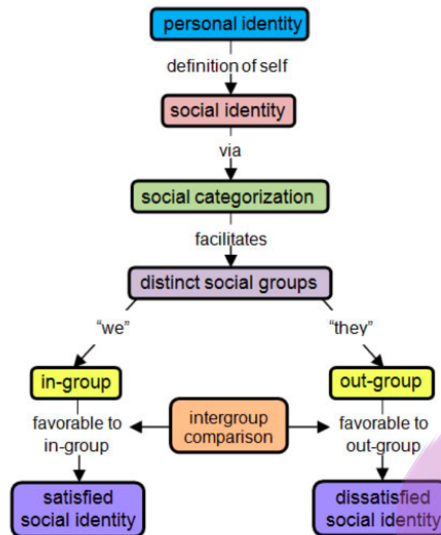
Figure 1 – Social Identity theory (Tajfel, 1979)

3.1.2 Green Purchase Perception matrix

Created by Peattie (2001), the Green Purchase Perception matrix strives to explain consumer behavior in a buying situation when linked to sustainable consumption. The matrix is structured as a foursquare model, where the customers' degree of confidence is examined in relation to the degree of compromise.
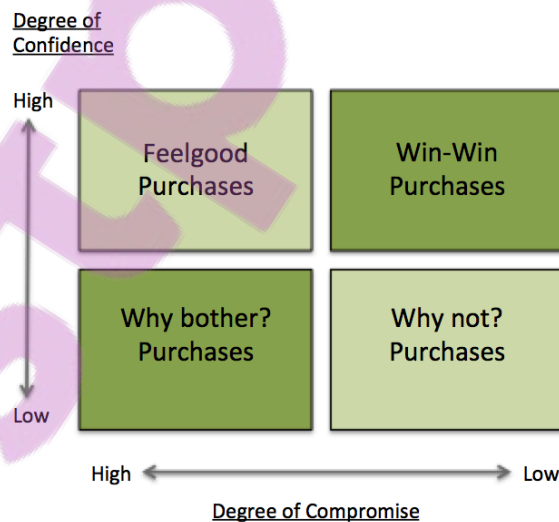

Figure 2 – Green Purchase Perception matrix (Peattie, 2001).

According to Peattie (2001), the model works as follows:

In cases where the persuasion or degree of confidence is high in combination with a low need for the consumer to compromise, the so-called win win-purchases occur. The consumer is convinced that the product or service is sustainable, and feel no obligation to compromise in any way to obtain the product. Furthermore, in win win-purchases, the consumer is confident that the product is not a part of any type of misleading advertising, as for instance greenwashing, and also, that the purchase does not imply for any type of sacrifice, such as paying a premium price (Peattie, 2001).

In situations where both the degree of conviction and compromise is low are called the why not-purchases. These situations occur when consumers suspect that the product is not as sustainable as it was supposed to be. However, the low compromise rate acknowledges the purchase to be accepted anyway since there is not much to lose, creating the "why not?" mindset and attitude towards the product or service (Peattie, 2001).

When the confidence rate is low and compromise claims are high there is a third situation referred to as why bother-purchases which significantly decreases the probability for sustainable consumption due to large sacrifices in relation to the low degree of confidence. However, when the confidence rate is high, these circumstances generate the so-called feel good-purchases. In these cases, the conviction that the product is sustainable is strong. Hence, the consumer needs to take an active decision when making the purchase to evaluate whether the sustainability is worth compromising or not, which it generally is in a feel good-purchase situation. The consumer is normally willing to do some kind of sacrifice to obtain the product, such as paying a premium price (Peattie, 2001).

4 Methodology & Method

To construct an accurate analysis, the methodology used is required to fit the intended purpose of the study. The first part of this chapter will discuss the research philosophy and the research approach with it, further on the method of semi-structured interviews and data collection with its trustworthiness will be discussed.

4.1 Research philosophy

There are four different philosophies within the area of business and management, pragmatism, interpretivism, realism, and positivism. These philosophies hold essential assumptions about the way in which people perceives the world (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). To fully understand the chosen philosophy is of high significance in order to adapt to the research process and to gain support when interpreting the findings (Saunders et al., 2009).

Regarding the previous matter, in social sciences and business management, there are two central philosophies; positivism and interpretivism. Positivism focuses more on research that can be analyzed and considers credible data through hypothesis that later on will be tested and confirmed, in opposite to interpretivism (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Since this study is qualitative, the focus will be to use the interpretivism philosophy when conducting the material (Saunders et al., 2009). Interpretivism supports the belief that it is essential for the examiner to understand the weight of the human behavior and how direct contact with an individual differs from results through technology and computers. This, in order to perceive the human role as a social actor (Saunders et al., 2009).

Due to this matter, the philosophy accentuates that research should be conducted among people instead of through statistics. Therefore, this approach is suitable for the intended study to get a deeper understanding of what drives sustainable consumption and how different dimensions is related to the consumers' identity construction.

4.2   Research approach

Since this study is to explore the behavior of consumers, an inductive approach has been used in order to draw conclusions. Inductive approach, also known as inductive reasoning begins with observations and later on theories will be applied to the findings in order to identify preliminary relationships throughout the research process (Goddard, 2004). Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe the understanding of inductive analysis as *"the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data"* (p.12). Therefore, data will be gathered from semi-structured interviews and subsequently compared and related to appropriate theories and frameworks (Saunders et al., 2009). With this approach, the authors will be able to get a deeper understanding of how consumers perceive and act in a sustainable manner, and later on, draw conclusions of how it is related to their identity construction.

4.3   Methodology

Norikov and Norikov (2013, p.2) presents the methodology as *"the theory of organization of an activity"*, meaning the order and description of how a study will be conducted. The structure of the method is at most critical when the forming the purpose and organizing the key activities (Norikiov & Norikov, 2013). They continue by describing an activity as the operating behavior of an individual which signifies the understanding of the livings decisions and actions. Moreover, the definition explicates the process of arrangements with activities in a certain order to facilitate development for future studies. Since this study is conducted on a specific occasion with a constrained amount of time, it holds classified as a cross-sectional study (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson & Lowen, 2008). Therefore, it will examine the phenomenon of sustainable food consumption in relation to consumers' identity, and seek to describe what drives people to act as they do in regards to consumption. In order to present accurate answers to the research questions, the structure of the method and presentation of the findings will be delivered in sequential order.

4.4   Method – semi-structured interviews

To fully understand consumers´ motives of why they engage in sustainable food consumption and how this relates to their identity, primary data were collected from semi-

structured interviews (Saunders et al., 2009). With this method, valid and reliable data which is relevant for the research was collected. Also, the possibility to get ambiguous information directly from the consumer perspective with emotions, interactions, and experience of the sustainable practice (Saunders et al., 2009).

