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Green Marketing & Ethical Consumerism

Shaping Consumer Behavior

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Abstract

Marketers have found new ways of thinking leading to a development within the marketing area, the concept of green marketing has emerged and aims to improve communication in terms of ethically conscious products. Consumers are at times skeptical and companies need to be aware of the fact that trust is a main issue. However, along with the concept of green marketing, companies are sometimes misleading the consumers on their true intention, this phenomenon is called Greenwashing. This occurs when companies portray themselves to being greener than they actually are.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how consumer behavior is affected by green marketing and exploring whether or not knowledge has an effect. It will try to show the standpoint of the consumer and show what they strive for regarding ethical and green consumption. This research has been conducted through a deductive approach. The data collected are both gained from a qualitative and a quantitative method, however the analysis has been conducted in a qualitative way. Moreover the findings collected from this research have been retrieved from six semi-structured interviews as well as an online questionnaire.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, Sustainability, Green marketing, Ethical consumption, Green- & Ethical consumerism, Greenwashing.

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1. Introduction

This chapter will present the background and purpose of the thesis. The background will explain why the chosen topic is considered to be relevant and the purpose will demonstrate the problem areas as well as the delimitation.

1.1. Background

Climate change has caused multiple variations in the environment, such as severe flooding, earthquakes and extreme changes in the earth's temperature. This has lead to several countries and governments taking action and emphasizing the importance of global warming worldwide (Bleda & Valente 2009 ; Krahmann 2013). If we look back in time, in the 70´s one of the issues was chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and how harmful this was to the environment. This compound eventually ended up being banned from the market. The 80´s made the population more conscious about eco footprint and to which state the planet would be left for the generations to come (Mansvelt & Robbins 2010). Predictions concerning the future have always been clearly stated and it is suggested that the earth's population will increase to a staggering number of 9 billion. Furthermore, which will lead to an increase in poverty as well as illness (Meadows et al. 2005). Nowadays both agriculture and fisheries are diminishing and worldwide illnesses are spreading quicker than ever due to an unsustainable behavior (Akenji 2014).

Arising concerns regarding environmental issues, has lead companies to rethink and re-consider new strategic paths. For the sake of pleasing growing customer needs, numerous companies are highlighting a preferably sustainable approach (Ankit & Mayur 2013 ; Chen & Chang 2013). When researching sustainability and in particular sustainable consumption, it can be dated back to the early 19th century that the concern and criticism for overconsumption as well as unhealthy living was brought to life. However at that time concerns for environmental issues were not the focus (Akenji 2014). Furthermore due to several factors and the 30:3 syndrome, consumption is an important issue. The 30:3 syndrome can be explained by 30 percent of individuals stating that they have a general concern about sustainable however green products represent only 3 percent of the market share (Hobson 2004). Private households are gaining a greater accountability for unsustainable living. It is imperative with

an increase, concerning the market of green marketing, in order to meet these apprehensions (Krahmann 2013 ; Wells et al. 2011). Companies are utilizing trends in their favor and traditional marketing is dated (Chen & Chang 2013 ; Ottman 2010).

The marketing area has not been untouched by the repercussions of global warming as well as including sustainable practice, which has increased throughout the last decades. As a result, marketers have been able to develop new ways of thinking and adapting themselves to the market by utilizing sustainable marketing or green marketing, which is another definition. One of the factors explaining the emergence of green marketing, is due to the increasing concern among individuals for sustainability. Therefore it is vital to incorporate this discourse in the world of marketing. Leading to a higher knowledge of how marketing can affect environmental issues (Chamorro et al. 2009). A term called greenwashing has manifested itself on a greater scale. This arising phenomenon occurs when companies make misleading or inaccurate statements about their products. Companies claim that their products are environmentally friendly and/or ethically conscious when the fact of the matter is that it is false. They enhance the value of their product whilst misleading consumers (Lane 2013).

Nowadays a majority of the population comes in contact with some type of green product every day. The channels of distribution have transformed and led to easier access of environmentally friendly as well as ethically conscious products. It can easily be said that green is now something mainstream. A possible repercussion due to recession might be diminishing concern for the environment and decreasing consumption habits. However sales for green products suggests that there is a steady growth, even in times of economic hardship. People continue to feel the importance of social and environmental benefits (Ottman 2010). The younger generation is more aware and educated regarding sustainability. They are the future population and they seem to have a different mindset towards consumption and ethically conscious products. They are more prone to wanting a substance behind a purchase, meaning that younger individuals gather more information before purchasing a product Kanchanapibul et al. 2014).

1.2. Purpose and Problem identification

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how consumer behavior is affected by green marketing and exploring whether or not green knowledge has an effect. Furthermore the aim of this study will be to show the standpoint of the consumer and show what they strive for regarding ethical and green consumption. The thesis will further explore the business-to-consumer communication and illustrate consumers' feelings about the validity of companies and the underlying reason for boycotts meaning in this case that the consumers stop buying from a particular brand. The concept of greenwashing will be explained as well as seeing the potential of demoralization for a company due to this notion. What happens when consumers realize that their own ethics and morals do not comply with their chosen brands for consumption? Do this affect customer loyalty and does it lead to the empowerment as well as destruction of a brand?

