

## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Background.....	1
1.2	Problem and Purpose.....	2
1.3	Research Questions .....	3
1.4	Delimitation .....	3
1.5	Key Terms.....	4
<b>2</b>	<b>Theoretical Framework .....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	Introduction.....	5
2.2	Perceived Quality .....	5
2.2.1	Perceived quality as an evaluative judgement.....	7
2.2.2	Perceived quality as a subject- object interaction.....	9
2.2.2.1	Comparative factors .....	9
2.2.2.2	Personal Factors .....	9
2.2.2.3	Situational factors .....	11
2.2.3	Perceived quality and the consumption experience .....	11
2.2.4	Formation of quality attribute beliefs .....	12
2.2.4.1	Descriptive belief formation.....	13
2.2.4.2	Informational belief formation.....	13
2.2.4.3	Inferential belief formation .....	13
2.3	Perceived Value.....	15
2.3.1	Perceived value model.....	15
2.3.2	Perceived value and sports drinks.....	17
2.4	The Role of Packaging .....	18
2.4.1	Packaging design and elements.....	19
2.4.1.1	Graphics .....	21
2.4.1.2	Size and shape .....	22
2.4.1.3	Information .....	22
2.4.1.4	Technology .....	23
2.5	The Conceptual Model Used in the Study.....	23
<b>3</b>	<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>26</b>
3.1	Thesis approach .....	26
3.1.1	Research Philosophy .....	26
3.1.2	Research Design.....	27
3.2	Data Collection .....	28

3.2.1	Secondary Data .....	28
3.2.2	Primary Data- Focus Groups.....	28
3.2.2.1	Sample .....	29
3.2.2.2	Choice of Questions .....	30
3.2.2.3	Ethical Considerations and Focus Group Execution.....	31
3.2.2.4	Choice of Brands .....	32
3.3	Assessing the Quality .....	32
3.3.1	Integrity of Data.....	33
3.3.2	Balance Between Reflexivity and Subjectivity .....	33
3.3.3	Clear Communication and Findings .....	34
3.4	Data Analysis .....	34
3.4.1	Data Assembly .....	34
3.4.2	Data Reduction .....	34
3.4.3	Data Display .....	35
3.5	Evaluation of the Method .....	35
<b>4</b>	<b>Findings from the focus groups .....</b>	<b>37</b>
4.1	Focus Group 1 .....	37
4.1.1	General Discussion.....	37
4.1.2	Three Different Brands.....	38
4.1.3	Purchase Intention.....	39
4.2	Focus Group 2 .....	39
4.2.1	General Discussion.....	39
4.2.2	Three Different Brands.....	40
4.2.3	Purchase Intention.....	41
4.3	Focus Group 3 .....	42
4.3.1	General Discussion.....	42
4.3.2	Three Different Brands.....	43
4.3.3	Purchase Intention.....	44
4.4	Findings from the Semi- Structured Interviews.....	45
4.4.1	General Discussion.....	45
4.4.2	Three Different Brands.....	46
4.4.3	Purchase Intention.....	47
<b>5</b>	<b>Analysis .....</b>	<b>49</b>
5.1	Introduction.....	49

5.2	Perceived Quality for Sports Drinks.....	49
5.3	Consumption Values.....	51
5.3.1	Functional Value.....	51
5.3.2	Conditional Value.....	52
5.3.3	Social Value.....	52
5.3.4	Emotional Value.....	52
5.3.5	Epistemic Value.....	53
5.4	Inferential Process.....	53
5.5	Packaging.....	54
5.5.1	Graphics.....	55
5.5.2	Size and Shape.....	57
5.5.3	Information.....	58
5.5.4	Technology.....	58
5.6	Purchase Intention.....	59
<b>6</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>62</b>
6.1	Perception of Packaging Design and Quality.....	62
6.2	Purchase Intention.....	62
<b>7</b>	<b>Discussion.....</b>	<b>64</b>
7.1	Overview.....	64
7.2	Relevance of the Study.....	64
7.2.1	Purpose.....	64
7.2.2	Research Question 1.....	64
7.2.3	Research Question 2.....	65
7.2.4	Managerial Implications.....	65
7.3	Limitations.....	66
7.4	Suggestions for Further Research.....	67
	<b>References.....</b>	<b>69</b>
	<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>80</b>

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Consumers have gained more awareness of health issues, and the fact that sugar and artificial additives may be detrimental to health makes them consequently drawn to products that can provide them with desired benefits for physical training as well as fulfilling their requirements regarding content ingredients (Euromonitor, 2016). The question is how strongly this awareness is rooted and what factors may influence the consumers when facing a purchase decision.

Previous studies in consumer behaviour have presented evidence that initial consumer purchase intentions do not necessarily transcend into actual behaviour (Sheeran, 2002). In this sense, product packaging is significant considering that it has frequently been described as a strong tool when marketing products, since it often represents the initial contact with a consumer (Kobayashi & Benassi, 2015), who thereby forms an opinion of a product itself and its qualities (Rod, 1990). Traditionally, packaging has been a method of protecting and transporting the product contained within it. Nowadays packaging serves a more sophisticated role, as according to Silayoi and Speece (2004), packaging commonly has a decisive influence in purchase decisions at point of sale and consequently becomes an essential function for the communication and branding process. Visual elements of packaging are of significant importance, particularly in low involvement situations since it is a manifestation of the product itself. In general, food and drink items are considered low-involvement products because they are typically low value and high volume (Hingley et al., 2007). Consumers therefore tend to evaluate the products based on packaging and its design. Furthermore, what consumers immediately consider in a purchasing decision is the perceived quality of a product and how well it fits with their overall consumption goals (Steenkamp, 1990). Therefore, it might be important to understand how the consumption goals and perceived quality affect the purchase decision.

During the last few decades there has been a shift in the market for beverages and one way in which this change is manifested is that the segment for Carbonated Soft Drinks has experienced a decline in sales. Contributing factors for this are increasing health consciousness and suspicion towards excessive amounts of added sugar and artificial sweeteners among consumers (New York Times, 2015). Consequently, other segments within the market have experienced growth and shifting consumer demands for product offerings (USA Today, 2015). One is the segment for functional beverages. The segment itself is part of the overall market for functional food,

which has, although lacking a consistent definition, been defined as food that is enriched or enhanced in a manner that is potentially beneficial for the consumer's health (Crowe & Francis, 2013). The issue of an ambiguous definition applies to the functional beverages as well in the sense that several categories within the beverage market can be labelled functional. According to Future Market Insights (2016), the functional beverage segment can be divided into energy drinks, sports drinks, nutraceutical drinks, dairy-based beverages, juices and enhanced waters.

Functional beverages in the Swedish market have displayed prominence. An indication of this is that the segment for sports and energy drinks increased sales from 7,88 to 9,03 million litres between 2013 and 2014 (Sveriges Bryggerier, 2015). According to a market report issued by Euromonitor (2015), Swedish consumers abandoned soft drinks containing sugar and additives and instead requested healthier and more natural alternatives with some added benefit (consequently, such brands have continued to succeed and Swedish consumers are expected to increase their demand for healthier alternatives). Another aspect to this shift is that an increasing number of people engage in fitness and exercise, which has caused the demand for functional beverages that are aimed at supporting these activities (Euromonitor, 2016).

The category in which these beverages are included is somewhat ambiguously defined. Traditionally, sport drinks have been characterised as drinks for hydration and electrolytes replenishment. It does nowadays however encapsulate a wider definition of functionality in beverages as it is becoming more adaptive to consumer needs (Food business news, 2013). It may also be defined as being part of the sports nutrition market, which constitute both food and drinks with the aim of facilitating nutritional needs for consumers engaged in sports and physical activities (Packaged facts, 2013). For this study however, we choose to categorize the drinks according to the function they aim to fulfil and thereby classify them as sports drinks, which thereby corresponds to Euromonitor's (2016) definition.

## 1.2 Problem and Purpose

More and more brands are likely to enter the Swedish market for sports drinks, as the functional beverage brands available continue to succeed and are expected to do so in the upcoming years. Not only does the competition increase, but consumers are also getting more aware of what they consume, and hence become more selective in their product choices (Euromonitor, 2015). This poses as a problem, or challenge, for companies in the sports drinks industry, as they must try to

differentiate themselves from the increasing competition in order to attract potential customers. In order to stand out and given the fact that the beverage consumers tend to respond positively to convenience (Corbo et al., 2014), the brands must increase the probability of persuading consumers at point of sale by giving consideration to the packaging design. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate consumer perceptions regarding the packaging design of sports drinks and what role those consumer perceptions have on purchase intentions.

The utility of the findings is for them to ultimately serve as guidelines in the decision making process of designing packaging for sports beverages.

### 1.3 Research Questions

Research Question 1: *What is the role of packaging elements (such as colour, shape, typography etc.) regarding consumer perceptions of sports drinks?*

The aim of this question is to capture a broader spectrum of which packaging elements, if any, have a more extensive impact on consumer perception of sports beverages.

Research Question 2: *How does consumer perceptions of sports drinks packaging impact purchase intentions?*

This research question attempts to elicit findings of what role the perceptions of the consumers have on their actual purchase intentions of sports beverages.

### 1.4 Delimitation

The authors of this study has chosen to focus on the packaging of sports drinks, excluding other functional beverages that do not claim to give athletic benefits when consumed. In order to explore the appropriate target group, the authors have chosen to base their studies on active people that do some kind of physical sporting activity at least a couple of times a week.

Additionally, during the interviews there was only sports drinks presented that have not yet been launched on the Swedish market, since the participants are less likely to have preconceived ideas and attitudes towards such brands. This research can further be justified since no such study have been conducted to date. Furthermore, only Swedish residents was investigated in this study in order to fully comprehend the Swedish market. This means that this study cannot accurately generalize to a wider population of non-active people as well as people not residing in Sweden.

## 1.5 Key Terms

**Intentions:** The choices people make at different times in their lives when deciding to buy products or services (Doyle, 2011).

**Low involvement product:** A product that does not require particular research or thought in selection and purchase, typically consumable goods with low costs (Doyle, 2011).

**Packaging:** A tool to make a product attractive to consumers, enhancing the usage of a product and often adds extra value to a brand from a customer experience point of view (Doyle, 2011).

**Perception:** The beliefs of what a customer thinks are true and how they evaluate a product (Doyle, 2011).

**Point of sale:** The point at which a consumer is faced with a purchase decision (Doyle, 2011).

**Sports drinks:** Beverages specifically focused on rehydrating people during or after exercise (Diabetes.co.uk, 2016).

## **2 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how packaging might be utilized by a consumer to infer their perceived quality of a product. There are several components that are leading up to perceived quality, including consumption values. But since perceived quality is a central part in the theoretical framework, this chapter will begin by describing the nature of it. Thereafter, the components of the perception process, which is depicted in figure 1, will be elaborated on and an explanation will be provided that illustrates how perceived value, more particularly consumption values, have been integrated in the theory.

### **2.2 Perceived Quality**

The word quality is a term that is frequently being used in describing objects in the surroundings and is a central concept to industries as well as in relation with competition among companies and their corresponding strategies (Steenkamp, 1990). Striving for increased quality in a firm's offering is considered as a strong mean of differentiating from competition (Porter, 1998), and is likely to determine the success of an organization (Peters & Waterman, 2006). Steenkamp (1990) provided the notion that there might be a difference in how a company and a consumer perceive quality and that it therefore is important to bridge this gap by focusing on consumer perceived quality, since they ultimately determine what products gets sold.

Substantial research exists regarding consumer perceived quality judgements towards products (Zeithaml, 1988; Ophuis & Van Trijp, 1995; Steenkamp, 1990; Snoj et. al., 2004). According to Ophuis and Van Trijp (1995), perceived quality is defined to be situated somewhere in between two extremes of the concept of quality. As foundation for this argument, the authors on one hand provide the notion that quality is an inherent characteristic of excellence, which is not suitable for analysis but can rather be recognized through experience. According to Snoj et. al., (2004), quality is based on a number of bundles of attributes that combined represent benefits to the consumer, which are measured by a perceived level of quality. Additionally, there is the notion that perceived quality only can be defined in relation to other items. On the other hand, quality might also be defined by an opposite approach by portraying it objectively, which enable measurement and verifiability of superiority in relation to an established standard (Zeithaml,



1988), with the prerequisite that such standard can be technically measured (Ophuis & Van Trijp, 1995). The word “superiority” infers that an item or a product only can be labelled as such if it exists in a category and enables comparison between several ones. In a marketing context, perceived quality is therefore by this definition regarded as a judgement- based approach of an items quality, performed by a person, or more specifically a consumer. Zeithaml (1988) concluded that perceived quality as consumer judgement about the overall excellence or superiority of a product. The word “excellence” do on the other hand appear to be of a binary nature since it implies a yes or no answer regarding quality (Charters & Pettigrew, 2005).

Steenkamp (1990) criticized existing definitions and models of perceived quality for being different variations of “fitness for use” with regards to consumer needs, without considering the theoretical basis for how perception of quality is formed and how the theories may be applied to various situations. A more specific critique of other existing theories that the author presents is their absence of quality attributes in relation to quality cues and their importance when consumers form perceptions of quality (explained in section 2.3) (Steenkamp, 1990).

Steenkamp’s (1990) theory emphasized the fact that consumer perceived quality can be seen in the context of value, of which perceived quality is considered to be a part. Several other researchers have established a similar relationship, particularly regarding perceived value (Bonillo & Fernández, 2007). For instance, Zeithaml (1988) argued that consumer perceived value could be considered a trade- off between what is given and received when making a purchase and perceived quality is in that sense an important factor in the value perception. Value is defined, according to Steenkamp (1990), as a relative preference an individual experience when interacting with an object (a further elaboration and distinction of value is performed in section 2.2). Steenkamp (1990) derived three main dimensions of value that provided a conceptual framework for how to define perceived quality in the context of value. It is also within this framework that the link and distinction between quality cues and quality attributes is explained, concepts that have consequently been applied in several studies (Northen, 2000; Ophuis & Van Trijp, 1995). The three dimensions are perceived quality as an evaluative judgement, perceived quality as a subject- object interaction and perceived quality and the consumption experience.

Figure 1 shows an illustration of Steenkamp’s (1990) model and each part of it further explained. The various components in the model are marked by the numbered headings of concepts explained in this chapter, to facilitate comprehension of the theory.



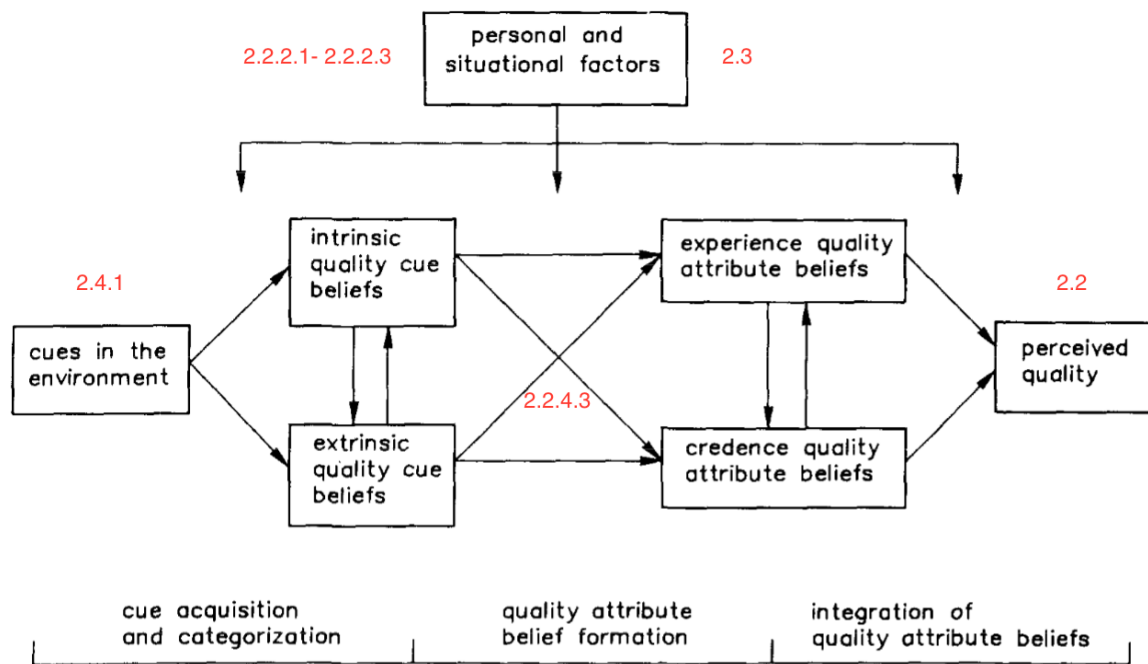


Figure 1. Model of the quality perception process (Steenkamp, 1990). The various boxes in the model are accompanied by numbers referring to the sections that explains them.