McCracken (1988) explains in his book *The long interview*, that an interview is one of the most authoritative techniques in the qualitative area for definite descriptive and analytic objectives, as no instrument of analysis is more revealing. Hence, the method helps to gain a better understanding of the mental world of the respondent. For instance, by being a useful tool to observe how individuals perceive the world and how he or she comprehends it (McCracken, 1988). Furthermore, using semi-structured interviews as a method is the perfect way to get the information needed in the area (Saunders et al., 2009). In that sense, the interviewer has an agenda of topics and pre-prepared queries to cover, although these may differ slightly between the various interviews. However, there might be situations were questions need to be excluded or added in relation to the research matter (Saunders et al., 2009). Lastly, the dialog with the interviewees will be recorded by an audio-recorder and documented by note-taking.

When applying the method of semi-structured interviews to this research it was decided to have a time-frame of 30-40 min for each interview to certainly have time for all the questions and further discussion. When questioning the respondents, it was important to ask questions that were of an abstract concept (Saunders et al., 2009). Therefore, the authors chose to use the critical incident technique when doing the interviews which help the informant to answer in detail and to describe the root cause of the question (Saunders et al., 2009). A critical incident is defined by Keaveney (1995) as an action or occurrence where the consequences are so clear that the contributor has a distinct idea concerning the effects. This approach is relevant for the analysis of theories and for the authors to be able to draw conclusions regarding the research questions. Furthermore, when the information from the interviews was collected, a verbatim transcript was used in order to retain the integrity of the data (Saunders et al., 2009). This means that the authors transcribed every word from the recordings just the way it was said from the respondents, and then quotes were carefully selected and translated into English for the analysis of the study.

4.4.1 Selection of respondents

This research aims to study what motivates consumers to engage in sustainable consumption and how sustainable food consumption is related to their identity. To be able to investigate this, only consumers that consider themselves as sustainable and environmentally conscious were chosen for the interviews. According to research by LOHAS (2017), women in the age from 30 to late fifties with an average income of 300 000 SEK per year are considered as most likely to adopt a sustainable lifestyle. With this research in mind, this study will be targeting women in the age between 30 to 60 with an annual income of minimum 300 000 SEK. To easier identify the target population and avoid shortfall due to non-compliance with the criteria set, people that openly display a sustainable lifestyle in social media and within their social circle was contacted and interviewed by the authors.

Table 1 illustrates the list of respondents that participated in the semi-structured interviews. It is provided with a fictive name, gender, age, occupation date and time of the interview. As shown, the target population is narrowed since the intention is to analyze a specific pattern in sustainable food consumption in relation to the identity. When the process of interviews started, the goal was to have enough respondents to reach saturation level for the results. After eight extended meetings, eight was adequate to collect the material needed.

Respondent	Gender	Age	Occupation	Date	Time
Erika	Woman	49	Sales manager	09.04.18	00:32,15
Katarina	Woman	55	Preschool teacher	12.04.18	00:30,36
Helén	Woman	57	CFO	12.04.18	00:38,41
Anna	Woman	48	Nurse	09.04.18	00:32,05
Ulrika	Woman	49	Police	08.04.18	00:29,16
Therese	Woman	30	Gym instructor	05.04.18	00:40,19
Tea	Woman	30	Agricultural advisor	05.04.18	00:34,22
Alexandra	Woman	34	IT consultant	10.04.18	00:33,54

Table 1 - Respondents

4.5 Data collection

For this research, primary sources were gathered by the authors themselves, which was studied further to meet the purpose and research questions. The material consists of semi-structured interviews done on the selected target respondents. Regarding the previous, for these interviews people that consider themselves environmentally conscious was carefully chosen to access the depth of perceptions.

Furthermore, when conducting the material for this research, the authors decided to work with peer-reviewed journals and articles in order to maintain high relevance and credibility. Therefore, only limited time was made searching for secondary data. In order to select the targeted population for the interviews, it was essential to locate a reliable and trustworthy source that can confirm the previous research on the subject of sustainable consumption. LOHAS (2017), which is the only secondary data used in this research was found when searching for what group in Sweden that consider themselves as the most sustainable ones. Keywords used was: Individuals + sustainable + lifestyle + Sweden + regeringskansliet. Additionally, the source where verified as credible after observing the organizations operations both in Sweden and internationally with its marketing research and reports.

4.6 Data analysis

An interpretive, inductive approach is used within the borders for this study, and characteristics of the technique is applied when creating the analysis. When conducting this qualitative research, it was vital for the project to implement a structured categorization of the gathered data as stated previously in this chapter (Saunders et al., 2009). Therefore, two steps were used when categorizing the collected information. The first step consisted of extensive reading through, and understanding of data, which implies the foundation of categories and also leveraged prior literature and theoretic concepts. Next section is made of the primary data collected form of semi-structured interviews that represent the uttered ideas and interactions regarding the subject.

For the implementation of the empirical data collection, the eight respondents were interviewed through the semi-structured interviews, thus they were open and had room

for supplementary questions. The conversations could flow continuously and continue to be of high relevance for the study. The sound and speech from the interviews were recorded with the respondents' consent.

4.7 Credibility of research findings

In order to reduce the possibility of attaining unreliable answers and information, attention has to be taken to the highest grade on two particular areas in the research design; reliability and validity (Saunders et al., 2009). Reliability and validity are in qualitative research different measurements of quality, accuracy and general research potential which is achieved through methodological and substantive principles and conventions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Therefore, as Bryman and Bell (2011) states it is almost impossible to achieve complete reliability. With this in consideration, the authors cannot assure the findings to be 100 percent accurate.

4.7.1 Data reliability

There are always some questions regarding how the knowledge in a study has been conducted if the results and conclusions stand up to the nearest scrutiny. Saunders et al. (2009) describe that the answer of course, in the literal meaning is that you cannot know for sure. What can be done is to make sure reducing the errors that can occur and result in getting the wrong answer. Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) refer reliability as *"the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis processes will yield consistent results"*.

Saunder et al. (2009) declare that there can be four different threats to reliability. Subject or participant error and observer or bias error. Firstly, subject or participant error, refers to choosing a suitable time for the interview which will not affect the outcome. When interviewing the selected informants, it has been important for the authors to choose a calm environment and to ensure that the participant is concentrated on the matter (Saunder et al., 2009). Secondly, subject or participant bias may appear, meaning that there can be circumstances which make the participating parties modifying their answers to fit the situation. For instance, the issue of biased participants is commonly appearing in an authoritarian management style (Saunder et al., 2009). In the case of this study, there was no higher authority to consider since the people chosen was ordinary people, and the

errors were therefore minor. Moreover, for this study, it was chosen to keep the respondents anonymous in their answers to keep the personal interpretations as high as possible. Also, in order to keep it intimate, semi-structured interviews were chosen one on one, instead of focus groups to minimize the errors of misinterpretation.

Due to the matter of observer error and bias, some issues have been identified that was needed to be taken into consideration. Regarding the interviews, all three authors participated in conducting material which results in three possible ways of questioning to stimulate answers. Therefore, it was important to have a clear structure and schedule of the interviews and the questions. Furthermore, in order to decrease the risk of misinterpretation, the authors chose to implement cross-validation to ensure consistent quality and high credibility. Meaning, that each writer analyzes the gathered information individually before cross-checking each other´s findings (Saunders et al., 2009). This technique was applied throughout the whole thesis and all its interviews.

4.7.2 Validity

Validity can be divided into two different sections, external and internal validity. The external validity deals with the result and the extent to which they can be generalized. Generally speaking, this approach is low for qualitative research. Because of this, it is not applicable to this study since it is based on a relatively small selection which is not sufficient to represent a whole population. Nevertheless, the result of this study is thus not to be generalized (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Moreover, to receive a more initial reply and reaction from the respondents, it was vital to make them feel comfortable and confident in the interview setting. Therefore, the strategy was to start asking broad questions concerning the subject to guide the informants into the core thoughts of the topic without leading them to much.

4.7.3 Trustworthiness of research data

When analyzing the findings of this study through the tradition of qualitative approach, the use of quantitative tradition such as the ones mentioned above, reliability and validity is still very common in various research (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Hence, in the case of trustworthiness, the research concepts of credibility, dependability and

transferability have been used to explain several characteristics of the phenomenon (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Long and Johnson (2000) propose an application of qualitative tradition when delivering the outcomes for the analysis. Although the separation of aspects regarding trustworthiness is stated, they should be considered as interrelated.

Credibility is one of the key criteria of trustworthiness that deals with how coinciding the findings are when compared to the reality (Shenton, 2004). When applied to this study, the authors have as stated before addressed the threat observer error and bias and decided that all the writers' material will be cross-validated to ensure consistency and keep high credibility. Shenton (2004) describes dependability as the part where, if the work were repeated once again with the same circumstances, comparable results would be attained. Therefore, the process of this research will be described in detail, allowing a future researcher to repeat the work and with an understanding for the research model gain a similar result. Additionally, trustworthiness also incorporates the subject of transferability, which refers to the extent to which the findings of the study can be transferred to other situations or groups (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). This research focuses on a very specific group of people to generate a pinpoint result. Therefore, to enable transferability, the authors believe that this study can be transferred to another population in the future or directed towards other definite groups. An interesting approach could be to compare the women's perceptions of sustainable food consumption in relation to their identity with the male perspective in the same matter.

5   Empirical material & Analysis

This chapter includes the empirical results of the study that is presented based on the empirical collection from semi-structured interviews and associated analysis. The empirical material is analyzed by using the theoretical tools of the Green Purchase Perception matrix and the Social Identity theory, while related to previous research within the field of sustainable consumption. Since this is an exploratory study using qualitative methods, the analysis of the result is based on subjective interpretations to gain deeper nuances of individual's motives to consume more sustainable. The following sections are different themes and dimensions of how individuals construct their sustainable identities based on the key findings from this thesis.

5.1 Consumers perceptions of sustainable consumption

In order to lay a foundation for this study, it was important to investigate how the respondents perceive sustainable consumption. This, since the main criteria were to only interview people who identify themselves as sustainable and previous research has shown that perceptions might vary among consumers (Gilg et al., 2005). In general, the respondents share similar perceptions and ideas regarding sustainable consumption. The overall tone of voice is positive when discussing sustainability and the respondents associate the concept sustainable consumption as something important and desirable.

Nevertheless, when personally defining sustainable consumption there were different opinions. Ulrika highlights the importance of buying high-quality products that will last longer. This is also noticed by Katarina who associates sustainable consumption with reuse and disposal of products, as well as taking care of environmental hazards and toxins. Connolly and Prothero (2010) show that consumers are significantly more concerned with recycling and minimizing waste than changing their consumption behavior. This is noticed among several of the respondents, and Alexandra said that she: *"Try to think long term, not only in my consumption but also in the way I live. (...) contribute to the environment by recycling"*. Furthermore, Tea has similar perceptions and for her, sustainable consumption means *"avoiding waste and overconsumption of natural resources"*.

Sustainable consumption per definition is difficult to interpret since it depends on the occasion as well as the personal view and perspective from the consumer. However, one can summarize that the consumer defines sustainability either as consuming for a healthier planet, to avoid waste and renewal or as consuming with long-term goals in mind.

To conclude, the consumers' perceptions and interpretations of sustainable consumption signify the foundation for defining various dimensions of individuals' sustainable identity construction.

5.2   Environmental Dimension

The first dimension affecting consumers' sustainability perceptions are concerned with environmental factors. One of the key findings was that respondents felt responsible towards the environment and the footprint their consumption leaves. Consumers try in different ways to minimize the environmental impact of their consumption habits and one of the identified solutions was connected to the importance of locally produced products. Furthermore, there was a unanimous view that every consumers' contribution matters.

5.2.1   You need to pull your own weight

The respondents seem to have various reasons for engaging in sustainable consumption. However, the majority agree upon that the primary reason for actively participate in sustainable consumption is connected to environmental issues. There is a mutual responsibility for all consumers to minimize the negative environmental impact in today's society. Tea expresses her concerns *"I enjoy being out in nature, and in the end, it's the nature that gets destroyed by our abusive consumption".* Alexandra believes that there is always something that can be done in order to help - *"You feel quite small if you look at the whole planet, but you try to do what you can in order to preserve it. Everybody can do something."* Overall, the respondents had the same thoughts about that there is a need for change in behavior and mindset among consumers. There is always something that can be done on an individual level to contribute even further.

One effective way of reducing the environmental impact is by changing the individual behavior when it comes to food consumption. Reisch et al. (2013) discuss the importance of locally produced products as a key solution for diminishing the environmental impact. This aspect has also been acknowledged by the respondents, and many argue that favoring locally produced products is their way of contributing to minimizing the negative environmental impact. Anna describes that: *"I like to favor local farmers for the environment, then I know where the product comes from and how it has been produced"*. Further Katarina states: *"I buy locally produced products since I believe that it's better for the environment. Less transportation, better animal conditions and fewer chemicals"*.

Helén is another respondent expressing her thoughts about locally produced products: *"I always want to have in mind that what I buy should be locally produced. As long as it's possible"*. The respondents are conscious regarding the environmental aspects and share their concern for the environment as the main driver for engaging in sustainable consumption. Many consumers are aware of the environmental issues but have difficulties transferring this awareness into their purchase behavior (Young et al., 2009). Katarina expresses her concerns about that every individual needs to take responsibility and adopt a sustainable mindset: *"In order for us to prevent our environment from being destroyed"*. Therese shares the same thoughts and believes that *"You need to pull your own weight for the environment"*.

Additionally, it has been discovered that there are some aspects making environmentally friendly purchases more difficult. For instance, buying products that are locally produced is often associated with higher prices, and therefore creates a barrier for many. Nevertheless, the majority of the respondents believe that it is worth the extra cost in order to obtain a product that is sustainable and associated with less negative environmental impact. Helén and Ulrika explain that they rather pay a premium price for locally produced products. When analyzing the responses through Peattie's (2001) Green Purchase Perception matrix, the findings implies a clear motivation towards purchasing local products, and therefore the confidence level is high. Moreover, a purchase of this sort is referred to a feel-good purchase, as the consumer is convinced that the product is sustainable and are therefore willing to compromise in order to obtain the product.
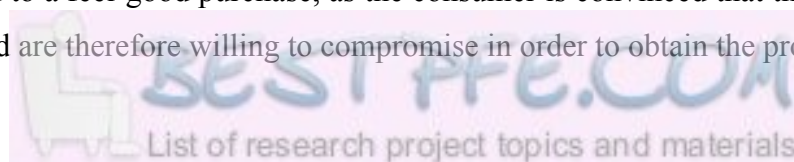
5.3   Individual Dimension

Another key finding motivating consumers towards sustainability is identified as the individual dimension. This refers to consumers acting sustainable and green for their own personal sake primarily, even if this is a continuously debated issue whether or not to put the major focus on the individuals' health or the overall well-being of the planet when discussing sustainability issues. Moreover, the findings related to this dimension contains relevant insights of barriers towards sustainability, which all are connected to the self. This implies valuable implications of the consumers' attitude-behavior gap that this study has addressed in the problematization section.