## 2.2.1 Perceived quality as an evaluative judgement

This dimension defines perceived quality as an overall evaluative judgement and how consumers arrive at those. Here lies the distinction between quality cues and quality attributes, which according to Steenkamp (1991) is a fundamental limitation of other theories. Quality cues are informational stimuli of a product that a consumer can observe prior to consumption and quality attributes are defined as the consequence of consuming a product. A more comprehensive description of the distinction between the two concepts is that quality cues are what the consumer observes and quality attributes are what consumers want in a product. For instance, the colour green on a packaging is usually by a consumer associated with attributes such as healthiness and environmental friendliness (Rokka & Uusitalo, 2008). Cues, or in this context quality cues, are essentially informational stimuli representing the full range of product features such as price, packaging, brand name etc., and functions as quality indicators of products (Obermiller, 1988). By such definition it constitutes a broad concept considering a product consist of multiple cues, for instance the previous examples price, packaging and brand, each of which are subject to evaluation and consequently results in a combined consumer judgement of a products quality as a whole (Ophuis & Van Trijp, 1995). According to Zeithaml (1988), cues are

furthermore divided into two main categories, namely intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic cues are defined as integral parts of a product and cannot be altered without changing the product itself. Examples of intrinsic cues are appearance, colour, shape and size. Extrinsic cues are features that are intimately linked with a product, such as price and brand name, although do not make up a physical part of it. Quality cues are comparable to search attributes of a product in the sense that they can be established prior to purchase (Northen, 2000). According to Ophuis & Van Trijp (1995), quality cues may provide a consumer with an expectation of product quality while attributes provide the actual experience. Quality attributes are unobservable prior to consumption, so consumers are forced to rely on quality cues as guidance in their purchase decisions. However, consumers can also infer quality attribute beliefs prior to consumption since consumers' value cues in terms of their perceived relationship with attributes (this is elaborated further in section 2.2.4) (Steenkamp, 1991). This relationship can be exemplified using sports drinks. The packaging and its design serves as a quality cue, from which a consumer may draw conclusions regarding the quality attribute of the beverage, such as taste and effect on sports performance.

Furthermore, cues and attributes can each be divided into two separate components. Quality attributes are divided into experience and credence attributes. Experience attributes can be established from actual consumption experience with a product while credence attributes cannot (Steenkamp, 1990; Northen, 2000). A consumer can, for instance, establish the taste of a sports drink upon consumption (experience attribute) but not the nutritional value (credence attribute). Quality cues are separated as extrinsic and intrinsic cues, a notion that was described earlier. Previous studies have suggested that intrinsic cues are more suitable regarding the quality perception process for the majority of products (Steenkamp, 1990). However, according to Holbrook et al., (1986), extrinsic cues might be more significant compared to intrinsic for so-called image products. Bottled water has been listed as an example of such product and product packaging is thereby defined as an extrinsic cue. However, this definition is not an unanimously recognized fact among scholars (Steenkamp, 1990). In the case of beverages, depending on what is defined to be an extrinsic cue of the product, one could argue that the liquid content and container (packaging) are interrelated or inseparable and thereby may be viewed as having an intrinsic relationship, instead of being separated. This issue has been suggested by Zeithaml (1988), who argues that a product's packaging belongs to the category of cues which are considered difficult to classify as either intrinsic or extrinsic. The author additionally claims that packaging can be classified as an intrinsic cue if it is considered to be physically integrated with

the product itself. Since packaging most commonly is defined as an extrinsic cue, that is the definition that will be applied in this study.

## 2.2.2 Perceived quality as a subject- object interaction

Since the consumer quality judgement occurs in relation to a product and in a contextual setting, the procedure is not entirely subjective or objective, but rather an interaction (Steenkamp, 1990). The author therefore identifies three factors that are involved in this interaction (Steenkamp, 1990), which are comparative factor, personal factors and situational factors.

### 2.2.2.1 Comparative factors

This factor addresses the issue that the perceived quality of a brand or a product might be influenced if there are other products or brands present. This notion is congruent with what Ophuis and van Trijp (1995) proposed, more specifically that perceived quality is judged by its intended use and among alternatives. As there are several variations of sports drinks in terms of intended function, target group positioning and packaging design, a consumer might be affected in various ways when facing a purchase decision between several options. Schoormans and Robben (1997) found that depending on how a product appears, consumers will have a certain degree of attention directed towards as well as forming beliefs and perceptions about it. Examples of stimuli that attracts consumers' attention are brand names and advertisement (Schoormans & Robben, 1997). Since product packaging is the first component that the consumer encounters when it comes to sports drink, a consumer is likely to be affected by his or her impressions of packaging design (Clement, 2007). We have therefore in our data collection included research participant's assessments of several different packaging designs for sports drinks.

### 2.2.2.2 Personal Factors

This category consists of involvement, prior knowledge, level of education, perceived quality risk and quality consciousness.

*Involvement:* Involvement in a product is defined as high, low or somewhere in between

(Steenkamp, 1990). It can be seen as an indication of a consumer's motivation to process product information (Han et al., 2007). It can also be described as how invested a consumer is in taking an interest in a product, which originates from perception of a certain product being able to meet goals and values that the consumer holds (Lee & Mittal, 1989). High involvement require consumers to conduct more elaborate reasoning regarding products (Celsi & Olson, 1988) and consequently have a tendency to attach more importance to quality cues, specifically intrinsic ones, since those often represent the true characteristics of a product and generates stronger beliefs about quality attributes (Steenkamp, 1990). As previously concluded, sports drinks are defined as low- involvement products, indicating limited amount of information searching prior to purchase and consumers consequently might use cues such as packaging to form a quick impression of the products that lead to a decision of whether to purchase or not.

*Prior knowledge:* Prior knowledge is an important influencer in the consumer's ability to process information about a product (Zaichkowsky, 1994). Consumers with already established knowledge about a product may use it to form more profound and abstract information processes (Maheswaran & Sternthal, 1990). Since prior knowledge may be seen as a framework for consumers to evaluate products (Monroe & Rao, 1988), they do so relatively quick compared to consumers that do not possess extensive prior knowledge.

*Level of education:* Level of education may be crucial in making informed decisions. Those that possesses a higher level of education tends to information more efficiently and to a wider extent in decision making processes compared to those that are lower educated (Klein, 1999). A similar pattern is also notable in the cue interaction, which higher educated consumers tend to rely on more extensively than lower educated consumers, mainly as a consequence of the fact that it requires more information processing to evaluate them (Steenkamp, 1990).

*Perceived quality risk:* If quality attributes are perceived as risky the overall quality judgement will be negatively affected (Snoj et. al., 2004) and consumers tend to base their judgement on merely a few cues when perceiving high risk (Steenkamp, 1990).

*Quality consciousness:* Quality consciousness was defined by Steenkamp (1990) as following; "A mental predisposition to respond in a consistent way to quality- related aspects which is organized through learning and influences behaviour". This infers that an individual will give approximately similar responses to quality aspects regardless of the situations or products (Steenkamp, 1990).

### 2.2.2.3 Situational factors

These variables have been found to affect consumer judgement for a broad range of products. According to Orth (2005), product's and service's attribute importance in the minds of the consumers varied depending on which situation they were in. According to Steenkamp (1990), the two variables that in previous studies have appeared to be of high significance are usage goals and time pressure.

*Usage goals:* According to Garbarino and Johnson (2001), personal goals of the consumption influences every stage of the purchasing process, including the product usage. Usage goals are a relevant factors to this study since consumers might have different reasons for consuming sport drinks (See further elaboration in section 2.3). Usage goals determines or at least influences which quality cues and attributes that are likely to matter regarding overall quality judgement (Steenkamp, 1990). In the case of sports beverages, intrinsic cues might be more important when a consumer is interested in the actual function of the beverage and thereby is more likely to ignore the external cues, such as price and store setting.

*Time pressure:* Time pressure is the amount of time available for the consumer to make quality judgements and process information about quality. Bettman et al., (1998) suggested that when individuals are under time pressure, they have a tendency to focus more intensively on negative information about quality and evaluate fewer quality cues than they would in normal situations. For a sports drink, this could imply that consumers' focus on information about content or a colour that they do not prefer.

### 2.2.3 Perceived quality and the consumption experience

This dimension refers to perceived quality derived from the consumption experience (Steenkamp, 1990; Holbrook, 2005; Bredahl, 2004; Laverie et al., 1993). Consumers are believed to buy products for the experience they give. Steenkamp (1990) distinguished between two wants. A basic want is the consumption experience a consumer is searching for and derived wants are the means to achieve the desired consumption experience. Perceived quality do in this case function as a link between the two types of wants and it measures to what extent a product is fit to deliver the desired consumption experience (Steenkamp, 1990).

The behaviour a consumer intends to perform using a product can lead to different consumption

experiences (Steenkamp, 1990). This is congruent with the notion presented by Mano and Oliver (1993) in the sense that consumers might purchase products or services for utilitarian and hedonic reasons, depending on what they search for. For instance, a consumer might use a product for the sake of its intended function such as drinking a sports drinks with the purpose of experiencing the effect of higher performance or a consumer might consume a sports drink because of a statement that individual want to display to the surroundings. In this regard, perceived quality with respect to the consumption experience depends on the reason for purchase that the consumer had. Additionally, Havlena and Holbrook (1986) emphasized the role of emotions in a consumer's consumption experience and that it often guides behaviour. Steenkamp (1990) emphasizes the fact that different usage behaviour will result in different consumption experience and that it therefore is important to consider the goal of the consumer. The consumption experience and goal of the consumer is also the reason for why this study also aims at including perceived value (see section 2.2) in combination with perceived quality and purchase intention.

The purpose of the study does not include that the research subjects actually drink the sports drinks but rather what elements of the packaging design makes them more inclined to purchase. With this in mind, the subjects are not able to actually experience the consumption in terms of taste and perceived effect and consequently cannot evaluate the perceived quality based on quality attribute since those can only be experienced after consumption. However, consumers can according to Steenkamp (1990), infer quality attribute beliefs based on guidance by the quality cues. This notion has been examined by using price as a cue for consumers to infer quality (Natesan & Smith, 1999). Consumers can thereby arrive at an evaluative judgement regarding the perceived quality of the sports drinks, using cues. This conceptualization can be applied to the purpose of our study. Quality cues such as the packaging design may enable subjects to infer certain quality attributes about the products (sports drinks).

#### 2.2.4 Formation of quality attribute beliefs

Quality attribute beliefs can according to Steenkamp (1990) be established in three ways; through descriptive belief formation, informational belief formation and inferential belief formation. These belief formations are described more closely in the following sections (2.2.4.1- 2.2.4.3). Prior research has been conducted involving belief formation (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Mitchell & Olson, 2000), but not in terms of the relationship between quality cues, quality attributes and perceived quality. The relationship between these components are depicted in

figure 1.

#### 2.2.4.1 Descriptive belief formation

Descriptive beliefs about a product are those that can be observable with the senses prior to consumption (Steenkamp, 1990; Erickson et al., 1984; Alba & Hutchinson, 1987). Since consumers do not always have the opportunity or the want to try out a product prior to purchase, they rely on quality cues, which in our study is sports drinks packaging. By exposing themselves to packaging, the consumers can form various beliefs and quality judgements based on how they perceive it. For instance, a consumer may form a descriptive belief about the taste of a sports drink and categorize it if the packaging claims that the drink has a certain taste. However, according to Steenkamp (1990), the categorization of cues relies on their relationship with quality attributes, in our case that actual taste of the sports drinks instead of how a consumer imagines how it taste. A descriptive belief does therefore not tell much to the consumer about the actual quality attribute of the product. For this, informational and inferential belief formation is required (Steenkamp, 1990).

#### 2.2.4.2 Informational belief formation

This refers to the formation of quality attribute beliefs from an outside source such as friends, magazines and commercials (Steenkamp, 1990; Boyle, 2007). This suggests that the cues provided that leads to belief formation is not intimately linked with the product. The likelihood of consumers to process such information depends on a number of factor, a few of which are how credible the source is perceived to be, how comprehensive it is and the consumer involvement in absorbing the information (Steenkamp, 1990).

#### 2.2.4.3 Inferential belief formation

This is the part of Steenkamp's (1990) quality perception process that is most relevant to our study. Inferential belief formation describes how an individual is able to infer quality attributes and thereby a perception of quality from the cues that are available. Inferential belief formation depends on prior beliefs (Erickson et al., 1984; Alba & Hutchinson, 1987) that are utilized when exposed to a cue in order to form a quality perception and this involves the perceived



relationship between cues and attributes (Steenkamp, 1990). According to Zeithaml (1988), it is important to consider how consumers infer beliefs in their product evaluations, since an organization will have an interest in providing and retrieving the proper kind of information to consumers. Additionally, to understand how consumers infer beliefs is considered important since belief is an antecedent of attitude and behaviour (Lee, 2014). It is ascertained that prior beliefs usually exert more influence in inferential quality beliefs than new information, as opposed to descriptive and informational belief formation, which are dependent on other sources such as product cues and advertisements. Prior beliefs are elicited from memory and are often linked to the individual's cultural environment and stereotypes (Steenkamp, 1990). Till and Nowak (2000) describes the inferential belief formation as formed through the process of using learned relationships, so called associative learning. According to Steenkamp (1990), these relationships are particularly valid when there are no other informational elements present. For sports drinks and other products, this means that the packaging induces certain meanings in the minds of the consumers, based on their prior beliefs and how the packaging appears (Till & Nowak, 2000).

The appropriateness of the inferential belief formation with respect to the purpose of our study is strengthened by the fact that a concept called cue utilization process is applicable. Cues are stimuli in our surroundings that determine how an individual respond (Kotler et al., 2013). The cue utilization process is described as a way for an individual of obtaining information from the environment and to use it in cognitive processing (Koriat, 1997) and has been used in studies to depict participant's evaluative judgements towards products. This cognitive process is in some aspects similar to components included in perception process.

Steenkamp (1990) suggested, based on the work of other authors, that inferential belief formation and consequently quality perception is derived from several different quality cues instead of merely one. For instance, a consumer may rely on quality cues such as price, packaging and country of origin to infer quality attributes. However, since a product packaging can contain much information for a consumer to elicit a belief about a product, such as nutrients, colour and other information about the product, this will justify our choice to only use packaging design as a cue in our study. Furthermore, Silayoi and Speece (2007) concluded that consumer perceived packaging to be one of the most important brand choice criteria's and Gómez et al., (2015) argued that packaging could be seen as the main reason for a brands' existence. Another justification is the fact that packaging can for instance provide information about point of origin (Barber & Almanza, 2006), which in that sense makes it more comprehensible.

## 2.3 Perceived Value

An essential reason for including consumer perceived value when investigating purchase intention is due to the fact that authors such as Huang and Tai (2003) have suggested that perceived value is more comprehensive than perceived quality and that it represents what consumers consider when facing a purchase decision. Previous studies have suggested that perceived quality and perceived value are intimately linked (Soutar & Sweeney, 2001; Holbrook, 1999; Lapierre, 1999) to each other. However, before elaborating further on how this link is manifested, it is important to distinguish value from the concept of values. According to Holbrook (1999) *value* refers to an evaluative judgement an individual makes about something whereas *values* are norms, standards, rules and criteria's that are required in order to make an evaluative judgement. *Value* is therefore based more on individual interaction with an object or service while *values* are linked with beliefs individuals have (Bonillo & Fernández, 2007). For a sports drink company, it is in that sense important to understand their customers and their values in order to position themselves so that the customers find their offerings attractive enough to make a purchase.

Several different views have been presented on how the relationship between perceived quality and perceived value is manifested. For instance, Zeithaml (1988) contended that perceived value is a construct derived from how a consumer perceives quality and price. Value is in that sense regarded as a trade-off between what is received and what is given, which thereby according to the consumer determines the value. This view that consumers consider value as a trade-off between what is received and given have gained criticism for being too simplistic (Soutar & Sweeney, 2001; Babin et al., 1994; Bonillo & Fernández, 2007). The critique evolves around the fact that perceived value is regarded a higher-level construct which consists of several components that leads to an evaluative judgement about a service or product (Bonillo & Fernández, 2007). At the core of this line of thinking lies the notion that consumers do not merely consider the price they have to pay in relation to the benefit they receive, but rather that they might as well possess more profound motivations to display a certain behaviour (Bonillo & Fernández, 2007). Theories following such approach to perceived value have been defined as multi-dimensional (Bonillo & Fernández, 2007).

### 2.3.1 Perceived value model

Sheth et al., (1991) proposed a model which depicts several constructs of value, so called

consumption values, that impacts a consumer's tendency to buy or abstain from doing so. According to the authors, the model can enable the various forms of value to predict a certain behaviour as well as to describe and explain it. The model is based on three assumptions. (1) Consumer choices are based on several consumption values which they perceive. (2) the consumption values make different contributions to any choice situation. (3) The consumption values are all independent of each other.

The consumption values included in the model are functional, conditional, social, emotional and epistemic and is illustrated in figure 2 at the end of this section.

*Functional value.* This component is based on the utility a consumer perceives a product to possess and refers to its actual physical performance and whether or not it performs to an extent of what it is supposed to, but also price (Patterson & Spreng, 1997; Sheth et al., 1991). The obvious functionality for a sports drink would be the effect it gives from drinking it, which for instance could be increased performance prior to an exercise session or recovery afterwards.

*Conditional value.* A type of value whose impact depends on situational factors and circumstances that consumers are in (Sheth et al., 1991; Soutar & Sweeney, 2001). The value perception a consumer has regarding a product will therefore depend on the situation. This could affect the success of a sports drink in several ways, for instance depending on the presence of competing brands.

*Social value.* The social value component refers to consumer perceived utility that a product has in a social context in accordance with the reference group the consumer is associated with (Sheth et al., 1991) and what that product communicates to others (Soutar & Sweeney, 2001). Value is therefore derived based on demographical, socio economical and ethnical aspects and to what extent the product attributes are aligned with those. If it is trendy to drink a certain sports drinks brand, it might be consumed for the sake of social values, for instance in terms of what the consumer wants to communicate to the surroundings.

*Emotional value.* The perceived value a consumer experiences about a product depends on the level of emotional arousal it manages to evoke, which can be both positive and negative (Bonillo & Fernández, 2007). Soutar and Sweeney (2001) defined it as the enjoyment or pleasure derived from a product. In that sense, the higher the emotional response a consumer exhibits towards a product, the greater is the emotional value (Sheth et al., 1991). Packaging elements for a sports drink might evoke feelings that significantly might influence a consumer's judgement towards it

and thereby the purchase intention.

*Epistemic value.* This is the ability of a product alternative to induce curiosity into the consumer and satisfy a need for knowledge, surprise and novelty (Sheth et al., 1991; Soutar & Sweeney, 2001). This type of value is particularly apparent when a consumer is in any way unsatisfied with a product currently being used and therefore discovers value in a new offering (Sheth et al., 1991). For instance, if the packaging of sports drink manages to stand out in some way, that might evoke a consumer's curiosity, which might lead to purchase.

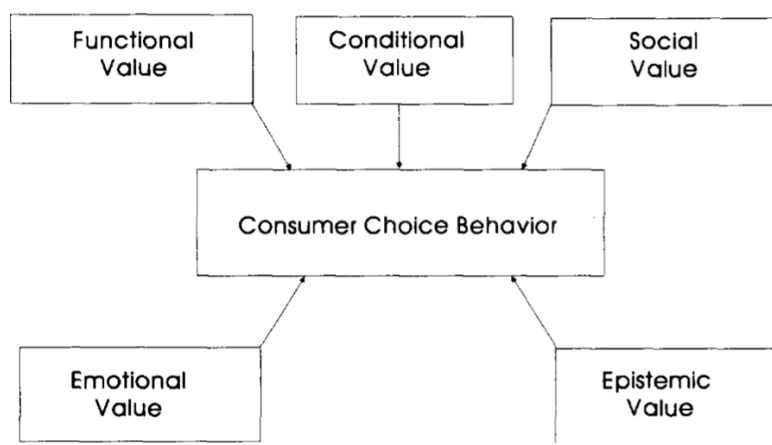


Figure 2. Model of consumer choice influences (Sheth et al., 1991).

According to Sheth et al., (1991), a consumer choice may be influenced by one or several of these consumption values. A consumer might for instance purchase a sports drink for the function it provides, which is increased performance, but also because of the social value it may bring when openly displaying the possession of the drink to the social surrounding.

### 2.3.2 Perceived value and sports drinks

Since there has been a shift in the definition of sports drinks and considering that the beverage industry in total is becoming increasingly innovative and catering to different categories (Nutritional Outlook, 2015; Packaging Digest, 2015), our study will include different sports drinks with different packaging design. The reason for this is an attempt to uncover findings that provides insights into whether or not different designs might have varying effect on consumers

purchase intentions, depending on different dimensions of perceived value. Furthermore, the brands that will be used in the study are not available in the Swedish market. In that way, the risk of participants having already been exposed to them decreases, which means that they will not have any preconceived ideas about them.

## 2.4 The Role of Packaging

Traditionally, packaging has been a method of protecting and transporting the product within (Prendergast & Pitt, 1996). Nowadays packaging serves a more sophisticated role. The consideration of packaging as a marketing tool is increasing among firms and organizations that are attempting to promote products (Brewie & Retter, 2000). According to Silayoi and Speece (2004), packaging commonly has a decisive influence in purchase decisions at point of sale and consequently becomes an essential function for the communication and branding process. Considering that packaging is crucial for attracting consumer attention (Löfgren & Witell, 2005), it is in that sense intimately linked to how the consumer will perceive the product. Visual elements of packaging are of significant importance, particularly in low involvement situations since they are manifestations of the products themselves. Consumers therefore tend to evaluate the products based on packaging and its design, especially when they are in stressful situations. In the context of our investigation, packaging is defined as the container that is in direct contact with the content (Ampuero & Vila, 2006), which in this case is the sports drink.

Silayoi and Speece (2004) argue that depending on how the consumers perceive the communication elements, it will have a corresponding effect on their intention to purchase or not. In this regard, the authors also contend that judgement evaluations regarding the quality of the product is reflected by the packaging. If the packaging characteristics reflects high quality in the minds of the consumers, the consumer judgement and perception about the product will correspond to that reflection and vice versa (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). The authors argue that packaging is of significant importance as a marketing communication instrument for Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) in particular since they are classified as low involvement products, considering there usually is no extensive information search prior to purchase involved and the risk of purchase is considered low. Packaging design and its elements therefore play a significant role in the sense that consumers tend to respond more affectively in their purchase decisions. Another importance of packaging according to Underwood et al., (2001) is its accessibility at point of purchase. Since the packaging of a product often represent the initial contact with a

consumer, they are more likely to evaluate the products based on the packaging. Packaging also provides a last resort for companies to persuade a customer at point of purchase (Ampuero & Vila, 2006). Therefore, all elements of packaging design play a role in convincing the consumer of which option to choose. In the following section we discuss the various elements of packaging design.

#### 2.4.1 Packaging design and elements

There are several definitions available of how to classify the various elements of packaging, although it is an inherently concept of multiple dimensions (Underwood et al., 2001). Although there are some variations in terms of approach, the definitions follow a similar pattern regarding colour, typography, shape etc. in this study we have included the definitions provided by Ampuero and Vila (2006) and Silayoi and Speece (2004), since they provide comprehensive overviews of packaging design.

Ampuero and Vila (2006) argued that packaging design constitute a base of primarily two components that contains the various elements. These components are defined as graphical and structural. Graphical elements included colour, typography, graphical shapes and images on the packaging. Structural components refer to the shape and size of the packaging. Although the definition by Silayoi and Speece (2004) differ in terms of components of packaging design, the elements themselves are similar. They separated the packaging elements into the components visual and informational (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). The visual component consists of the elements size, shape and graphics, of which the latter one includes colour, layout, illustrations and typography. In this component, pictures on packaging also fits in (Underwood et al., 2001). The informational component consists of product information and packaging technology. Since visual and informational components can be more easily applied to Steenkamp's (1990) model of perception process of quality, specifically with regards to descriptive, informational and inferential belief formation, we will mainly focus on the packaging design definition provided by Silayoi and Speece (2004) as a point of origin.



Figure 3. Packaging elements of a sports drink (Lekwadu, 2015).

#### 2.4.1.1 Graphics

Included here are layout, typography, colours, picture and these elements are according to Silayoi and Speece (2004) of particular importance in low involvement situations, where relatively little cognitive processing is required, since they tend to have an instant impact on consumers. Layout is essentially how the information is presented on packaging and typography is the arrangement of letter to make the information readable (Silayoi & Speece, 2007). Since the packaging often performs direct communication with the target consumer (Nancarrow et al., 1998), it is preferable to induce a lasting impact on the consumer by using an appropriate combination of graphical layout and colouring.

Silayoi and Speece (2004) also refer to time pressure as being a factor facing consumers at purchase decision. As mentioned earlier, perceived quality can be regarded as a subject- object interaction (Steenkamp, 1990), of which time pressure is a factor that is significant for how consumers perceive the quality of a product. The visual component of packaging design is therefore also significant in relation to how much time a consumer has to make a decision and companies must therefore design a package so that consumers get a favourable quality perception of a product in shortest time possible.

Ampuero and Vila (2006) suggested that different colours infer different meanings about the product to the consumer. For instance, they established that dark colours were linked to prestige and higher class while light colours were associated with accessibility and lower price. According to Richarsson et al., (1994) consumers rely on cues (in this case packaging) that they are able to assess quickly and the colour of a packaging must therefore correspond to some expectation about the product, in this case sports drinks.

Pictures serve a multitude of purposes. According to Underwood et al., (2001) pictures may function as a source of information to a consumer, regarding how a product feel and taste like. In the case of sports drinks, a picture might reveal to the consumer what taste it has as well as the purpose if the drinks. In that sense, consumers may also infer perceived judgement of the quality of the drink by attending to the pictures and according to Ampuero and Vila (2006), a picture might enable the consumer to position the product in a certain way. Bone and France (2001) argue that pictures may serve as a guideline or framework for consumers to interpret information on the packaging since pictures are often processed prior to other elements. A picture may therefore strengthen the informational stimuli. A sports drink might for instance have a picture of something related to physical activity, which thereby tell the consumer what kind of product it



is before processing verbal information.

#### 2.4.1.2 Size and shape

The size and shape of packaging affects the consumer assessment of the product in various ways Silayoi and Speece (2004). One of the more prominent utility consumers perceived these elements to have is usability. In this sense, the size and shape of packaging are considered on the basis of the convenience it brings about, for instance how easy they are to carry and handle as opposed to the graphics component, which is means of communication. According to Ampuero and Vila (2006), the size and shape of packaging also included the overall composition and thereby the material used when manufactured.

Consumers also used packaging to infer volume judgements (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). One significant finding involved the consumer belief that packages or containers that were more elongated contained more even though the volume was the same.

#### 2.4.1.3 Information

According to Kupiec and Revell (2001), visual components of packaging is less important when it comes high- involvement purchases since consumers usually require more information in order to make a judgement. As described earlier, drinks are usually considered to be Fast Moving Consumer Goods and have a low price and can thereby be classified as low- involvement products. For that reason, we will focus more heavily on the visual components of packaging in our study. However, consumers searching for and evaluating sports drinks are of course interested in finding out what the drinks contain and therefore must rely on informational elements.

According to Silayoi and Speece (2004) either excessive or insufficient information on a packaging may cause confusion for the customer. For instance, if a sports drinks product requires an extensive description with limited space on the package, the readability might be hampered (Silayoi & Speece, 2004) due to small wording. Silayoi and Speece (2007) included food labelling as an informational element consumers consider important for making careful decisions.

#### 2.4.1.4 Technology

According to Silayoi and Speece (2007), the technology aspect is often associated with the consumer's lifestyle since development in the area often originates from trends and consumer behaviour. Advances in the technology of packaging tends to influence the consumer to pay an incremental premium, which indicates higher quality (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). Moreover, technology of a packaging also refers to how the materials have been composed as well as other steps in the developing process (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). Silayoi and Speece (2004) argues that consumers are usually more willing to pay more for enhanced product value. In that regard, every technological improvement that add on to such value should be in favour for the consumer. For instance, a cyclist might favour a bottle technology that allows the cork screw to be sealed so that the person can drink throughout the entire exercise session.

### 2.5 The Conceptual Model Used in the Study

A conceptual model based on perceived quality process by Steenkamp (1990) (figure 1) has been constructed to illustrate how packaging as a cue may be used to infer perceived quality. But since perceived value is considered a higher level attribute since it manifests what consumers look for in a product (Bonillo & Fernández, 2007), perceived quality is not enough and therefore we have chosen to assemble our own model containing both concepts from Steenkamp (1990) and Sheth et al., (1991) to explain how they lead up to purchase or intention of doing so.

According to Steenkamp (1990), a consumer's evaluation of a quality attribute is significantly depending on to what extent it is perceived to lead to a desired consumption experience. Such notion implies that different motivations and reasons for consuming a product will result in corresponding judgements about perceived quality attributes and thereby quality cues. A consumer's overall perceived quality of a product, and more importantly how that individual evaluate quality cues, therefore will be guided by the motivation for consumption. For this reason, the model Sheth et al., (1991) provided is applicable since it presents several different values as reason for consumer behaviour, or more specifically purchase. Moreover, this notion aligns well with what we have previously concluded regarding value and quality. Since perceived value in the eyes of a consumer is seen as a higher motivation for purchase compared to perceived quality because perceived value is what the consumer immediately consider when faced with a purchase decision (Bonillo & Fernández, 2007). For the sake of this study, people might

have several motivations for consuming sports drinks than merely the functional value (hydration and increased performance), for instance social value. A consumer might be more prone to judge other packaging elements as important, in comparison if they buy for functional value, if they buy sports drinks to establish coherence to a certain social group.

Although Steenkamp (1991) contended that several cues are often involved in the belief formation process of perceived quality, it was also noted that fewer cues were involved in situations concerning image products, such as sports drinks, as well as in low- involvement situations. Even though this study merely includes one single cue, which is packaging, it has been pronounced as an important one in terms of affecting consumer decision at point of purchase (Löfgren & Witell, 2005).