5.3.1   I consume more to be able to do what I love

One aspect proved important for the interviewed consumers in this study is the individual health and wellbeing. According to Evans and Abrahamse (2009), individual health is a critical issue that consumers elaborate whether to live and maintain a sustainable lifestyle. Several respondents argue that the health aspect is a major factor when evaluating purchases of local and organic products. From this point of view, the interviewees chose to act sustainable due to their own individual health, rather than for the environment or society at large. As Helén argues:

"For health reasons. Because the food hopefully would contain more nutrition. You feel better if the food you eat doesn't contain a lot of pesticides. I started buying organic food in the early 90's when I got my children. I thought it was important to give my children nutritious food without a lot of crap in it." – Helén

However, there is an ongoing debate regarding how the interviewees address their sustainable identity. Either from a solely individual perspective or as a part of the societal community. Moreover, it is known that all of the selected respondents do identify themselves as sustainable consumers. All the interviewees are female between the age of 30 to 60 with an income of at least 300 000 per year, making them the most aware and responsible customer segments in the society when dealing with sustainable consumption (LOHAS, 2017; DiPetro et al., 2013), which is the primary reason for them to be selected

for the interviews. When explaining why they perceive themselves as sustainable, the overall answers include that they live as per their definition of sustainable consumption. Some common terms that are mentioned in addition are that they all attempt to avoid waste, favor organic products, dispose correctly and fix things that are broken instead of always buying new products. Erika is highlighting some drivers to increase the motivation of sustainable consumption that favors her individual self-identity and actualization:

"I define myself as a sustainable consumer because I try to avoid harming the environment but also for my own sake due to economic reasons. It is cheaper to buy products from second hand than straight from the store. I usually buy furniture and cars on for instance blocket.se since you can find some really good deals that are kinder to both my wallet and the environment" - Erika

On the other hand, the respondents agree that there is still room for improvements. Each of them has mentioned some kind of obstacles which prevents them to become completely sustainable in all areas. Anna sometimes wants to treat herself by buying something new. She argues *"I just enjoy buying new products way too much, especially since I grew older and have the economic circumstances and abilities to continuously purchase new stuff even though I'm aware that it is unnecessary most of the times"*. This issue reflects the attitude-behavior gap that Connolly and Prothero (2010) addresses in their research, as Anna adds that *"I'm a sustainable consumer due to my care for the environment."* Ulrika continues by confessing that her impulses are her greatest barrier towards sustainable consumption *"Sometimes I simply can't resist"*. However, this implies that the interviewees are struggling with finding a balance between the internal and external conflicts when constructing their individual identity.

"I would definitely identify myself as a sustainable consumer. But… I'm selfish sometimes (...). I really love working out and challenge my own body and mind. Therefore, I need to eat a lot more than a normal person. I consume more to be able to do what I love, in that sense, I'm not sustainable". – Therese

These obstacles are explained as being a part of the consumers' why-bother purchases according to the Green Purchase Perception matrix. In these cases, the confidence rate is

low and compromise claims are high which significantly decreases the probability for sustainable consumption due to large sacrifices in terms of individual values. Additionally, the consumers acknowledge that the attitude-behavior gap exists but chose to ignore and continue to consume as they have always done due to their why-bother attitude.

5.4 Social Dimension

The social dimension holds maybe the most essential pillar when talking about identity construction according to the findings of this study. Childhood gives an individual the tools for how they will perceive and interpret sustainable consumption in the future, and later on the social surrounding of friends and colleges will take over the role as an educator. Furthermore, the empirical material of this research has identified a new possible dimension for the Social Identity theory to consider, namely media, which has shown great impact in the construction of the individual identity of the human being.

5.4.1 People have influenced me

Overall, the respondents share the same view regarding where the sustainable thinking and its opinions originate from in their everyday life. Many believe that the basic values concerning sustainable thinking are created as early as in their childhood. Nevertheless, no one claimed that they do it because they really want to, instead that surroundings and circumstances lead their minds into action. With this in mind, it seems that the respondents identify themselves in group circumstances were they feel commitment and belongingness. This results in a process that forms a self-identity for the individual (Glassner & Tajfel, 1985). Both Helén and Anna believes that the fundamental acknowledgment for sustainable thinking originates from childhood, even though they have had two completely different upbringings. Helén describes it as something that has been with her throughout her entire life. With this in mind, one could argue that there clearly is a relationship between the sustainable behavior of an individual when growing older and ones' childhood.

Furthermore, it is not only childhood that plays a part in the identity construction of an individual in regards to sustainable consumption. It has been acknowledged that other factors have an impact as well. For instance, Anna believes it to be more of a mix between

childhood and influences from the people she surrounds herself with: *"I believe that you have a lot with you from your childhood, but I also believe that the people I work with have the same viewpoint as me in the subject"*. When analyzing even further into the social aspects, one could argue from the collected answers, that the influence of friends and colleagues has the greatest impact when choosing the sustainable lifestyle. Alexandra describes that one of her main influences in life is her colleagues: *"I constantly get affected by group pressure from colleagues at work. I've heard that they separate waste, recycle and buys organic products and stuff, and also social media pushes for sustainability. Therefore, I have been affected to an extent I guess."*

Pearce (2013) proposes that individual values are formed and designed by the group which the individual perceive themselves as belonging to. Almost every informant participating in the study discussed the influence of how colleagues and friends deliberate on the matter, and how this has formed their thoughts and activities in their behavior concerning food consumption and its sustainability. As Katarina states, childhood is a part of her sustainability mindset today, as well the everyday social surroundings: *"My childhood is a part of it. And then the debate in the society. Of course, the social interactions also have a role, it is a hot topic. Others engage and I talk about it with others"*. Therefore, it can be confirmed that the concept of the Social Identity theory is applicable to the targeted group for the study.

> *"External influences. I do get a lot of `why not purchase sustainable products?´. People have influenced me and questioned me before. If I am choosing between two products, `why not choose the organic one?"* – Therese

When analyzing Therese's mindset through the in-group and out-group aspect, the authors believe that the segmentation between the groups is clearly defined. The respondents describe the feeling of judgment against people that do not care, as Therese discussed, since the solution for a more sustainable behavior is relatively minor. Additionally, the Social Identity theory has a central part that reveals a pattern of in-group individuals seeking to undermine people that do not participate in the distinct social group (Tajfel, 1979). In this case, people that identify themselves sustainable, engage in a so-called intergroup comparison behavior (Tajfel, 1979).