There are several previous studies that have established a positive relationship between perceived quality and perceived value, although the perceived value component has ordinarily been treated as a trade- off between perceived benefits and sacrifices (Snoj et al., 2004; Aurier & de Lanauze, 2011). In a study conducted by Wang (2013), a combined definition of perceived value was proposed, in which a price component and one similar to this study was included. In several studies, perceived quality is seen as an antecedent of perceived value (Aurier & de Lanauze, 2011; Zeithaml, 1988; Wang, 2013), meaning that perceived quality, either as a single component or combined with others such as price, leads to perceived value. But as earlier described, consumers might evaluate quality cues, quality attributes and perceive quality differently depending on their reason for consumption, which can be connected to the model of value provided by Sheth et al., (1991) and more specifically, usage goals, which was earlier described. Therefore, we want to investigate these components in relation to each other instead of presuming that there exists dependence between them. Consequently, we have provided a model to illustrate this relationship, with a link to purchase intention (figure 4). It is adapted from the models of Sheth et al., (1991) and Steenkamp (1990). For starters, the cues component consists of packaging and the elements chosen for investigation. Since we have chosen to classify packaging as an extrinsic cue, the intrinsic cue belief component has been withdrawn from Steenkamp's (1990) original model. As described earlier, quality is in this context regarded as a judgement based approach, meaning it is what and how the consumer perceives it that determines the quality of sports drinks. Therefore, there is no established dimension in terms of what signifies quality of sports drinks, such as taste, nutrients or experienced physical performance, but that will rather have to be stated by the subjects during the sampling process, which is yet another justification for using

exploratory research as a method. We have furthermore added the value dimensions by Sheth et al., (1991) in the same cluster as personal and situational factors, which were earlier described, since those are based on individual preferences and reasons for consumption.

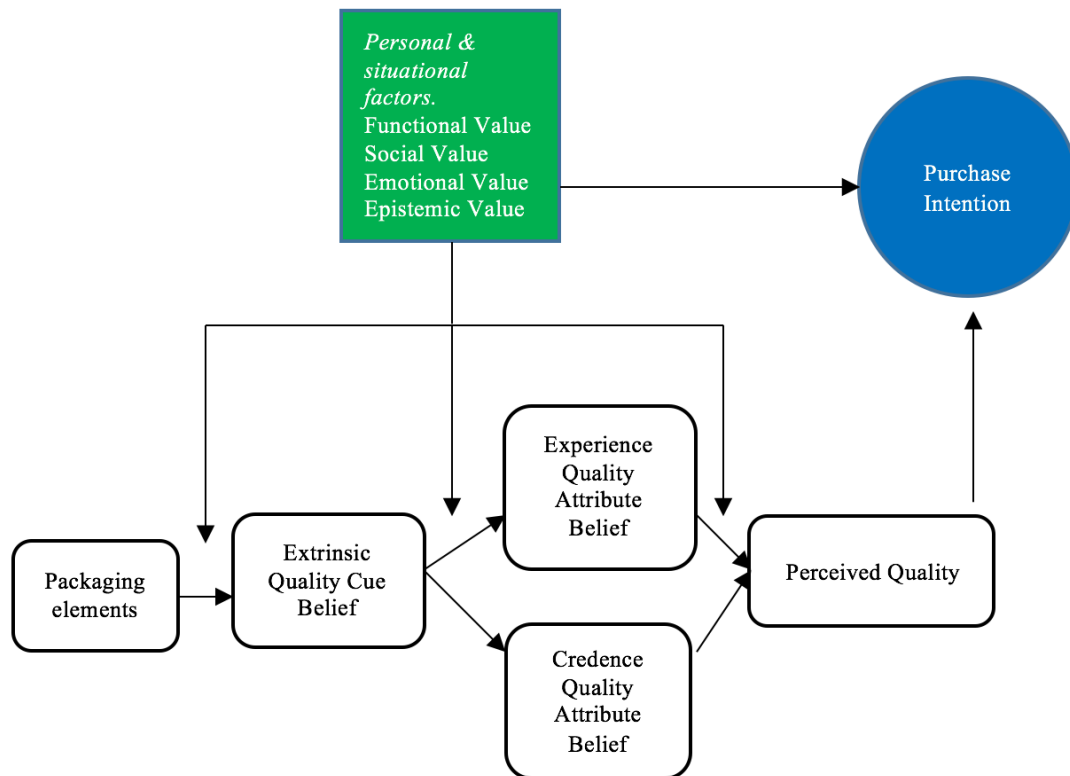


Figure 4. Conceptual model derived from Sheth et al., (1991) and Steenkamp (1990).

This chapter will introduce the approach and design of our study, as well as showcasing how data has been collected and why, and how the quality of the data has been assessed.

### 3.1 Thesis approach

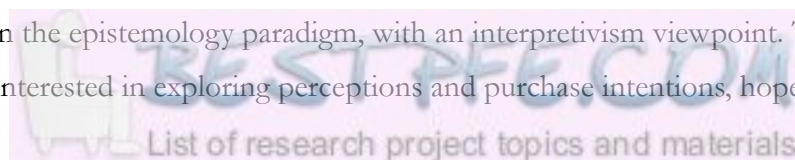
The purpose of this study is to explore the role of consumer perception of product packaging in the purchase intention of sports beverages. Since this approach investigates consumers' feelings, thoughts and motivations concerning the issue, the problem is being examined from a consumer point of view. Therefore, it is of vital importance to understand how consumers react, process and respond to different elements of packaging.

#### 3.1.1 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy a study adopts is a good indicator of how the authors view the world (Saunders, 2009). It has a significance not only on what is investigated, but also on the understanding of it. There are two major ways of viewing research philosophy; ontology and epistemology. The ontology viewpoint is about the nature of reality, and questions regarding the commitment held to particular views and how the world operates are raised by following this philosophy. Epistemology, however, cares about what constitutes knowledge considered acceptable in a field of study. Saunders (2009) describes two different type of researchers: the 'resources' researcher and the 'feelings' researcher.

The 'resources' researcher believes that reality is constituted by "real" objects, such as cars, phones and machines. These so called "real" objects exist separately to the researcher, leading to the researcher claiming that the collected data becomes more objective and less affected by bias. The 'feelings' researcher, however, cares more about attitudes and feelings of for example the workers that produce these "real" objects. This viewpoint would be seen as a social phenomenon which have no external reality by the 'resources' researcher. However, the authors argue that feelings of people can be measured, and has been frequently over time. It is an interpretivist philosophy viewpoint that the 'feelings' researcher, and this study, adopts (Saunders, 2009).

This study has chosen the epistemology paradigm, with an interpretivism viewpoint. This because the study is interested in exploring perceptions and purchase intentions, hopefully



leading to an understanding of the differences between humans as social actors. This also emphasizes that the authors are exploring consumers and their emotions to a certain product, instead of doing research about the product itself.

### 3.1.2 Research Design

There are two main approaches of research design, conclusive and exploratory. A conclusive design is used to test hypothesis in order to describe specific phenomenon's. An exploratory design, however, is rather used to explore and provide insights of those kinds of phenomenon's that are hard or impossible to measure with numerical figures. This means that exploratory research is more flexible than conclusive research, and in order to properly define a problem, further insight is needed (Malhotra et al., 2012).

When exploring perceptions, attitudes, opinions and alike, the usage of exploratory research design is recommended (Creswell, 2009). This means that qualitative methods are to prefer over quantitative methods in these cases, such as focus groups, observations or in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2009; Malhotra et al., 2012). As this study aims to explore consumer perceptions and purchase intentions, data has to be collected in a somewhat unstructured process, as these measurements are hard to measure numerically and cannot be used in hypothesis testing. In order to get useful insights in consumers' feelings, beliefs and opinions regarding product packaging of sports beverages, this study will follow the recommendations of Creswell (2009) and use an exploratory research design that can provide understanding of our research questions during the progression of the study. A qualitative 2-step research method will be used, namely focus groups along with semi-structured interviews, since this study aims to describe and understand the research problem, rather than measure it and test hypothesis, while the complement of the semi-structured interviews will give the moderators additional chances to probe for answers.

Abductive reasoning uses observations to generate a theory that accounts for the observations, in order to seek the best and simplest explanation (Elliot, 2008). Since the aim of this study is to see the impact of sports drinks packaging on consumer perceptions and purchase intentions, this study is an abductive one; by viewing packaging elements as certain conditions that meets a phenomenon, which is the perceptions and purchase intentions of the consumers, we can generate explanations from it (Barney & Hostelry, 2008).

### 3.2 Data Collection

Data has been collected through both secondary and primary data. Secondary data is data that is already existing, and thereby collected from someone else. This includes for example scientific articles, academic journals, company reports and information from media (Saunders, 2009). This collection stage is described in section 3.2.1.

Primary data however means that the researcher collects the data him-/herself through a data collection process, in order to answer the purpose of the study (Hox & Boeijs, 2005). Making sure that the data collection process has been conducted correctly and has given reliable data is of high importance (Saunders, 2009). This collection stage is described in section 3.2.2.

#### 3.2.1 Secondary Data

Secondary data has been gathered from scientific articles, academic books and journals, as well as company websites and reports. The data collected in this phase serve as foundation for the primary data collection and the research questions. The focus when searching for suitable secondary data were on perceived quality, perceived value and the role of packaging. Furthermore, key words such as sports drinks, packaging elements, perceptions and purchase intentions were used in order to find data that could help solving the research problem at hand. Databases used were the University library of Jönköping and Google Scholar.

#### 3.2.2 Primary Data- Focus Groups

In order to be provided with different insights and views of potential consumers, it is suitable to conduct open discussions using focus groups. What focus groups provides, and that other qualitative data collecting approached lack, is the possibility for the participants to build on each other's answers. This improved the richness of the data collected (Sincere, 2012). A focus group is a small group of participants discussing about a given subject, conducted by a moderator in a natural and non-structured manner (Malhotra et al., 2012). The ideal focus group is between five and ten people (Krueger & Casey, 2009), and are homogenous in terms of socio-economic and demographic characteristics (Stewart et al., 2007). If there are too many participants or are too different in regards to the characteristics listed above, there is a chance the focus group will be divided into different subgroups, and hence hindering the open discussion. Therefore, this study aims to have 5-7 participants in each focus group.

Six semi-structured interviews were also conducted in order to get more in-depth into certain aspects, first and foremost the aspect of packaging elements. It is a good complement to the focus groups, as one-on-one discussions could provide a deeper insight to certain answers and give the researchers more time to probe on certain important aspects. It is also easy to control, and while it limits the number of views and opinions since it only comes from one source, the interviewee, the focus groups still provide the range of views, making one-to-one interviews a suitable complement (Denscombe, 2008). Semi-structured interviews are used since the researchers used a list of questions that were to be covered, but probed differently depending on the answers from the participants, and therefore the discussion varied from interview to interview (Saunders, 2009). There is more emphasis on the elaborations of points of interest from the interviewee's point of view, and the answers therefore become open-ended (Denscombe, 2008).

#### 3.2.2.1 Sample

Since this study is focusing on consumer perceptions of sports beverage packaging, young, active and sports oriented participants were gathered to our focus groups and interviews. This because, according to PackagedFacts.com, in USA, men account for 64% of high volume usage of sports beverages; especially men under the age of 25 are most likely to consume sports beverages and will therefore be highly represented in this study.

In order to find the right people for the focus groups and interviews, non-probability sampling has been used in this study. The authors have chosen participants, which means this relies on the researchers' personal judgements (Malhotra et al., 2012). If the aim of this study were to target a sample that would be representative to a wider population, probability sampling techniques would be preferable, however this is not aligned with the purpose of this study. Instead, the authors selected those participants to be included in the final sample as they saw fit regarding who would be representative of the target group. This approach is called judgemental sampling. The results of this technique depends solely on the judgement of the researchers (Neuman, 2006). This is a quick and cost-efficient method that the authors felt was convenient as representation of a broader population is not required in this study.

Based on the desired characteristics described in previous paragraphs, meaning this study aim to target men and women under the age of 25, potential participants were screened. The participants that ended up being selected in the final sample were groups and interview subjects



the authors believed both would give insightful discussions including various perspectives and met the criteria's. Within the final sample, the focus groups were put together so that a mixture of personal characteristics was evident.

#### 3.2.2.2 Choice of Questions

How to formulate the questions that should be used in the focus groups and interviews are of vital importance, as it is the questions that will drive the discussions and interactions among the participants (Stewart et al., 2007). In the semi-structured interviews, the same questioning guide will be used, but more emphasis will be put on probing deeper for each participant's answers. A set of questions have been designed by the authors, based on the purpose of the research and the research questions. The goal of the questions is to understand the perceptions of the participants regarding sports drinks packaging, and how this does or does not lead to purchase intentions. This also links back to the research questions and purpose of this study. The questions have been divided into three sections, where the first section is an introduction to the topic that is about to be discussed, and each remaining section is connected to a research question.

The first section introduced the participants to the topic, by asking them if they consume sports drinks, how often and at what occasions. This will hopefully set their minds in a good state for discussion, and give them encouragement to start thinking about the topic in order to create better discussions in the latter stages of the topic guide.

The first research question, "What is the role of packaging elements regarding consumer perceptions of sports beverages?", links to the second section of the topic guide. Here the participants were able to discuss what elements of packaging caught their attention, how it affects their perceptions of price and quality, as well as general questions that ask the participants what they associate with the product at hand, sports drinks. They was in this section also able to discuss three different brands of sports drinks not yet launched on the Swedish market, in order to materialize the discussion and obtain their different thoughts on the different packaging.

The third section of the topic guide links to the second research question, "How does consumer perceptions of sport beverages link to their actual purchase intentions?" In this section, the participants discussed how their perceptions lead to purchase intentions, as the focus lied on what packaging elements influenced them to purchase the sports drinks. Moreover, they were asked to elaborate further if their perceptions are altered depending on what type of sports drink

they are buying, and if they buy other products as substitutes to sports drinks instead.

### 3.2.2.3 Ethical Considerations and Focus Group Execution

According to Malhotra et al. (2012), participants' identities in a focus group should be kept anonymous. Following this guideline, all the names of the participants are fictional in this study, in order to keep their contact information confidential. A smartphone recorder was used during the focus group discussions in order to capture all the information gathered, something that the participants were made aware of and to which they consented.

It is important that the participants in the focus groups and interviews feel relaxed and positive. Therefore, the choice of location is important, as the location has an impact on what atmosphere the focus group will have (Stewart, 2007; Malhotra et al. 2012). Therefore, the focus groups and interviews took place in the homes of the moderators, in order for the participants to feel relaxed and furthermore not be surrounded with disturbance or distractions. The authors chose to conduct the focus groups in Swedish, since all the participants have Swedish as their native language. If the participants get to discuss matters in a language they might not fully master, the results from the focus group as well as the results from the interviews might be affected negatively.

In order to ensure that the questions in the focus groups and interviews were constructed well, do not require too much effort from the participants and provide information that is relevant, a pre-test should be conducted (Malhotra et al., 2012). This will decrease the probability of drawbacks linked to misunderstandings and confusion of the questions used in the focus groups. The sample selected for this pre-test should represent the same target group as the planned focus groups and interviews, and the pre-test should be conducted under the same circumstances (Malhotra et al., 2012; Stewart et al., 2007).

The pre-test was conducted using five people the authors know well. They were in the ages of 20-23, and hence met the requirements for being in the same target group as the 'real' participants in the actual focus groups. The results from the pre-test showed that the questioning guide was a strong foundation for discussion, showcasing that the questions worked well and created good discussions among the participants.

#### 3.2.2.4 Choice of Brands

Since this study is focusing on the perceptions and purchase intentions of sports drinks packaging in general, it was important that the participants in the focus groups and interviews could discuss sports drinks that had not yet been launched on the Swedish market. In order to follow the purpose of this study, there was focus on finding three brands with different types of packaging, making it easier for the participants to spot the differences and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the different packaging designs.

The first brand used was Overly, a British sports drink brand. On their website [overlywater.com](http://overlywater.com), the drink is described as a *"pure, unflavoured water with performance-level electrolytes for superior hydration"*. The brand claims to being able to hydrate someone with 40% less fluid than actual water. The packaging of Overly is a clear see-through bottle with little text or information on it. It is very much alike a bottle of regular water, except for the brand logo on the bottle.

The second brand used was BodyArmor, a sports drink brand based in New York. The brand describes their drink as gluten and caffeine free drink with plenty of vitamins and electrolytes in it, according to their website [drinkbodyarmor.com](http://drinkbodyarmor.com). They also claim that there are no artificial ingredients in it, and that it contains no significant amount of saturated fat. BodyArmor's packaging is a colourful bottle that comes in many different colours and flavours. Most of their drinks have plenty of fruit on their packaging, along with their brand name printed with big letters in the middle of the bottle.

The third and final brand used was US based LifeAid, and in particular their drink FitAid. On their website, LifeAid describes FitAid as a drink that supplements different ingredients for muscle recovery, joint health, endurance and cardiovascular support, among many more. The packaging design on FitAid is different from the other two drinks described previously in terms of technology, as this is packaged in a can instead of a bottle. It is a white and black can, with a lot of text and information on it. The logo is filled in with red, making it stand out from the rest of the markings on the bottle. There is also a big white cross on the can, as it is in their brand logo as well.

### 3.3 Assessing the Quality

In order to establish the trustworthiness of qualitative data, Williams and Morrow (2009) suggest

that there are first and foremost three categories that must be attended. These are integrity of the data, balance between reflexivity and subjectivity and clear communication of findings.

### 3.3.1 Integrity of Data

This category refers to the dependency or adequacy of the data, meaning to what extent the study can be replicated by other researchers. This study aims to give researchers data which can be replicated by carefully describing the entire focus group discussions in the appendix, as well as describing the different sports drinks brands used when facilitating the discussions.

Researchers should also show evidence that the quality and quantity of data gathered are sufficient for the study (Williams and Morrow, 2009). Many solutions to the problems of adequacy of data are dependent on the judgement of the researcher. Therefore, the authors aimed to have diverse perspectives when analysing the data. This is something novice researchers might struggle with. Also, diversifying the sample of participants in the focus groups and interviews, in terms of demographics and/or viewpoints, will help provide richer data (Williams and Morrow, 2009).

In order to ensure that the study obtains enough quantity of data, additional focus groups and interviews were conducted until a point was reached where additional focus groups would not lead to new information or insights. Some researchers suggest that the sample should be analysed as a whole by grouping the responses of the participants in the focus groups (e.g. Williams et. al., 1998), whereas other grounded theorists rather focus on the uniqueness of each individual's responses, for example (e.g. Morrow and Smith, 1995). This study aims to present sample as a whole in order to locate frequencies in the answers and discussions of the different individuals.

### 3.3.2 Balance Between Reflexivity and Subjectivity

Another part of establishing the trustworthiness of the qualitative data gathered is to consider what the participants say in relation to how the researchers interpret what is said, and this is heavily affected by reflexivity and subjectivity (Williams and Morrow, 2009). This study aimed to achieve a good balance between these by always making sure they understood what the participants in the focus groups meant. Sometimes the moderator had to ask something twice in order to comprehend and keep up with the discussion, in order to decrease the probability of imbalance. Furthermore, after the focus groups had been taken place, some participants were

contacted again in order to make sure the translation from Swedish to English were made in a proper way, without altering their viewpoints.

### 3.3.3 Clear Communication and Findings

The last step of establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative data in a study, is to be able to communicate the findings and argue how these matter (Williams and Morrow, 2009). The reader should understand what is being said in the study and be convinced that the qualitative data gathered can support the interpretations and conclusions made. In order to successfully do this, the authors have tried to answer the study's research questions using the data gathered together with previous studies done in similar fields. This study also contains limitations and recommendations for further research, to show what needs to be done to explore this subject more extensively.

## 3.4 Data Analysis

In order to analyse the data that has been collected, the authors chose an approach described by Malhotra et al., (2012) which includes four steps: data assembling, data reducing, data displaying and data verifying. However, the last step of verifying the data where not used, as another method described in section 3.3. were used.

### 3.4.1 Data Assembly

The step of assembling refers to the collection of data from varying sources. These sources could be diagrams, notes from the focus groups and interviews, recordings, reflections made by the authors, and so on (Malhotra et al., 2012). In this study, the main approach for the assembling of data has been the usage of focus group and interview notes.

### 3.4.2 Data Reduction

This step is about the handling of the assembled data, meaning the structuring and disposing of it. As the transcripts most often are the primary data source in qualitative studies, the process of transcribing them is of vital importance. All information that is gathered may not be relevant to the purpose of the study, and therefore the authors must reduce and dispose of data that is not meaningful. In this process you also find the most meaningful parts of data collected. This is

called coding, where you break down data in different categories before attaching references to them (Malhotra et al., 2012).

Great emphasis was placed on transcribing in order to ensure that the focus groups and interviews that were conducted in Swedish were translated into English without changing meaning or relevance of what was said. When all the recordings were collected into writing, data reduction was the next step.

### 3.4.3 Data Display

In this step, the information that has been collected in the data assembly and data reduction sections are summarized and presented. This will give an overview of what connections have been made between the categories that were created in the coding phase. Malhotra et al. (2012) suggest that a matrix or a spreadsheet should be used for displaying the data. By using a spreadsheet, information gathered from the focus groups can be inserted into cells in the spreadsheet. This method is a good way of presenting the data visually, as it gives an opportunity to spot differences and connections between the columns. This is why the authors of this study constructed a spreadsheet. The coding categories were drawn from the focus groups, where one section handled perception while the other handled purchase intention. This spreadsheet was a good tool when analysing the data in the later stages of this study.

### 3.5 Evaluation of the Method

There are potential drawbacks that have to be considered when adopting focus groups for data collection, primarily moderation bias. The direction of questions as well as the quality of results are directly affected by the moderator's skills to maintain the discussion flowing (Stewart et al., 2007; Malhotra et al., 2012). Since the authors are not highly trained moderators, this moderation bias might be occurring to some extent. Furthermore, focus groups lead to conclusions based on a specific target group, in this case young, active people, meaning that it is more difficult to generalize the results as other quantitative methods can do (Malhotra et. al., 2012).

Even though moderation bias might occur, the interactive data gathering provided by focus groups provides a natural, simple way to get in depth with potential consumers. In comparison to in depth-interviews, this study aims to let the focus groups help the participants take advantage of each other's ideas and viewpoints, which leads to more extensive and interesting results than

single one-on-one interviews would provide. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are used as a complement in order to get more in-depth with participants, especially regarding the aspect of packaging elements. Also, in order to ensure that the participants fully grasp the concept of different packaging, visual stimuli was shown as a base for discussions.

## 4 Findings from the focus groups

In this section, the findings from the focus groups and semi-structured interviews will be brought up and presented, firstly by going through each focus group, and thereafter the interviews. Each segment is structured into three different themes; general discussion, three different brands, and purchase intentions.

### 4.1 Focus Group 1

The first focus group consisted of 5 participants, 1 female (L1) and 4 males (L2, L3, L4, L5). They were all in between the ages of 21-24. The session lasted for 47 minutes.

#### 4.1.1 General Discussion

In the first section, the participants were asked general questions about packaging, quality and sports drinks. This in order for them to get a sense of what the topic was all about, and to get the discussions flowing. Firstly, they were asked if packaging design was important to them when conducting a purchase. The group agreed on it being important; *"if the packaging of a sports drink is good looking, at least I get more inclined to buy it"* - L2, *"a nice packaging design radiates quality, thought and effort"* - L3, *"a nice bottle makes a drink look tastier"* - L4. However, two of the participants expressed that they would not pay more just because of the packaging design.

The discussion continued towards quality in general, and the participants were asked to define the term quality using their own opinions of what it means to them. This lead to comments such as *"I immediately think of durability. Like, things that does not break as easily as things with less quality"* - L1, *"the service or product delivers up to my standard"* - L4, and *"the product is durable and pricy, as well as trustworthy"* - L2. Regarding sports drinks, everyone agreed that the factors which makes up a high quality sports drink is taste, that it gives energy and that it looks appealing.

When asked about if they could think of any reasons to consume sports drinks other than fulfilling a certain function when exercising, the participants' answers were mixed. Taste, aggressive marketing, peer pressure and everyday life usage were all reasons mentioned. A small discussion between two participants took place regarding whether or not aggressive marketing really could make people buy sports drinks, where L3 stated that *"aggressive marketing could get badly*



*informed people to buy it”, “people generally do not care what they stuff their bodies with”. The group agreed that depending on what reasons consumers buy the sports drinks for, they evaluate quality differently. “Those people that just use it in their everyday life probably use it as a thirst quencher, and maybe as a substitute for coffee as they want to consume caffeine. But those that use it when they exercise probably looks for something that helps their progress, like nutrition” - L2. The first part ended by all the participants agreeing that bottled sports drinks are to prefer over canned sports drinks.*

#### 4.1.2 Three Different Brands

In the second section, three pictures of sports drinks not yet launched in Sweden were shown to the participants. These three brands were Overlywater, BodyArmor and FitAid. Regarding Overlywater, there were mostly positive remarks to it. *“The positive thing about Overly is that you can see the content. It radiates confidence, and it looks really fresh” - L2. Comments on FitAid said it looked professional and that the brand wanted to appear healthy based on its packaging design. Even though BodyArmor was quite left out in the discussions, one out of the five participants said he would most likely buy BodyArmor if he had to choose between the three alternatives. “BodyArmor seems like a tasty drink though [...] I just want a drink that tastes good” - L5. FitAid was also chosen by one participant, while the remaining three participants would most likely buy Overlywater. “Overly looks way fresher and healthier than the other two alternatives” - L4.*

The moderators continued by asking what packaging elements are a sign of quality for the participants. Also here, the responses were quite widespread and mixed. Some elements mentioned were colour, size and overall graphical appearance. *“Colour is extremely important. The sports drinks should not have too many bright colours, that just signals that they want to be seen” - L3. “Size is important as well. You do not want a too big of a bottle. It should not take up too much space” - L1. “The first thing you see is the appearance of a drink, so the graphical part is the most important one” - L5. L5 also argued that information on the packaging was not something people tend to care about at first glance. L3 countered this statement by claiming that he cares about the information on the bottle, but did not argue it further. The second part was summed up by a final statement from L2 regarding how packaging elements can matter differently depending on what reason you have when buying sports drinks. “Someone that buys a drink just for show will probably care more about the graphical part, while someone that for example is out jogging wants a better technological solution, like choosing bottles instead of cans” - L2. The other participants agreed to this, and L3 closed the question by stating; “L2 pretty much summed it up.”*

#### 4.1.3 Purchase Intention

In the final section of the focus group, the participants were asked about how packaging design influence their purchase intentions. Something everyone agreed on was that packaging is a big influencing factor when conducting purchases of sports drinks; *"When it comes to sports drinks, packaging matters a lot. You want a drink that looks both tasty and fresh"* - L4, *"I would say that the packaging design controls about 80% of my willingness to buy a product like this. The combination thirst and design usually does it for me"* - L2. However, L3 added that he always check the information on the drink even though he likes the packaging design before conducting the purchase.

The last question asked the participants what packaging elements on the three sports drinks shown previously had the most as well as least effect on their purchase intentions. Also here Overlywater got positive responses; *"Just look at Overlywater. A simplistic bottle that does not try to hard to be seen on the shelf, easier to reach a big target group. Not a bunch of knick-knacks all over the bottle. Minimalistic packaging designs would have the best impact on me"* - L3, *"I think Overlywater has done a good job, like T says. Looks fresh, and that is what I want when I buy a drink."* - L4.

#### 4.2 Focus Group 2

The second focus group also consisted of 5 participants, 1 female (D1) and 4 males (D2, D3, D4, D5). Here the age span was between 19-24. The session lasted for 44 minutes.

##### 4.2.1 General Discussion

Also the second focus group discussed general questions about quality, packaging and sports drinks in the first part. When asked about the importance of packaging design, the second focus group were not as unanimous as the first one. While D1 argued that an attractive design would give her an incentive to buy the product, D3 said this was not the case for him, as he cares more about the price of the product. *"As a poor student, I would not pay more just for good looking packaging designs. I would go for the cheapest alternative"* - D3. Also D2 was hesitant to whether packaging matters; *"If you already know the product, then you do not care as much about the packaging"*.

When asked for their own opinions of what quality is to them, the participants gave answers such as *"high standards. If I think something is of high quality, then it meets my standards"* - D2, *"something that is durable or contains a lot of good things"* - D1, *"quality can also be that you have put your effort into something"*

*in order to make it good. Everyone have heard the term quality before quantity” - D5, and “quality for me is a good product or service. Something that delivers” - D4. D3 mentioned that you usually pay more for higher quality, but D1 did not agree to this; “I do not really agree with D3, quality does not have to be expensive”. D2 agreed with D1; “Sometimes the price goes up just because people perceive the quality to be higher than it actually is”. Regarding sports drinks, the participants said that quality is determined by taste, number of healthy ingredients and freshness. D2 however seemed to be a bit reluctant to the idea of sports drinks in general; “I am always sceptical about these sort of drinks, they tend to be unhealthier than one might think”.*

The moderators asked the participants if they could suggest reasons people buy sports drinks other than using it as a supplement when exercising. Both D5 and D1 said that taste was a big reason; *“I can buy it sometimes just because I am thirsty and it looks good. When you see Powerade for example, you always get thirsty. Maybe it is because of the blue liquid, and that I know I like the taste” - D5, “I agree with D5, because some think they are tasty” - D1.* Also here scepticism was shown towards sports drinks, as two participants, D1 and D2, said that they do not believe in sports drinks in general. This could be seen in the answers of the next question as well, regarding people evaluating quality differently depending on the reason for their purchase; *“I think those that exercise but are not as well-read into this matter drinks sports drinks, while those that are more serious and exercise a lot mix and fix a lot themselves instead” - D1, “obviously the sports drinks are not worthless. I just think it is an expensive alternative for water” - D2.* Adding to the discussion of the question at hand, D3 added; *“I know someone who buys sports drinks just for show, to look athletic. He never works out, but he always brings sports drinks to our classes. And he always chooses the best looking bottles. I do not think he cares about what is in the drink, but rather the packaging design instead”.* In the same manner as the first focus group, this focus group also ended the first section by agreeing on the fact that bottled sports drinks are to prefer over canned ones.

#### 4.2.2 Three Different Brands

In the second section, the three images of sports drinks not yet launched in Sweden were shown to the participants. Overlywater did not get as much praise as it got in the first focus group; *“Overly looks boring, just like regular water” - D1.* Only one participant said that Overlywater looked like a fresh drink. Instead, the opinions about the three sports drinks were divided. D5 stated *“BodyArmor looks like a really sweet drink, not something you use as a sports drink. FitAid I think has the best packaging design, it looks professional”.* Even though D5 previously agreed on the fact that bottled sports drinks are better than canned, he would still want to try out the canned FitAid

because of curiosity. D4 argued that he thinks the bright colours on the packaging of BodyArmor is positive for them, as it gets spotted more easily. However, D1 seemed vary of the size of the drink; *"In this picture BodyArmor looks small though. If you buy a sports drink, you want a lot of it"*.

When asked about what the three different brands try to achieve with their packaging designs, a lot of different ideas were mentioned by the participants; *"Overly wants to appear natural. BodyArmor wants to appear tasty. I think FitAid wants to appear like a cool drink"* - D1, *"I think Overly want people to think of fresh water, and then connect it to their drink. It might speak to those on the fence, that does not know if they want to buy a sports drink or not"* - D2, *"FitAid looks really professional. It has a lot of text on the can, which I presume is information about the drink's benefits. It is too bad it is a can instead of a bottle"* - D4. D1 and D5 discussed whether or not the bright colours of different fruits on BodyArmor's packaging was an attempt to appear healthy, or draw the attention of younger consumers, as D1 thought it looked like a drink that contains a lot of sugar. D5 argued; *"I do not think that stops people from buying it. Fruit is colourful, people might relate a bright red to healthy strawberries in the summer, for example"*. Even though Overlywater did not get as much praise as in the first focus group, most of the participants still would most likely buy Overlywater. However, D5 said that he would buy FitAid instead of Overlywater if it was to be packaged in a bottle, furthermore showcasing the importance of the correct packaging technology.