Another respondent enlightens media and social media influencers as the primary drivers impacting her sustainable identity. Tea says: *"I believe it has a lot to do with media and trends. For example, when Therese Lindgren (a famous Swedish influencer) releases a book about how to eat and what to buy. I think many others and me as well becomes very affected by it"*. The fact that consumers get exposed for both print and digital media in enormous amounts every day in form of articles, news, radio, television, blogs, social networks etcetera, clearly influences an individual's purchase behavior. The power of influencers on social media channels is critical as they reach millions of followers with their online posts. This, in turn creates a new key aspect of the Social Identity theory in the sense that in-groups and out-groups exist in the digital world as well.

5.5 Societal Dimension

Despite that humans' as individuals are free to make their own choices regarding their food consumption patterns, that is not always the case. There are additional macro influences with a high degree of impact on consumers purchasing patterns. Especially in relation to sustainability as there are political drivers such as regulations and laws that affect the society at large. These drivers are discussed in the following section, as the societal dimension address these macro influences that our respondents feel they have low or none leverage in controlling. Still, all the interviewees maintain a positive attitude towards the external drivers as they believe green regulations are necessary for the future of next generations which they gladly engage and contribute to.

5.5.1 I need to take responsibility and pass on my knowledge to the next generation

When elaborating how the respondents implement sustainability in their everyday life, they agree upon that the Swedish government and society at large pushes for basic sustainability actions such as recycling, public transport and to favor local farmers. The overall attitude towards the current sustainability regulations in Sweden is positive. Actually, the respondents in this study want to contribute even more to the society as they feel committed to and responsible for the well-being of future generations.

To build upon the regulations that already exist, all respondents do have some individual preferences of how they implement sustainability actions that they do control, and that might impact society at large. For instance, Tea signifies the relationship between environment and her personal economy when contributing to a more sustainable society. She believes that people often have the perception that being sustainable and economic is not the same thing. However, to her, the two concepts are very closely related. She continues arguing for that, when she is saving money, she also prevents harming the environment. Moreover, she highlights the importance of planned consumption, both to reduce impulses and waste. This statement is in line with Phipps et al. (2013) research that claims for sustainable consumption being the aftermath of three primary drivers; environmental, economic and social impact and consciousness. Katarina on the other hand, argues for the better of upcoming generations:

"I always buy organic products, and I try to reuse old products and materials. Therefore, I think it is important to show the children at work that it is possible to fix things that are broken (...) mostly because I think I need to take responsibility and pass on my knowledge to the next generations". – Katarina

Katarina is a preschool teacher and defines herself accordingly which lays the ground to her identity. However, as she describes in the interview, she feels responsible to make a difference for the better future of upcoming generations. Moreover, she wishes to contribute by affecting those in her surroundings to the best of her abilities.

The basic concept of Social Identity theory is the establishment of an individual's self-identity developing into a social one due to the group circumstances in one's environment (Glassner & Tajfel, 1985). In this case, one could argue for Katarina being a vital driver when forming the social identity of the children that she teaches, as well as impacting her own. In that sense, Katrina is part of the influencer group that lays the ground for the values and beliefs encouraged, which additionally is a substantial source building pride and self-esteem (Tajfel, 1979).

5.5.2   I rather chose to buy products from a company that are environmentally-minded if I have several options

However, another finding regarding the societal dimension is that several of the interviewees are highlighting the impact that companies have on consumers and that organizations should increase their awareness in what the sustainable consumer expects from them. Alexandra is one consumer that believes she implements sustainability in her everyday life by analyzing companies' efforts toward sustainability and encourage those who actively produce with an environmentally friendly mindset:

"I think it's extremely important to analyze what companies are doing for the sustainability and environment. There are a lot of companies which are very proud of their work towards sustainability and that only use suppliers which are green certified without fossil fuels etc. In that sense, I rather chose to buy products from a company that are environmentally-minded if I have several options" - Alexandra

Therese and Helén agree regarding the importance of how organic and local products are displayed in the supermarket. Therese states that:

"If I get enough support from the supermarket, then I choose organic. I constantly look for the organic alternatives. If two products are placed next to each other, I always choose the organic one. So yes, I guess the product placement matters a lot". – Therese

Tea continues by pointing out that there are cases where she believes Sweden have the opportunity to produce more sustainable food products than what is currently available to obtain in a regular grocery store. Tea states that:

"I always try to buy Swedish produced products as much as possible. In some stores, it's difficult though because they are not providing it even though it should be possible. Let's take rapeseed oil for example. Even though we have rapeseed in almost every field in Sweden, it is really difficult to find in 'normal' stores. However, IKEA sells Swedish rapeseed oil at an affordable price, then I usually choose to buy it there instead of ICA." – Tea

She concludes by highlighting the importance of the everyday consumption choices, as she believes that if everyone tries to think more sustainable regarding the small things in life, we could really make a difference for the society at large.

When elaborating this issue through the framework of Green Purchase Perception matrix, one can conclude that the sustainable purchase decisions are influenced by both level of confidence and level of compromise. As all of the respondents stated that the advertisement of a product affects their purchase behavior to an extent. If the company advertise their product as sustainable, the attitude is positive and hence the degree of confidence is high as the interviewees' trust products marketed as sustainable. Thus, Peattie´s (2001) Green Purchase Perception matrix becomes relevant as the respondents are convinced that the product or service is sustainable. Which creates a need and obligation for them to compromise to retain the product, as it adds value for the consumers. The majority of the respondents says that if they are confident that the product and company has a genuinely sustainable approach and the price reasonable a purchase will be made. A so-called, win-win purchase occurs (Peattie, 2001).

5.6   Economic Dimension

The economic dimension has clearly shown to be one of the major obstacles for the respondents to encounter. There is a willingness to live and maintain a sustainable lifestyle, however, sometimes the economic circumstances prevent you to do so as the level of compromise increases. This segment will present the economic dimensions and how the respondents are willing to compromise when making a purchase decision with a sustainable product.

5.6.1   I am willing to compromise on price

When conducting the interviews, the respondents were asked how they deliberate in terms of sustainable goods when doing grocery shopping. There were several different opinions of what factor that triggers a purchase decision, but as a follow-up question the informants were asked if they are willing to compromise in any aspect to retain a more sustainable product, and the opinions were unanimous about what character that is:

"I am willing to compromise on price if I know that it's a sustainable product." –
Alexandra

Alexandra, Ulrika, and Tea believe that the price does not have any impact on their purchase decision and therefore claims that they will buy products that are organic if possible either way. Ulrika explains the reason to be that the household became smaller when her kids moved out and therefore the costs reduced. Tea is clearly influenced by her knowledge and experience of agriculture from her previous education and therefore elaborate every purchase decision in favor for nature: *"I will always pay more for a Swedish product, it gives the good additional value"*. Moreover, that the product comes from a local origin seems to be the number one priority when searching for sustainable products. Ulrika describes it as if she knows where the product comes from and that it is a place nearby, it has a positive effect on her. As a result, the confidence level increases and she is willing to pay more in order to retain a locally produced merchandise.