D2 stated that the packaging elements which were signs of quality for him when it comes to sports drinks are *"classy bottles with information on it that explains why the sports drink is good for you"*. D3 added; *"I want to have heard about it before as well. If I see a totally new brand, I would not be convinced of it being a qualitative drink"*. The second section was summed up by D1 arguing how packaging elements matter differently depending on the reason for purchasing them; *"If you care about design and packaging, then you want the bottle to look nice. But if you like the taste and ingredients, then I do not think it matters that much how the packaging looks. It is more important at first sight, when the company wants you to spot their drink and buy it"*. The other participants agreed, and the moderators moved on to part three of the focus group.

#### 4.2.3 Purchase Intention

The moderators here asked the participants what role packaging has on their purchase intentions. Two participants mentioned price as a more important factor; *"I would care more about the price though. I do not want to pay a huge amount of money for a nice looking packaging design"* - D4, *"I agree with*

*D4, price is more important than the packaging design. I cannot afford spending too much money on pretty packaging*” - D3. D2 however argued that he thought they were more affected by packaging than they said. *”I doubt you would buy a Coca Cola that were pink and said ”Girly Cola”*”, - D2. D5 said he would not mind trying out a drink like the one D2 described, but also agreed with D2 regarding the fact that packaging is an important factor on purchase intentions, especially when he spots a brand new product.

When asked about what packaging elements in the previous pictures of the three sports drinks that had the most and least effect on their purchase intentions, the participants had mixed answers. *”BodyArmor does a good job of persuading me, since they have a lot of fresh fruit on their packaging”* - D1, *”On the picture, FitAid looks like a cold, carbonated drink, and if it is healthy as sports drinks should be, then sign me up. BodyArmor has too many bright colours, I would say, but maybe that attracts more younger people”* - D5, *”FitAid has a lot of text and information on the can, as well as a red cross in their logo. They convey a professional message”* - D4. D1 said she thought Overlywater had a boring packaging design; *”there is almost nothing on the bottle”*. D2 disagreed; *”That is what I like about Overly. It looks classy and fresh, just like regular water. I would say that both BodyArmor and FitAid have too much stuff on their packaging”*.

### 4.3 Focus Group 3

The third focus group consisted of 9 participants, 3 females (P1, P2 and P3) and 6 males (P4, P5, P6, P7, P8 and P9). They were in the age span of 22-28. The session lasted for 42 minutes.

#### 4.3.1 General Discussion

When asked about the importance of packaging design, all participants in the third focus group agreed upon it being of high importance; *”Yes absolutely, you chose what appear to be good”* - P1, *”Yes, it looks reliable because packaging is the first thing you see before you try it”* - P2. Additionally, some of the participants automatically associated good looking packaging with product quality; *”Packaging is often a form of quality sign. If it is a very cheap product, it is usually reflected in the packaging”* - P4, *”You assume that if they have the money to spend on a good packaging, they will have money to include good ingredients in the product as well”* - P1.

When the discussion continued towards quality, and how the participants perceive that term, P4 stated *”added value, more than what you normally get”*. Other participants stated that quality meant

fulfilled expectations, and P4 argued *“yes, expectations are probably important, that they are fulfilled and thereby becomes signs of quality”*. One of them referred to origin of the product as a sign of quality; *“But for instance, if you are going to shop for meat and similar, you think of Swedish meat that is something of decent quality. If it originates from Belgium or pork from Denmark, you might think that it is not that good quality”* - P1. It was also suggested that there might be different aspects of a product that consist of quality, while others do not; *“It could also be that there are very good things included, but the taste might not be of very good quality. The product itself might not be associated with quality but it might still be good for you. It might live up to expectations if you expect it to be good”* - P5. Furthermore, overall transparency and credibility was interpreted as a sign of quality; *“but maybe also regarding packaging, that it shows on the packaging what the product actually is. So that they are not trying to hide it. Otherwise it may not be so good quality”* - P5, *“important that it looks credible”* - P2. Regarding the quality of sports drinks, factors such as healthy content, practical usability and price were mentioned; *“Content is very important, that you get what you want out of the drink. Do you want a recovery or do you want a boost, the packaging comes in and is important. So content is important”* - P6, *“If you are out biking, you might want to have something that is easy to grip and place in the carrier so that it does not slip away”* - P3, *“for instance, BCAA cannot be cheap but it is going to cost you. Price also reflects the quality, for instance if it is cheap you might become sceptical”* - P6.

The moderators continued by asking if the participants could figure out another reason to buy sports drinks rather than using it for exercising reasons. The main theme from the answers from this topic were that people buy it for status, to look athletic and make a statement; *“to look sporty. Even though you might not train so much, you know that the one who do are awesome [...] you often see, especially girls, that they are posting pictures on Instagram and Snapchat of themselves holding a Celsius and say that they are gearing up for the gym. Then you in some way want to display that you are consuming it”* - P1, *“It is a little bit about the phenomenon surrounding the tennis- week in Bastad, in the sense that people order in extremely expensive Champagne to project that they are very wealthy, when they in reality are working in a storage facility year round and then spend all their savings in one week”* - P4.

#### 4.3.2 Three Different Brands

For the second part of the focus group, the participants were asked to look at the photos of three different sports drinks, which were used as a frame of reference to facilitate the discussion of what packaging elements of a sports drink signals quality. Similar answers to the two previous focus groups were to be found here, regarding all three of the sports drinks. Overlywater got praise for having a clean packaging design, while BodyArmor were perceived by all the

participants as a sweet drink that contains a lot of sugar; *"Yes a lot of sugar. If I were to see it on the shelves I would not think of sports drink or something healthy"* - P1. When it came to FitAid, P7 argued *"FitAid's packaging looks quite messy to me"*. P4 disagreed; *"I like it. It looks medical in some way. It generates a medical impression"*.

The overall expression throughout the entire group was that Overlywater was the healthiest and hence most qualitative sports drink out of the three. The fact that Overlywaters packaging clearly shows the content by using a see-through bottle, and furthermore stating what the drink is on the front of the bottle, were important factors for the participants. P2 stated *"if the packaging is not transparent, you get sceptical"*. The participants perception of Overlywater as having clean design was related to Apple; *"regarding Overly, I can promise you visit Apple headquarter, the fridges will be stuffed with drinks like these. It looks clean and safe. [...] the design is clean"* - P4. P2 perceived it to be more exclusive than other bottled water brands and that the name Overly alluded to that. Bodyarmor furthermore appeared to be perceived as lower quality and something you can buy as a multi-pack at a low-price store; *"it feels very cheap, very typical American"* - P7. P2 added; *"It feels very childish, because of the colours. It appears to target small boys or girls"*.

#### 4.3.3 Purchase Intention

The participants were asked what about packaging design might attract their interest and purchase when browsing convenient and grocery stores. P4 indicated that it depends on what kind of product it is. Another reasoning was *"if you have never bought a commodity before then I think the design of packaging is important. Also how convenient the product is to handle and pack"* - P7. Another answer indicated brand loyalty; *"if I have a certain product that I have bought before, and then another product comes out with another design. Even if it looks appealing, I think I would have went gone with the product I have used before. Because I know what I get"* - P2. Another aspect that was raised as important regarding packaging was transparency, that you see what you get; *"then I know that there is good stuff inside"* - P9. Also, packaging design were considered more important for more luxury products; *"if you are going to choose a bag of chips, then you stand there and check if there are new ones and which ones look good. In that case packaging is very much decisive"* - P1. When buying product as gifts, such as chocolate, P5 argued that packaging in that case almost becomes more important. In conclusion, the group agreed that evaluation of packaging is different depending on the purpose of the purchase.

Lastly, the participants were asked what packaging elements would have the largest as well as the

least impact on their purchase decision. P6 expressed willingness to buy Overly since it has simple design that also correspond with simple content of the drink itself, while the other designs were considered too complicated. Bodyarmor on the other hand had a more negative impact since its perceived relation to high sugar content. There was also some scepticism expressed regarding the perceived price of Overly, based on the impression of the packaging. In more general terms, colour and text (information) was by several participants considered the most important elements to when it comes to impressions, closely followed by the size and shape of packaging, which referred to practical usability in terms of how easy it is to drink. This factor was one that was perceived to be in favour for Overly since it has an resealable cap. This was also perceived as a considerable disadvantage for Fitaid, since it is a can that is not able to reseal; *"this FitAid you have to drink immediately, or else you might spill it"* - P2.

#### 4.4 Findings from the Semi- Structured Interviews

In the semi-structured interviews, the same question guide was used, but more emphasis was put on probing, and especially digging deeper into the aspect of how the interviewees perceive different packaging elements on sports drinks. The six participants were between the ages of 19-26, 3 females (T1, T4 and T6), and 3 males (T2, T3 and T5). The responses from the participants has been integrated into the same themes as used in the focus group sections, however the participants were interviewed individually. Each interview were completed within a time span of 40-60 minutes.

##### 4.4.1 General Discussion

Four out of the six participants mentioned durability as a sign of quality for products in general; *"durable, I think. Good, good stuff"* - T2, *"Durable, good design, and good material in it"* - T3, *"Quality is a product that I feel is durable, depending on what it is for a product. It should not break after a couple of weeks"* - T4, *"When things reach a certain durability, and does not get old and broken"* - T6. Regarding the quality of sports drinks, every participant mentioned that it should fulfil a certain function, as in making you more alert or contributing as a complement to exercise. This factor seemed to be more important than the taste of the drink.

T1, T2 and T3 all mentioned image as a factor that make people that do not buy sports drinks for the sake of fulfilling a function while exercising, buy sports drinks; *"it has to do with image"* - T1, *"it has become an image thing. Sports drinks are not just for training freaks, but also for everyone that wants a fitness*



*image. You want to express yourself as a healthy person. It is kind of like an accessory” - T2, “it might be “hip”, modern to buy it” - T3. T4 and T6 mentioned taste as the main reason; “Many probably buy it because they think it is tasty. They like the taste” - T4, “Some think it tastes good, and that it is better than normal soda. So it is for general pleasure” - T6. All the participants said that bottles are to prefer over cans when it comes to sports drinks, because of the technological aspects, being able to reclose the drink.*

#### 4.4.2 Three Different Brands

Just as the participants in the focus groups, the interviewees were shown the three sports drinks not yet launched on the Swedish market, Overlywater, BodyArmor and FitAid. The drinks were perceived in similar ways by all the interviewees. Overlywater was perceived as a clean, healthy product that radiates quality; *“Overly looks clean and pure. It is see-through, so you can see the content. [...] Overly is more like my identity, I want orderliness” - T1, “Overly looks like quality. Thick plastic that does not break” - T2, “Real health freaks that solely buys the sports drink because they exercise much, they buy this one to get better performance, or something like that. They probably pick this one because they imagine this one being the healthiest out of the three. That it does not have that many additives. That it is quality” - T3, “It radiates more “fresh sport”, a healthier bottle. [...] it is not that much glued decals or too colourful. It does not feel like a lot of extra additives, but more genuine, naturally” - T4, “It is good that it gives a healthy impression though, it probably attracts people that are very conscious about their training and what they consume during and after their exercises” - T5, “Overly is a bit straight-forward, so it is okay”, - T6.*

BodyArmor on the other hand was perceived as a sweet drink containing sugar and a lot of additives, because of the bright colours on the packaging; *“BodyArmor looks like a sugar bomb. It looks very sleazy and sweet” - T1, “I would never have thought that BodyArmor was a sports drink, but more of a juice” - T2, “it looks a bit tasty with all those fruits on the packaging. [...] It looks sweet” - T3, “feels like it is a lot of hocus-pocus and you should not get that in your body” - T4, “It has more resemblance of a juice than a sports drink. It feels like a drink containing a lot of sugar and additives, and that is not something I want to drink when buying a sports drink” - T6. FitAid was perceived by T1, T2 and T5 as a drink with a packaging design that is too complicated and using too much text; *“FitAid looks like Coca-Cola Zero mixed with a Swiss flag. It is just weird, too messy with all those fonts. I want orderliness” - T1, “FitAid looks overworked. There is too much information. You do not have time to read for half an hour on the packaging when you are shopping” - T2, “FitAid is has too much text that is mixed, they could have made it better” - T5.**

However, T3, T4 and T6 were more optimistic regarding the canned sports drink; *“It probably appeals older people that just want a sports drink, since it looks quite classic. It is black and white, kind of*

*classic. The packaging itself stands for quality*” - T3, *”It does not really stand out, it is just black and white and a bit of red. All the text makes it look serious though. Maybe if you read on it you get convinced to buy it”* - T4, *”All the text on it makes it look serious though, it seems like they are not afraid to hide anything of their ingredients”* - T6. Especially T6 thought a lot of information on the bottle was something positive for sports drinks, since she felt it was important for her to know what ingredients she consume.

Concerning the clean look of Overlywater's packaging design, T1 mentioned the fact that it would be perceived differently if it, instead of a see-through design, had a bright red colour on it. Now, when the content is visible, Overlywater has a blue shade, which T1 thought radiated stability and firmness. T2 and T6 agrees with the fact that without a lot of bright colours on the bottle, Overlywater does not look like a sugar-packed drink, but instead rather tasteless. T4 continued this reasoning: *”It radiates more ”fresh sport”, a healthier bottle. [...] Because it is not that much glued decals or too colourful. It does not feel like a lot of extra additives, but more genuine, natural”*. When T3 were asked if she would perceive Overlywater different if the packaging were covered in bright orange, she stated *”yes, probably. The brighter colours it is, the more I connect it with sugar, and that is not something I want in a healthy sports drink. This is just pure see-through, it looks refreshing”*. The majority of the interviewed participants would rather buy Overlywater than the other two brands.

#### 4.4.3 Purchase Intention

When asked about the impact packaging design has on their purchasing intentions, the participants all mentioned that it is very important when buying a product for the first time; *”When you have tried a product, you are more prone to be loyal to the brand. Good packaging design makes me want to try the product”* - T1, *”It has a great impact. Partly because of the practical bit, you do not want a too big packaging. It is not fun if it looks too cheap either”* - T2, *”If I have not read about the products, then packaging has a great influence on me”* - T3, *”I know what I want to buy, and if not, I buy the one that looks best. Or in this case, the one that looks like the best quality for a sports drink”* - T4, *”I think a lot unconsciously. In a store, you do not control what your eyes spot first”* - T6. T1 mentioned that the packaging design should conform with the product, in order to avoid confusing the customers.

The responses to the question regarding what packaging elements has the biggest impact on the interviewees were quite similar. Transparency, in order to see what the actual content looks like, along with a clean design without too many bright colours, seemed to be the optimal sports drinks packaging; *”To see the content inside the bottle is important to me. I like the transparency that for example Overlywater has”* - T1, *”I would buy Overly since it is simple and clear. [...] It is good to see the colour*

*of the fluid. You do not do that with the other two brands, and you do not dare to buy them because of that*” - T2, *”since I do not want a lot of unhealthy stuff in me when I drink sports drinks, it has to be classic, and not too many colours. Represent soundness and quality. [...] I would not choose a brightly coloured one*” - T3, *”a see-through bottle is good, since you see what you drink*” - T4. However, T5 said that BodyArmor gave the best impression due to the fruits on the packaging, radiating healthiness, while T6 said she would buy FitAid if it came in a bottle, due to the extensive information on the packaging. However, the technological aspect of can versus bottle made it so she would instead choose Overlywater.

## 5 Analysis

### 5.1 Introduction

Since a main part of this investigation is to establish which elements of packaging are perceived to be indicators of quality of sports drinks, according to consumers, the analysis will initially discuss what quality of sports drinks actually is. This notion is naturally a highly subjective matter and might be influenced by personal traits, values and experiences earlier discussed, which additionally are not fully accounted for during the interview sessions. It goes without saying that we have included the different values, that is reasons and motivations for consumption of sports drinks, but it is important to clarify that some answers elicited from participants might be highly biased and not representative as a whole. Furthermore, as the case was with the theoretical framework, the analysis will begin with a discussion surrounding perceived quality, which was elaborated on and justified in the theoretical framework.