Even though the respondents belong to the same targeted population with a minimum annual income of 300 000 SEK, the willingness for compromises vary to some extent. Erika argues *"Most of the time it does not differ that much in price, but if the organic product is three times more expensive, I will choose another one"*, which is in line with Therese's thoughts regarding how much she is willing to pay extra to get a sustainable and organic product. If the price differs with just a few SEK, the time for reflection would be minimum, but if the price would be double there would be a reconsideration of the purchase decision.

Furthermore, the Peattie´s (2001) Green Purchase Perception matrix becomes relevant once again. In some cases, the confidence rate is low and compromise level much higher there is a situation of a why bother-purchase for the respondent. The result of this gives a significant decrease in the likelihood of a purchase decision because of the larger sacrifices. Therese debates that if there is a 4 SEK extra cost or more for a organic milk, a revaluation occurs to decide whether the organic milk is worth the extra cost or not. Moreover, there is a third option that can be identified when analyzing the answers from this question. A purchase decision which forces the consumer to make a substantially

active choice to retain sustainability, a so-called win win-purchase (Peattie, 2001). Erika argues that as long as the price is rational and not more than three times as much as the `normal´ product, it is worth it. Otherwise, the sustainable choice will be omitted. Ulrika and Helén on the other hand, claims that no matter the cost a local product will always be the first choice. If that is not a possibility, they will wait and buy something that is available for the season instead.

When investigating the economic dimension even further, Therese's arguments show a link between environmental and economic drivers in her sustainable thinking. She would be willing to stretch the economic boundaries in order to obtain a more sustainable product. Thus, it is difficult to identify the limit for how much one is prepared to compromise in order to retain a sustainable product. The main reason appears to be the monthly economic situation. It does not always allow choosing the more sustainable offer, and thus it becomes an economic issue. *"I try to only buy organic or Swedish chicken, but there's often a huge difference in price! So, it kind of depends on how my wallet is feeling. If I feel that it's possible with the current economic situation… But I try!"*. She also says that when it is possible, she rather spends the extra money it cost to obtain an organic product instead of spending it on other unnecessary 'stuff'.

5.7   Emotional Dimension

During the interviews, the respondents were asked to rank the following product categories according to when they evaluate sustainability aspects at most when making a purchase;

1.   Meat & fish
2.   Dairy products
3.   Greens (fruit and vegetables)
4.   Dry goods

In this section, the answers are analyzed through the Green Purchase Perception matrix as the degree of confidence in relation to the degree of compromise differs among the product categories. The findings resulted in a discovery of an emotional dimension, as the interviewees discussed their prioritization process according to their attitudes, beliefs, and values.

5.7.1   I care significantly more for the animals than I do for the plants

Based on the findings from this study, it is shown that consumers are most concerned with emotional dimension of sustainability issues when animals are directly involved. That is, in the meat and fishing industry as well as dairy products. The respondents were asked which of the product categories they considered as most important to be sustainable. One could identify some variations in the answers, depending on how much each individual consume of each product category. Helén states that she values meat and fish of high quality and have a concern for the animals' well-being: *"Both meat and fish are expensive products where I value high quality and I also want to support good animal conditions rather than bad ones"*.

Alexandra continues by questioning the role of living animals in relation to this issue:

> *"To purchase sustainable dairy products are important to me personally because it is a fresh-good and there are living animals producing it. Next would be meat and fish, for the same reasons as mentioned for dairy products". – Alexandra*

However, Alexandra believes that greens are important as well, mostly since non-organic greens contain pesticides and other unnatural additives, which she aims to avoid consuming. Katarina agrees with Alexandra as she states that:

> *"Dairy products are my number one because that's what I eat most of the time. But all the categories are almost equally important. My number two would still be meat though, both for myself and my personal health but also for the sake of the animals. I always purchase meat of Swedish origin (...). I do not want to support the terrible animal conditions that you see through the media's".*

This statement is also in line with Therese's thoughts regarding the various product categories from an ethical point of view:

> *"I prioritize meat and fish due to the animal conditions. I think its common that people lack in knowledge regarding meat in general. People that want to eat a lot of protein forgets all the substitutes that contain the same amount of protein and*

focuses on eating as much meat as possible. I care significantly more for the animals than I do for the plants (...). I don't consider sustainability issues at all when it comes to greens because I never buy it in the stores. I grow my own vegetables at home." – Therese

Still, none of the respondents are identifying themselves as vegetarians or vegans even though they argue that they are aware and caring for both the animals and the planet. One reason could be what Tea mentions:

"1. Meat & fish, 2. Dairy Products, 3. Greens, 4. Dry goods. Although I really think number one and two are equally important because all beef we eat is derived from dairy animals. But since the fishing is difficult NOT to prioritize, meat and fish would be my number one closely followed by dairy products. Even though some people argue for meat as unsustainable, for me personally, it is valuable to continue having cattle both for the landscape and economic growth as it creates more jobs." – Tea

When analyzing these reasonings through the Green Purchase Perception matrix, one can argue for meat being the overall feel good-purchase. This, because the consumer compromises in terms of paying premium-price for a product they know as locally produced and that the animal conditions are handled in an ethical manner, making the confidence rate that this is a sustainable product high as well. One example is Helén when she says that she purchases meat only from a local farm in order to control the product process and know that the animals have been doing well. Which in turn generates a better end product for Helén as a consumer. Helén is aware that such products cost more, but is not willing to compromise on the quality this product entails. Furthermore, the 'win-win product' in this case is the dairy products because the level of confidence is high and the price is only slightly higher, making the compromise rate relatively low in terms of price and the quality of the product makes up for it according to the consumers.

Moreover, the why bother-products are the greens because the degree of confidence are low as this product category is commonly imported from abroad suppliers making the degree of compromise high as well as this usually increases prices. Therefore, our

respondents argue for why-bother as long as it is not a season for that specific product. Lastly, the why not-purchases in this case are the dried products. Erika argues that dry goods are the least important since it is difficult to find Swedish products in this category. She further explains that she always looks after the country of origin on these products, but most of them are imported. So, after analyzing the answers from the respondents it is clear that there is a relatively similar view on what product areas that are most important to prioritize organic or local products. Also, the majority considers an organic or locally produced product as a premium alternative which they are willing to pay a premium price for.

6   Discussion & Critical reflection

The following section discusses the study´s problematization and its research questions based on the collected empirical material. The interpretations for the result are based on the theoretical tools Social Identity theory and Green Purchase Perception matrix. Furthermore, additional findings will be presented to generate knowledge contribution.

This research is based on two research questions formulated as following:

RQ1: *How do consumers construct their sustainable identities?*
RQ2: *Why do consumers engage in sustainable food consumption?*

Meulenberg (2003) discusses the critical issue of an individual's identity construction and what motivates the consumer's decision-making process in relation to social responsibility. It is addressed that the everyday consumption practices are being driven by consumer habits, individual concerns, social surroundings, society, and economics. The same drivers are identified when conducting this research. The empirical result gives the impression that the consumer both perceive and relate to sustainable consumption in a positive way.