### 5.2 Perceived Quality for Sports Drinks

Initially we analysed the participants' standpoints on quality as a subject- object interaction of sports drinks prior to being exposed to the pictures of three different sports drinks brands. We will later on in this analysis revisit this topic to further elaborate on the participants' answers regarding perceived quality after they had been shown the pictures of three different brands.

In the case of perceived quality as a subject- object interaction, one participant suggested straight out that quality might infer various meanings depending to which target group you are aiming for, a statement which is very much in line with perceived quality in terms of comparative factors (Steenkamp, 1990; Ophuis & Van Trijp, 1995). Worth mentioning here is that at this stage in the interviews, we had not introduced the participants to the images depicting three different kinds of sports drinks, which suggests that individuals do evaluate the quality of one product in relation to others which also affects the overall relative judgement about that product. Other findings within the area of comparative factors being influential in the participants' judgement regarding quality where expressed in a subtler manner, although still indicating that it being a vital factor in terms of consumers' quality perception about sports drinks. In fact, most of the insights provided that were expressed in either positive or negative terms may be subject to comparable factors automatically. Because when considering all the facts mentioned that the participants perceived as quality for sports drinks, whether it was something about the nutrient content, appealing looks and appearance or the provided function, ultimately it all comes down to which alternative

delivers most on the aspects that consumers find relevant. As one participants said about sports drinks; “That you get what you want out of the drink”. This is also supported by Steenkamp (1990) who argues that consumers consider quality attributes to have varying importance depending on their consumption goals.

Personal factors that could influence a consumers’ quality perception are involvement, prior knowledge, level of education, perceived quality risk and quality consciousness (Steenkamp, 1990).

As previously concluded, sports drinks are in this case considered low involvement products (Silayoi & Speece, 2004), implying that consumers to a lesser extent search for information and perform research prior to a purchase. Given the answers by the participants, this might not be an absolute certainty. This can be explained by the fact that some participants claimed that depending on the function of the sports drinks, consumers wants to make the right purchase decisions, for instance if a specific sports drink should be used as recovery after an exercise session or an energizer before. Content of the drinks were in that sense considered important based on the purpose of the consumption, for instance if it is concerning recovery or pre-workout. This naturally implies that you need some form of knowledge beforehand in order to make an informed decision and thereby display a higher degree of involvement, a notion that has been proven to be existing among wine consumers (Barber et al., 2007) and therefore also could hold some truth regarding sports drinks. Therefore, our findings in this regard could not only be related to the involvement of consumers but also factors such as their prior knowledge as well as level of education. Depending on how well these factors matched with the participants, one could also to a higher extent distinguish what cues about sports drinks were more imperative. For instance, during a discussion with the third focus group, subject of famous people as brand ambassadors of sports drinks came up. The discussion went around that if a famous sports personality actively promoted a sports drinks, it was likely to be of high quality since that person would not have risked being intimately associated with something that could potentially be detrimental to that person’s image. According to one participant, the sports drinks therefore became more trustworthy whereas another one claimed that had no persuasive effect, but that rather the actual benefit of the sports drinks is what matters instead. It was mentioned in one of the interview sessions that aggressive marketing might have a larger impact on poorly informed people. In this case, the packaging of the product should be more imperative if one seeks to deduce information about the content rather than trusting someone else, unless of course you are

targeting individuals that value those aspects more, which we will analyse later on. However, these findings indicate that depending on how well informed you are and how much that knowledge guides you in your purchase decision, there seems to be different aspects about sports drinks that are considered more important than others. For instance, peer pressure and the taste of sports drinks were mentioned reasons for consumption and these are not based on informed and rational decision making. The varying importance that these two participants attributed to celebrity association with a product can be assigned and classified according to different consumption values, in this case primarily functional, social and emotional (Sheth et al., 1991). This part is more thoroughly analysed in the next section.

It is also worth mentioning that even though people are educated about sports drinks and understand which things are good and which are bad, sometimes people do not care what they consume. This insight was also provided during one of the discussions.

### 5.3 Consumption Values

When it comes to the factor of usage goals that a consumer has when consuming sports drinks, this coincides with the values that was defined in the theoretical framework. During our findings, several different reasons for consuming sports drinks were mentioned by the participants. Some of these reasons are however not exclusively attached to merely one value, but can to various extent be seen as belonging to several consumption values.

#### 5.3.1 Functional Value

Naturally, this is the most obvious one since that is the very intention of sports drinks, that they should fulfil a certain function in the context of exercising, which corresponds well with the definition of functional value (Sheth et al., 1991). Worth mentioning is that it was not only the actual effect of the drinks themselves that can be placed into this category, but also depending on the packaging and how well it is adapted for a consumers intended usage. So packaging was not only considered a vehicle for information but also appeared important in a purely practical way. Cycling was brought up as an example and some participants pointed out that the bottle must be adapted in a way so that one can easily open and close the sealing throughout the workout session. Also, thirst quenching was a reason mentioned as well as the taste of a drink, although the latter one can also be defined as an emotional value. Furthermore, a participant mentioned that another reason to drink sports drinks is that people might worry about not having a

sufficient intake of necessary nutrients through their diets and instead turns to sports drinks to complement this.

#### 5.3.2 Conditional Value

Peer pressure was mentioned by one of the participants as a reason for consumption. People might feel obligated to consume a sports drink because their friends do so or they might do it more willingly just to fit into a group. This is also strongly associated with social value in the sense that people are trying establish their belonging in a certain group (Sheth et al., 1991).

#### 5.3.3 Social Value

One prominent finding was that people buy these drinks in order to appear “sporty” and to project an image to the surroundings of a certain lifestyle. One participant said that it is a way of expressing one self, by for instance posting pictures of an upcoming workout session on Instagram with a sports drinks in the hand. In that sense, packaging may be viewed as a communications tool (Soutar & Sweeney, 2001). Status was also mentioned as a motivator for purchase, a phenomenon that since long has been established (Frost & O’Cass, 2002). This is also dependent on the group that a consumer is trying to adapt and fit into. For instance, if you follow the latest trends in fitness, you might want to reinforce your position for yourself and in the eyes of other people that you are the person you are trying to be (Prenshaw & Zinkhan, 1994).

#### 5.3.4 Emotional Value

As previously mentioned, the taste of a sports drink can be classified as an emotional consumption value, in the sense that the taste can elicit pleasure and other emotional responses. This can of course also result in distaste and thereby evoke negative feelings. Colours in relation with product have an established strong association with feelings that consumers display (Bellizzi & Hite, 1992). This will be elaborated more on in the packaging section, where the colour of various sports drinks appeared to significantly influence some participants’ emotional arousal, in both positive and negative terms.

### 5.3.5 Epistemic Value

No clear answers were given in the findings prior to the showing of pictures that would suggest epistemic consumption values. However, when participants were exposed to the pictures of three different sports drinks, some expressed curiosity about several of them. This will be further elaborated on later in the analysis, in section 5.5.1.

## 5.4 Inferential Process

We have chosen to study the answers that were given prior to the showing of images to the participants and compare them to each other afterwards, in order to conclude insights regarding the inference process. Here we will try to identify cues that the participants considered important when it comes to the quality evaluation of sports drinks.

First of all, most of the participants agreed that packaging plays a role when it comes to evaluating the quality of a product. The motivation for this is largely congruent with what was established in the theoretical framework, namely that the packaging represents the initial contact that a consumer has with a product (Ampuero & Vila, 2006). Furthermore, packaging was in one case perceived as being a reflection of a products quality. If a packaging looks cheap, the product it contains was likely to correspond to the belief about the packaging (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). This notion is congruent with the fact that the inference process is based on how consumers perceive the relationship between a cue and the attribute they are looking for (Steenkamp, 1990). It was mentioned that a nice packaging design signals thought and effort to make a good product and thereby strengthening the perceived relationship. However, the packaging in this sense only appeared to matter for first time purchases in order to make a good impression (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). If a consumer knows the product from before and perhaps purchases it on a regular basis, the packaging has less importance (Hoyer & Brown, 1990).

Other inference processes based on cues that were brought up during the discussion were for instance the origin of a product and celebrity ambassadors. Most of the aspects that they considered important when evaluating quality for a sports drink were those that can be provided by packaging, such as nutrient content.

An interesting notion that seems to correlate with perceived quality was that many participants agreed that quality for products and services is, among other things, when they live up to



preconceived ideas about expectation in terms of what you get. So if you as a consumer have a positive expectation about a product or service, it will be perceived as a sign of quality if they live up to those expectations. The issue here is that if the packaging design is to a high extent positively perceived by a consumer but the actual experience from consuming does not correspond to the initial expectations, the consumer might for obvious reasons not continue to purchase. On the other hand, this might also depend on the consumption values, for instance if a consumer only cares about making a statement to the surroundings rather than taste or the actual function of the sports drink.

One of the findings from the interviews stated that quality in a sports drinks is apparent when “you get something out of it”, implying a very broad range of consumer wants and needs that a sports drink might be able to fulfil. This finding also supports the notion that people value different cues as having varying importance depending on what reasons they have for consumption. One participant from the interview stated that a sports drink can almost be used as an accessory and in that sense they are more likely to put more emphasis on external cues, in this case packaging, and see that as a quality sign. If we consider the example with sports drinks as an accessory, the perceived quality in for those consumers does not have much to do with the actual function of the product but rather what the sports drink can do for that person on a social level (Soutar & Sweeney, 2001; Frost & O’Cass, 2002).

Regarding the inference process and based on the findings, it can be determined that most of the cues that consumers use to infer attributes and thereby quality can be associated with the packaging of a sports drink, rather than other cues such as price and other types of promotion.

## 5.5 Packaging

In this section it will be determined how the packaging elements dictate the inference process about perceived quality and how it varies based on consumption values, more specifically regarding the reasons for consuming sports drinks. The aim of this section is to provide insight regarding the first research question. We will begin with the discussion about the various packaging elements, what role they were perceived having according to the participants and then analyse them in the context of consumption values.

A notable inference that several participants made was that they had a preconceived idea that sports drinks to some extent were supposed to be healthy for the consumer or in other ways

beneficial. What became apparent was that anything with the sports drinks packaging that did not correspond to this notion was perceived in a negative way and hence not associated with the intended use.

#### 5.5.1 Graphics

The graphical component appeared to have a significant influence on the participant's perception of what kind of drink it is and their perception of its quality, more so than the other packaging elements, which corresponds with earlier findings (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). Regarding the sports drinks the participants were shown, the attitude towards them were overall mixed, although they could agree on some aspects, of which the most prominent were the judgement about Overly's clean design.

One of the most negative inferences the participants made about quality had to do with Bodyarmor's design, specifically regarding the colours and pictures. Based on BodyArmor's intense colour combinations and images of fruits and berries, the sports drink was more perceived as a juice intended for a younger target group rather than a sports drink. This is similar to prior findings that have argued that the proper colours are associated with quality attributes, such as taste and nutrition (Silayoi & Speece, 2007; Imram, 1999), which in this case did not seem to be apparent. It was also by one person seen as a design that was influenced by American culture, rather than the more discrete Scandinavian approach, a notion about cultural differences that is supported by Silayoi and Speece (2004) and a statement that further reinforces the fact that it is imperative to create the right product for the right target group. It also resulted in a general belief that BodyArmor contained a significantly higher amount of sugar compared to the other sports drinks and were therefore seen as less healthy and to a lower degree associated with sports activities. This can be compared to what was discussed earlier regarding the inference process, prior to showing the participants pictures of sports drinks. How the participants perceived the perceived the packaging was seen as a reflection of quality of a product. This appears to hold true, especially regarding BodyArmor. Since the packaging was perceived as cheap, the beliefs about the content were negative. Quite the contrary of this case was that of the reactions to Overly. The graphic design was overall positively received among the participants and it was described as clean, clear and healthy. However, it was considered to be water rather than a sports drinks and it was not at all clear what the benefits were and what a consumer could expect from it, judging by the design. This implies that the colouring of packaging could give indications of experience attributes and to some extent credence attributes, or a lack of it if it appears confusing

for the consumer. As written in the previous section regarding inference before the participants were shown the pictures of sports drinks, the packaging and in this case colouring, indeed appeared to influence consumers' expectations of what they could hope to receive by consuming a sports drink. This also supports the fact that consumers value cues differently depending on their consumption values.

The most critical was the colour of the packaging, a notion that also has empirical support (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). Most answers indicated opinions that were strong, whether or not they were favourable or unfavourable, had to do with the colouring. Overall, based on the answers, it appeared to be the guiding sub- element when forming an impression about the sports drinks even though it essentially had nothing to do with the performance of the drinks themselves. The colour had particular importance when consumption values such as emotional and social were predominant, rather than functional, meaning that colour of a packaging did not appear to be particularly significant when consumers' strive for the functional benefits of a sports drinks, for instance recovery or an energizing effect. Also, in the case of colouring, less is more seemed to be a significant insight to consider for a packaging design. Therefore, limiting the design to fewer colours appeared to have a more professional, straight forward and overall positive impression on the participants. FitAid gained mixed responses in terms of its colouring. Some perceived them as being confusing and others claimed it gave a professional impression, in one case motivated with the red cross on the front of the packaging, which gave a medical and thereby healthy impression. What most of the participants could agree on was however the fact that the colouring was better suited than that of BodyArmor, both in terms of the number of colours and the appropriateness according to the purpose of sports drinks.

The most functional consumption value that was associated with the colour was that it indicated what kind of drink it was, which is the reason for why BodyArmor was not perceived as a sports drink. The colouring, as previously stated, seemed to have greater importance in terms of social and emotional consumption values, but also to some extent epistemic consumption values. One participant expressed curiosity for Overly and another one for BodyArmor, based on the colouring. A possible explanation might be that vivid stimuli is easier attract consumer attention in low involvement situations (Underwood et al., 2001). The usefulness of this information is not exactly certain since both the drinks were also perceived as confusing and in BodyArmor's case, negatively so. A company must therefore in that sense carefully evaluate their design if they want to evoke curiosity, without exposing themselves to the risk of being perceived negatively.

The layout also appeared significant and was specifically relevant in the context of emotional consumption values. The most obvious example of this was FitAid. Several participants perceived the layout of this packaging to be confusing. The position of the text appeared odd and the front side was misplaced since you could only see parts of the information.

One thing to keep in mind is that many participants perceived some drinks to be of high quality, for instance Overly. However, the drink was not perceived to be particularly associated with sports drinks. From this notion it can be argued that even though consumers may perceive a sports drink to be of high quality, it is crucial for a company to position itself correctly in the minds of the consumer in order to become appealing and consequently be clear about their actual core customers are (Zeithaml, 1988). Regardless of whether or not a consumer perceives a sports drink to be of high quality, it is irrelevant unless the consumer feel that the sports drinks appeals to them.

#### 5.5.2 Size and Shape

Size and shape in terms of quality appeared to a higher extent be linked to the functional consumption values of sports drinks. Already before showing the pictures, it was mentioned in some of the focus groups that the shape of the container matters depending on what kind of activity one choses to engage in. For instance, when going biking it was considered important to have a packaging you can seal instead of having to drink the entire content all at once and that the bottle is of appropriate size to carry with. The shape of a packaging could also infer what kind of drink a consumer believed it to be. In the case of FitAid, the shape was considered important for providing the consumer with insights about the drink. One participant stated that if the shape of the can instead would have been similar to a regular soda instead of the narrow long shape it has, it would have been perceived more negatively in the context of sports drinks. This indicates that the participants rely on shapes and sizes that are familiar to them (Silayoi & Speece, 2007).

One could also argue that the size and shape of a packaging could be relevant for other consumption values, which partly is supported by Silayoi and Speece (2007) in the sense that packaging size in their study appeared to be dependent on situations and consumer demographics. However, the importance of some of the packaging elements rather appeared to be dictated primarily by other consumption values than the functional. The priority

to consider the size and shape of a packaging are not as high when a consumer is driven by for instance social and conditional consumption values, since here there are stronger factors involved that are affecting the ultimate purchase decision.

### 5.5.3 Information

This element has been described as one the most important for consumers in their purchase decisions (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). Information was also relevant in the context of functional consumption values. Whereas the graphical element was more important for emotional and social consumption values, it was not the case for the informational element. Since those consumers that are drinking it for the functional benefit, that they want to be more energized and increase their performance, consider the content highly relevant, such information is naturally required to be displayed on the packaging.

One interesting finding is that it is not just about what kind of information is displayed on the packaging but also how it is displayed (Silayoi & Speece, 2004; Bone & France, 2001). This was in fact one critique surrounding the packaging design of FitAid. Even though the information was by many participants considered sufficient, the placement of it was not. It was in some instances considered awkwardly placed and according to some, you had to put in a significant mental effort to read it. It was also important that the right kind of information was displayed so that a potential consumer quickly could ascertain what kind of product it actually is, which for instance was not entirely clear to the participants regarding Overly. These notions overlaps to some extent with the graphical packaging element of layout and indicates that one element of a packaging design must align with others in order to create an entirety, and therefore cannot rely on getting one element right.

Of course, information must also be important for those who consumer sports drinks for other reasons than functional values, since they need to identify the name of the brand. This is however requires no extensive information on the packaging but can rather be recognized quickly while browsing a store shelf.

### 5.5.4 Technology

The most distinguished technological aspects of sports drinks packaging that were brought up during the discussions concerned the material and the sealing. The sealing has already been

discussed, in the sense that bottles were considered better than cans because a consumer does not have to drink everything at once. The material on the other hand has not been discussed. Being able to see the content of a sports drink was overall considered important for consumers since it radiated transparency from the brand itself in the sense that they had nothing to hide, but also because one is more able to judge the content. Important to consider here though is the fact that despite transparency in general was considered an advantage, it had no automatic association with sports drinks. For instance, in the case of Overly, the transparent bottle and the positive judgement about the content, it was rather considered by many to be water rather than a sports drink. This should be important to consider because it will determine the consumers' willingness to ultimately make purchase. Just because something looks nice and to be of good quality, it does not guarantee that consumers are actually ready to spend money. This does contradict what has previously been discovered since consumers normally have been more prone to pay more for packaging with better technological solutions (Silayoi & Speece, 2004; Rundh, 2005). So even if the material aspect definitely appears to be an important one to consider, it should not be of highest priority. Also in the case of the technological packaging element, functional consumption values were dominant and the other ones could not be strongly ascertained.

## 5.6 Purchase Intention

As described in the theoretical framework, the second research question aimed to provide insights on how consumers perceptions of sports drinks packaging translate into purchase intentions.

The design of a packaging was expressed in positive terms in the context of purchasing sports drinks and some claimed that packaging played a significant role when deciding whether to purchase or not. In one instance, this was justified with the belief that if a company makes the extra effort to provide attractive packaging, that will somehow reflect the quality of the actual product. This notion corresponds to answers given in one of the focus groups during the early questions regarding quality.

One important finding was that the participants were very positive about some aspects of packaging and through some elements inferred quality and despite this fact, did not display a significant propensity to make a purchase. This insight can be compared to the fact that the participants appeared to more instantly abstain from purchase and disregard products in the cases

that they found the packaging design distasteful or in any other way perceived it negatively which aligns well with the fact that packaging might in some instances be more important than the actual ingredients in purchase decisions (Ares et al., 2010). Although this is not a conclusion that with a high degree of certainty can be made, one might suggest that consumers may be in need of extra convincing to buy a sports drink, even though they are positive about the packaging design, whereas a negative impression about packaging design has stronger impact on their purchase decision.

This brings us to question why this is the case. One partial explanation is that this may partly have to do with consumption values since consumption values drive purchase attitude and behaviour (Sheth et al., 1991; Soutar & Sweeney, 2001; Sweeney et al., 1996). As a company, you have to understand a consumers underlying reasons and motivations for consuming a product. Positive judgement does not directly translate into a purchase if the product is not suited for the consumer needs. This is likely to be an important insight for decisions makers within the industry since consumers often are not only willing to purchase but also to pay slightly more for increased quality (Silayoi & Speece, 2004), which indicates the importance to understand the consumers' consumption values. Case in point, Overly water was by many considered to be of high quality, especially in comparison with the other sports drinks. Positive judgements were expressed regarding the simple yet elegant graphical design as well as the transparent bottle and the sealing. However, despite the positive perception, the total design resulted in the participants inferring that it was more an ordinary water brand rather than a sports drink and could therefore not see the overweighing benefit that would result in a purchase.

Another explanation might be that consumers' willingness to purchase decreases substantially when they see a purchase as risky, which can occur when they are not familiar with a brand (Silayoi & Speece, 2004 Sweeney et al., 1999).

Perceived price also affected the participants purchase intentions. Even though there were no indication of price provided from which conclusions could be drawn, some inferred that certain packaging designs were more expensive than others. Overly was such a case and one participant expressed an unwillingness to pay for the sports drink despite the fact that high desirability about the overall design was stated. This should however not be a problem in store because price tags are likely to be available. However, the fact that price appeared to be an issue is an indication that not only packaging design is the cue that has impact on consumers' perception of quality and

purchase intention. But since this study only investigate packaging as a cue, this fact will have to be regarded as a limitation. As a counterargument for this theory, one might argue that in the case of sports drinks, packaging is by far the most relevant cue to infer quality from and thereby form your purchase intention, since it has the ability to convey stimuli regardless of the consumption values. For instance, it holds information if a consumer is driven by functional consumption values and graphical elements if emotional and social consumption values are the drivers.

Many packaging elements were expressed to have significant impact on the participants' desire to purchase. However, no conclusive remarks can be established regarding which elements were more important than others in any given situation. McNeal and Ji (2003) concluded that all packaging elements combined can affect a consumer to purchase a product. Other studies have suggested that shape and colour are of particular importance for packaging design regarding purchase (Ampuero & Vila, 2006; Marshall et al., 2006), but such conclusion can in this case not with absolute certainty be established. Although, one can elaborate on the notion that various packaging elements have different importance depending on the consumers' consumption values and it can therefore, based on previous arguments surrounding purchase intentions, be established that the packaging design in some way need to appeal to the consumer to increase their tendency to purchase. Based on the discussion, this seems to be especially significant regarding first time purchases.



### 6.1 Perception of Packaging Design and Quality

In accordance with the theoretical framework, packaging appeared to have significant importance regarding individuals' perception of quality. Perceived quality was furthermore something that largely corresponded to fulfilled expectations and if the packaging of a sports drink lived up to those expectations, it was more likely to be a high perception of quality.

The definition of what quality was for sports drinks also seemed to vary depending on what motivations or reasons individuals had for the consumption, which corresponded to consumption values. Even though no decisive conclusions can be drawn in this regard, the various packaging elements appeared to have varying importance for the perception of quality depending on which reasons for consumption a consumer have, that is consumption values. The reason why it is difficult to draw conclusions out of these findings is because they varied to some extent from person to person in the sense that they had varied perceptions of what packaging elements best represented quality. There were however some patterns in the answers that displayed consistency. Colour did appear to be more important for social and emotional consumption values as opposed to functional consumption values. Instead, information displayed on packaging as well as the technology and size and shape were more positively associated with functional consumption values. Findings that are linked to conditional value were evident but they could not be linked to specific packaging elements. Moreover, the findings regarding epistemic consumption values were also limited and provided little to no insight in terms of specific packaging elements. It was however in one case established that packaging could evoke curiosity in consumers, if the design in some way attracted positive attention compared to other alternatives.

A general agreement was that it is important that the packaging design clearly signals what kind of drink it is, which strengthens the assumption that it is important to be aware of consumers' consumption values before designing a sports drinks package.

### 6.2 Purchase Intention

Packaging was by virtually all participants considered to be a vital tool, not just for quality assessment but also for when forming the decision of whether to buy or not. It was further concluded that the individuals expressed positive judgement regarding the packaging design in

many instances but did not express willingness to make a purchase. This phenomenon can likely be partially explained by the fact that the sports drink and thereby the design must be aligned with consumers' motivations for consuming them, which is the consumption values. The correct packaging design can in that sense be regarded as a prerequisite rather than an optional attribute.

Finally, price was also considered an important factor that could have decisive influence in the participants' intentions to purchase. This finding leads us to conclude that even though a proper packaging design appears to be influential in the purchase decision, it is not the only one.

### 7.1 Overview

In the last section we presented the conclusion with regards to the two research questions. In this section we will provide a discussion with regards to what extent we managed to fulfil the purpose and provide relevant answers to the research questions. Furthermore, we will present the managerial implications and limitations of this study as well as suggestions for future research within this area.

### 7.2 Relevance of the Study

Health and fitness have in recent years increased in popularity and consumers are currently becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of regular exercise as well as what they chose to put in their bodies. Consequently, more people turn to healthier alternatives, which has been affecting the sports drinks industry in terms of increased growth rates and thereby more competition. In the introduction to this study it was stated that companies and organizations nowadays constantly need to look at means of differentiation in relation to their competitors, in order to attract the attention and favourability of consumers. For this reason, consumers' perception of packaging in relation to perceived quality and how this corresponded to intentions for consumption, was investigated.

#### 7.2.1 Purpose

We have concluded that different packaging elements have varying importance depending on the perceived quality. In turn, how consumers perceive quality does at least partly depend on which consumption values they have. However, although providing insights into these relationships, the study did not provide any insights regarding consumer perception about other concepts than quality and consumption values, for instance perceived risk, price and also value as a trade-off between what is received and what is given.

#### 7.2.2 Research Question 1

On the basis of this study, it was indeed apparent that the design of packaging played a significant role in the inferential process of quality in relation with consumption values, which was also

stated by the majority of the participants. The importance of packaging was further reinforced by the insights discovered throughout the interview sessions. However, just as consumers' express favourability towards sports drinks that have packaging design they liked, the opposite holds true for those packaging designs that they do not like. It can therefore be established that the perceptions consumers have about the packaging design of sports drinks will reflect their expectations of the quality it consists of and that quality depends on which consumption values the consumers have.

### 7.2.3 Research Question 2

In terms of how packaging perceptions regarding quality and consumption values affected the purchase intention among consumers, we found a positive link between them. One of the most significant insights, which correlated with prior studies, was the fact that the participants appeared to display higher interest towards a sports drink if the packaging was designed in such a way that it managed to attract positive attention. Even though perceived quality of packaging was seen as a reflection of the quality of the product itself, it was not enough to generate purchase intentions. We concluded that a reason for this might have to do with consumption values, but were not able to establish that as an actual cause or that consumption values for that matter were the only factors that influenced a purchase decision. Price was also seen as an important factor that consumers take into account during a purchase decision, which indicates that there can be more cues than just packaging. So in that regards, our results showed that packaging affects consumers' perception about the quality of a sports drink but do not consider other factors that might influence.

### 7.2.4 Managerial Implications

This study has been able to highlight that importance and contributed to insights regarding packaging elements, perceived quality, motivations for consumption and the corresponding purchase intention that can be of aid to decision makers within the industry. Furthermore, a basis has been established for future academic research within this field to continue investigate the findings that we have presented. This assumption is strengthened by the fact that up until this point in time, the type of approach this study has taken is the only one of its kind for the Swedish market for sports drinks.

Our findings should however not be seen as a step- by step process for sports drinks packaging

design, but rather as valuable insights to consider in terms of targeting the right consumer and what their perception of certain packaging elements might be, given their desired quality and thereby consumption values.

### 7.3 Limitations

Even though this study has concluded the importance of a packaging design for sports drinks that resonates with the target groups, it still lacks appropriate data on the intrinsic use for each packaging element given certain consumption contexts. This study has in that regard not been able to bring forward specific recommendation regarding how to design packaging for sports drinks as to appeal to a certain target group. However, what can be established is the fact that people associate different design with different target groups and intended utility of the sports drinks and that consumers tend to put more emphasis on different elements depending on their consumption values, which should be important for a company to consider before entering into a market.

One significant limitation is the exclusion of other cues than packaging. In the theoretical framework it was stated that several cues normally affect an individual's perception of quality, rather than merely one. Packaging design is regarded as a significant cue since contains the information needed, the indication of functionality as well as the power to position a sports drink in the minds of the consumer. However, as was also stated in the findings, packaging was not the only relevant cue that consumers consider when facing a purchase decision. The theory underlines several cues which are traditionally of importance for a consumer in a purchase situation, but the one that was most prominent in the findings for this study was price.

Even though pictures of sports drinks that were not available in the Swedish market were used in during the interviews, the results and conclusions from the study cannot be generalized for other geographical markets since the participants were all Swedish citizens. Additionally, since the method for this study was explorative in nature, the findings can only be considered to be treated as insights could be worth investigating further. Therefore, a conclusive approach based on the findings of this study need to be taken before any decisive conclusions can be made.



#### 7.4 Suggestions for Further Research

There are a number of possible approaches that can be taken for further research within this area. During this study, it was apparent that packaging elements have varying importance for consumer perception of quality regarding consumption values. Therefore, it is appropriate to conduct studies on these consumption values more thoroughly in order to gather more in depth findings that could serve as more reliable bases to draw conclusions from. For instance, colour was in this study the most assessed and vital packaging element for social and emotional consumption values. But the answers varied in a too wide extent in order to generalize. One applicable approach in this scenario would be to gather participants that consume solely for the sake of emotional and social values to gain more correct insights. This approach can additionally be applied to the remaining consumption values.

It is also sensible to consider including more markets in future studies, which is of use both for foreign as well as Swedish companies that are looking to establish their brand in the international market. Varying insights of different geographical market is likely to be necessary, not at least judging by insights that this study provided. For instance, one of the sports drinks were considered to have a more American approach whereas the Swedish consumers were believed to care for more modest and discrete design.

This study also highlighted the need for additional research that includes cues other than packaging. Price was one such cue that some participants considered important when facing a purchase decision. Another example is store setting.

More extensive research regarding purchase intention might also be appropriate. This study has not included more elaborate theory regarding purchase intention, which leaves room for future consolidation with packaging elements effect on consumer perception of quality in relation to consumption values.

The brand also affects the what choices consumers make so it might also be appropriate to conduct research regarding this matter. Finally, since nature of this study was exploratory, conclusive studies in the previously mentioned areas must be conducted before generalizable results can concluded.



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## **Appendix**

### **Question Guide**

#### ***Focus groups***

##### **Part 1**

We are going to start this off by asking you some general questions regarding packaging and sports drinks. Is packaging design important to you when you are conducting a purchase?

In general, what does quality mean to you?

If we continue the discussion about quality, what do you think quality is for a sports drink?

As you may know, sports drinks are made to fulfil a certain function within exercising. We are wondering if you can think of another reason to consume sports drinks. Why do you think people would consume sports drinks other than improving their training?

Do you think people evaluate quality differently depending on the reason they have for consuming a sports drink?

Could you explain what types of pros and cons there are if you compare bottled sports drinks with canned sports drinks?

##### **Part 2**

##### **\*Showing pictures\***

Here we have three images of sports drinks not yet launched on the Swedish market. Firstly, what do you think are the pros and cons with the different packaging's?

What do you think that these three companies try to accomplish with their packaging?

So, which one of these three drinks would you most preferably want to buy?

There are multiple elements of packaging designs, like size, shape, information on the bottle, colour, layout and so on. What packaging elements of a sports drink is a sign of quality for you?

These packaging elements, do you think they matter differently depending on why you consume a sports drink?

##### **Part 3**

How big of an impact do you think packaging design has on your intention to carry through a purchase?

If we go back to the three images we showed you, what parts of the packaging's do you think have the most and least effect on your purchase intentions?

## ***Interviews***

What are your thoughts and feelings regarding;

- These drinks (in general)?
- The graphical part (typography, layout, colour and pictures)?
- Size and shape?
- Information?
- Technology (sealing and material)?

How do you think it feels to hold each of these products? What might you think when you're standing there, with the drinks in your hand?

What expatiations do you get when you see these products?

Which do you think have the best taste and which are the healthiest? Motivate your answer.

What kind of person do you think drink these drinks? What makes you say that?



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