When analyzing the empirical data, there are difficulties to clearly identify and define what sustainable consumption actually is, since it means different things to different people. Seyfang (2006) discusses the importance of sustainable consumption and the ecological citizenship, that the consumer and organization need to share common grounds in conveying ecological citizenship values. One of the respondents´ states that it is difficult to know what a company's true intentions are and that the concept of sustainability has become overused, and therefore lost its strong meaning. So, therefore by analyzing the *societal dimension*, it has become known that how companies position and promote themselves in regards to sustainability has a significant impact on the consumer. If the confidence level is high and that the product and company has a genuinely sustainable approach, the chances for a purchase decision will increase. This implies that consumers and organizations do not always share common grounds at the

moment, leading to a gap in perceptions and interpretations of sustainable consumption versus sustainable production.

This also goes in line with what Peattie (2001) has noticed, that the result from companies' attempts to become more sustainable has made the green consumer the main focus in the expansion of social marketing. Both marketing experts and academics in the field try to consistently identify and recognize the needs and values of the sustainable consumer in order to develop marketing offerings that suit these needs (Peattie, 2001). The fact that consumers nowadays always are exposed to media and social media can be a reason for why people have become more aware of sustainability than before. Furthermore, the role of influencers on social media channels today has shown to be critical through this research, as they have the power to make a difference with their online posts. The trend of online communities has shown that the in-group/out-group phenomenon exists even in the digital world, which is an interesting topic that could lead to further research. This new element also connects to the citizenship value, it can be plausible that social media in return is expressed in the green consumers' daily initiative and that they actively promoting the growth of ecological citizenship in a social context (Seyfang, 2006).

Moreover, with the framework of Social Identity theory, it is observed that there are internal conflicts and deviances among the respondents (Guan & So, 2016). Pearce (2013) claims that an individuals' values are designed and shaped by the group the individual identifies and interacts with. Generally, the informants have the same tone of voice regarding where their sustainable thinking originates from. The majority believes that the basic values and opinions were created as early as in their upbringing and childhood, but also social surroundings and situations have influenced their sustainable mindset.

Through the empirical material, it is discovered that the Swedish government also has a large role in helping consumers to become more sustainable. Rules and directives give the opportunity for anyone to participate in the act. However, the respondents seem to be aware of their ecological footprint when discussing waste separation, recycling and using of cars. Nevertheless, it could be questionable if doing so because of the need for

belongingness to a group, or the necessity to contribute. In the end, it is all about who the individual wants to identify herself with.

According to the findings of this study, it has been revealed that the main obstacle when it comes to a purchase decision for a sustainable product, is the price. This, because such a variable generally weighs heavier in a purchase decision than the sustainability aspect. It is addressed that price aspects create a gap when evaluating whether or not to act sustainably. McDonald et al. (2009) have identified that the green consumer does not have consistency in the purchase decision-making from one product to another. This makes it difficult to draw parallels across the product categories, which is in line with what the empirical material for this study has shown. With this in mind, one can draw the conclusion that if a consumer feels that she will lose her flexibility and quality of life by making certain changes, it is less likely that the change will happen (Shirani et al., 2015).

Lastly, there are obstacles identified when discussing consistency in the behavior of sustainable consumption among the respondents. A gap has been found between the consumers' attitude towards the concept and the actual behavior. The informants want to identify themselves as sustainable consumers in all aspects, but then discover areas where they do not follow through on the matter and fail to fully adapt. Hence, it becomes as Shirani et al. (2015) describe, a result of a resistance towards adapting to a more sustainable living. Furthermore, this could also be a consequence of what DiPietro et al. (2013) examine in their study, that the consumer only has knowledge in the area to a certain extent, but not enough to change their behavior in all food consumption situations.

Furthermore, since this study was conducted on a group of individuals inclined to be considered as the most sustainable ones in the Swedish society (LOHAS, 2017; DiPetro et al., 2013), the understanding in the area was expected to be high. It was also noticed that one of the respondents had prior education in the area, and therefore had a much deeper understanding of the subject and different objectives than the other respondents.

6.1   Additional findings

As mentioned previously in the background section, it is established in prior research that the motives impacting sustainable consumption are related to either environmental, economic or social causes (Phipps et al., 2013). Furthermore, Minton et al. (2018) imply that the reasons for engaging in sustainable consumption vary significantly among individuals due to personal values, beliefs and social trends. Therefore, it is crucial expanding the research in the field of sustainable consumption. The empirical material of this study has identified themes and dimensions to better understand the intended research questions. Nevertheless, two additional findings have been discovered during this process: namely the care for animal welfare and possible implications of age.

6.1.1   Animal welfare

One additional finding that was discovered from this study, was the importance of animal welfare in relation to the environment. Almost all the respondents are mentioning animal welfare as one of their primary drivers towards sustainable actions, which was not expected. The respect for animal welfare derives from the consumers' concerns regarding whether the animals' well-being and suffering are well managed when making a purchase that involves animals in some way.

 Furthermore, these concerns primary include how the animals are kept, their environment and overall well-being, as well as how they are slaughtered for food. Based on the empirical data collected from the semi-structured interviews, one can identify a pattern where the consumers argue that the health of the animals are significantly more important to them than the well-being of plants and other products that not involve living animals. This is, even though both dairy products and meat, as well as greens and dried products do have some degree of impact on their health personally. By critically analyzing these insights through the Social Identity theory (Tajfel, 1979) one could argue that these individual values are based on the respondents' in-groups and social environment at large, including macro factors as well in terms of media and trends. However, to receive increased accuracy and deeper understanding in this matter, one would need to change the focus of the study completely as this research only scratches the surface of this specific

issue. Hence, it was an interesting and surprising insight to complement the research questions of this study that would definitely be relevant to elaborate further.

6.1.2   Differences between ages

Another key finding was the difference in perspectives within the chosen sample population regarding their age. The chosen age segment of this study was women between the age of 30 to 60. However, the youngest participant is 30 years old and the oldest one is 57, making the maximum age-difference between the respondents totally 27 years. These 27 years' difference did matter even though all respondents had the same gender and were all identified as living a sustainable and healthy lifestyle. The conducted result showed that the people around the age of 50 tend to have similar values and perspectives regarding sustainable consumption in multiple ways, as did the individuals which are in their early 30's. By critical reflection of the empirical result, the authors could identify several similarities in the way consumers resonate and argue when answering the questions by assuming age as a critical variable.

Firstly, from the economic aspect of sustainable consumption. The result showed that the 'older' respondents suggest that by spending more money on purchases, e.g. buying expensive products that last longer or buying organic products with premium price, they feel more confident that they act in a sustainable manner.

On the other hand, the 'younger' respondents within the research segment argue for purchasing less to become more sustainable, if they save money they save the environment as well by consuming less. In that sense, are both age generations equally sustainable? Even though they are motivated by different reasons to engage in sustainability, the critical is the fact that they all want to engage. The respondents do have several similarities but they are unique individuals and the differences among them should not be ignored. This study did have a minimum annual salary but did not have any maximum, which one could assume to be the reason for the significant variations of economic conditions among the respondents'.

Moreover, there is one crucial difference when discussing the social aspects of sustainable consumption between the age groups. The 'younger' generation is in general increasingly

more exposed to digital media, influencers, and trends as they are more frequent users of social media and the internet at large.

Furthermore, from the environmental point of view, the authors understand that the respondents are more or less on the same page when interpreting sustainable consumption. Lastly, the term 'environment' seems to be the overall top of mind recall when discussing sustainability among the consumers, with no regards to age or other variables.

7   Conclusion

This section summarizes and ends the study. Conclusions and knowledge regarding the research questions will be presented, which are based on the analysis and key findings discussed in the preceding chapter. This chapter continues describes the shortcomings and limitations of the study, as well as proposals for further research within the area. Lastly, the implications of the findings are presented to clarify the major contributions of this thesis to academia and the society.

7.1   Implications of findings

The aim of this study was to elaborate the complex issue suggested by Hush (2010), that consumers are instantly exposed to internal and external conflicts when constructing their identities. This, of course, applies to sustainable consumers as well, which makes it relevant to draw parallels between this issue and the motives for consumers to act in a sustainable manner.

In order to meet the research objective, extensive studies have been conducted on previous research on sustainable consumption as well as adjacent areas. This, in addition to data collected from the interviews and interpretations of the respondents, were examined and analyzed through theoretical framework; the *Social Identity theory* and the *Green Purchase Perception matrix*, which resulted in several interesting findings.

When elaborating how consumers construct their sustainable identities, several themes and dimensions were identified as high-level influencers. Which resulted in the key findings of this study. The key findings showed that individuals primarily are affected by environmental, individual, social, societal, economic, and emotional drivers when constructing their sustainable identity. Hence, same conclusions are drawn in relation to why consumers engage in sustainable food consumption.

The themes identified confirms Phipps et al. (2013) theory that the critical motives driving sustainable consumption are related to either environmental, economic or social causes.

However, this research key findings nuances further by adding individual, societal and emotional dimensions to reflect how individuals construct their sustainable identity. The internal valuation of these dimensions as well as the prioritizing process differs significantly between individuals depending on how consumers interpret and relate to sustainable consumption. This confirms what Minton et al. (2018) states in his research, that the reasons for engaging in sustainable consumption vary due to differences in personal values, beliefs, and change in social trends. Hence, the findings of this study add the importance of personal background and social surroundings to the equation for motivating sustainable consumption, which in turn is closely related to what we refer to as our social identity.

By applying the Green Purchase Perception matrix developed by Peattie (2001), one could conclude that the consumers would be more likely to engage in sustainable purchases, if the level of confidence is high, meaning that the consumers are ensured that they are purchasing a sustainable product. Hence, even if it could mean compromising on other areas, such as paying a premium price or refrain from other purchases.

7.2   Limitations & Future research

In order to generate a more comprehensive research, there are some primary limitations that have been addressed in this study. First of all, the limited time-frame. The authors chose to conduct a rather small sample population for the semi-structured interviews even though it resulted in enough theoretical saturation. If more time were given, it would have been possible to extend the research and interviewed a larger sample size in order to get an even deeper understanding of the subject.

Furthermore, when conducting the empirical material neither respondents body language nor the tone of voice were noticed or paid attention to during the interviews which could be vital when interpreting and analyzing the answers. In order to improve the method of conducting material, it could be a suggestion for future research to replace the sound recording with video to embrace the significance of body language.

Since the sample population for this research is delimited to Swedish women between 30 and 60 with a clearly specified minimum annual income, this research is somewhat

limited. For future studies on this subject, it would be interesting to investigate a broader demographic segment, and possibly compare variables such as gender or generations. Moreover, it would be preferable to conduct the exact same research on the opposite gender with the same age and mindset, in order to see if the outcomes will be comparable.

Another suggestion, to get an even broader perspective on consumer perceptions of sustainable consumption, it would be interesting to investigate the differences with consumers who do not classify themselves as sustainable to identify potential barriers towards sustainability. One way of doing this could be proposed with a quantitative approach. This method could result in additional findings and dimensions by enabling larger samples as well as using other empirical methods. By elaborating this research and extending it to other or broader areas, one could find in-depth or new insights on the subject, which in turn could contribute to promoting a more sustainable consumption behavior among consumers.

7.3   Contributions

The purpose of this thesis was to find room for new contributions to imply valuable and relevant consumer behavior related insights for academia and company managers. This research contains several interesting insights and findings for both theoretical and practical purposes. From an absolute theoretical perspective, the key findings are relevant contributions in the fields of sustainable consumption, sustainable food consumption, consumer behavior and identity construction. The aim is to broaden the understanding within these fields and to facilitate for future examination of a comparable academic topic.

On the other hand, from a practical point of view, these findings can deliver useful knowledge to the society and marketing managers. As well as providing company leaders with relevant insights on consumer behavior and how their customers construct their sustainable identities. These insights become relevant as organizations are planning their advertising campaigns, product placements and marketing strategies at large. Furthermore, as the key to a successful business is to fully understand your customers (Peattie, 2001), this thesis is contributing in several ways by identifying the needs, attitudes, and values of the sustainable consumers' mindset.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview questions

1. Berätta om dig själv
   - Kön? Ålder? Arbete? Familj? Aktiv eller inte?
 	
2. Vad betyder hållbar konsumtion för dig?
 	
3. Varför engagerar du dig I hållbar konsumtion?
   - Vad motiverar dig att engagera dig?
   - (Min hälsa, min planets hälsa, gynna lantbruket)
 	
4. Skulle du identifiera dig som en hållbar konsument i ditt dagliga liv?
   - Varför? Varför inte?
 	
5. Vad tror du att dina tankar och värderingar kring hållbar konsumtion grundar sig i?
   - Uppväxt? Sociala kretsar? Jobbet/kollegor? Trender? Media?
 	
6. Hur implementerar du hållbarhet i ditt vardagliga liv?
 	
7. Beskriv innehållet i din matkasse
 	
8. Hur ser dina konsumtionsvanor ut när det kommer till mat och hållbarhet?
   - Tänker du mycket på hållbarhet då?
   - Varför? Varför inte?
   - Ekologiskt? Ja/nej, varför?
 	
9. Om ett företag marknadsför en produkt att vara hållbar, påverkar det dig i ditt köpbeslut?
   - Varför? Varför inte?
   - Olika faktorer? (Pris, förpackning, marknadsföring)
   - Är du villig att kompensera någon av dessa faktorer för att få en hållbar produkt?
 	
10. Om du skulle rangordna produktkategorierna – 1. Mejeriprodukter, 2. Kött/fisk, 3. Frukt & grönt, och 4. Torrvaror efter vad som är MEST viktigt att de är hållbara. (enligt din definition av hållbarhet ex: ekologiskt, svenskt, närproducerat). Vart är du MINST villig att kompromissa?
   - Hur resonerar du?
   - Motivera varför
 	
11. Är det något mer du vill tillägga angående detta ämne?