This leads to these research questions:

- Are consumers affected by green marketing, whether or not having green knowledge?
- Do companies who misrepresent themselves intentionally/unintentionally affect consumer behavior, from a consumer perspective?

1.3. Delimitation

There are many areas, which are covered by green marketing however, throughout this thesis the author will focus on the consumption of products used on a daily basis. Will analyze how they are marketed, taking into consideration the term of greenwashing, and this is necessary in order to limit the area of research. Furthermore, concerning the personal interviews, the sample group in this thesis is limited to 22 - 29 years old, which only represent a part of the population. Interviewees are limited to an age group that is in between studies as well as in the beginning of their careers. The author has decided to limit the sample group to a certain age group due to the fact that young generations are perceived as the future of sustainable development, as they are more prone to being targeted (Kanchanapibul et al. (2014). It would

be valuable to know if young consumers are actually affected by green marketing and therefore by greenwashing.

1.4. Thesis Structure

Chapter 2 – Method: This chapter will present the method chosen by the author as well as the implementation for the enabling of the gathering and the empirical studies.

Chapter 3 – Theoretical framework: This chapter presents the essential concepts needed for the construction of the theoretical framework. It clarifies the terminologies consumer behavior, green marketing, eco-labeling and greenwashing, as well as linking these concepts to relevant theory.

Chapter 4 – Findings: This chapter presents the findings retrieved from both the personal interviews as well as the questionnaire. Only the most relevant findings are presented.

Chapter 5 – Analysis: The purpose of this chapter is connecting the theoretical framework with the empirical findings.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion and Recommendation: This chapter aims at answering the stated research questions and concluding suggestion for further research.

2. Theoretical framework

This chapter will explain the essential concepts for the theoretical studies and creates a base for understanding the terminology utilized in the thesis.

2.1. Consumer behavior

Consumers nowadays have a greater understanding for sustainable development and green consumption. Moreover there is a deeper understanding for individual choices and the consequences caused, both in a positive as well as a negative way. Furthermore leading to consumers being more responsible when it comes to their individual purchasing decisions (Chen & Chang 2013). Consumers do not believe it to be sufficient with only with companies telling them that they have to buy a particular product. There are more factors leading to a purchase and consumers are more focused on the actual fact that they are buying than a certain advertisement. The younger generation is different regarding their mindsets and has distinctive attitude towards consumption (Kanchanapibul et al. 2014). It is implied that consumers are able to pressure companies into making more sustainable choices through decisions and selections of market products, however to put into practice such decisions the consumers need to make some sacrifice and dedication (Akenji 2014 ; McEachern & Carrigan 2012). Another interesting factor would be to understand when and how the behavior of a consumers may change, whether or not is it while making a purchase in the supermarket and also if there is a difference depending on the product or service (Wells et al. 2011). While defining the categorization of "the green consumer" some difficulties might arise regarding the terminology, which might be hard to describe. Consumers do not always have a clear mindset towards a green way of thinking, leading to confusion amongst individuals concerning a green mentality (Rettie et al. 2012).

Media and marketing have created a need for overconsumption. It is vital to understand the consumers' own concern for the environmental or ethical issues, furthermore increasing the understanding for products, production and consumption (McEachern & Carrigan 2012 ; Wells et al. 2011). Information is imperative and the younger generation has an insignificant influence of knowledge (Kanchanapibul et al. 2014). Moreover consumers who are able to

embrace a greater accountability, need to be educated and informed in order to better understand the whole production process, this might ultimately lead to a change in companies (Barnett et al. 2005 ; Peters 2005 ; Williams 2005). The difficulty lies within trying to change or redirecting ones behaviors, which can prove to be more complex for some individuals than others. Consumers with a deeply rooted loyalty to a brand, may have the willingness to lead a more responsible life, however they are less likely to stop buying a companies products completely. Moreover if price is taken into consideration, consumers are more prone to boycott a brand when prices decrease which could be explained by the fact that when the price decreases the consumers could have the feelings that the quality has also been reduced (Balabanis 2013).

2.2. Green marketing

Green marketing is a type of marketing which focuses on advertising products, which are eco-friendly and make no harm to either products as well as consumers. Furthermore it is a tool, which can meet demands of both individuals as well as organizations (Mintu & Lozada 1993). According to Grant (2007) this marketing segment is about making green products seem ordinary and not about appearing green. Furthermore, the perceive value lies within the product itself and not because it fits in a particular segment, in this case "green" products (Grant 2007). An increase has been witnessed throughout the market in companies active within this growing field, which has lead to participants joining from several sectors such as researchers and policymakers (Mansvelt & Robbins 2010 ; Rettie et al. 2012). Green marketing can be traced back to the 70´s where a workshop was held initiating people to a more sustainable living (Mansvelt & Robbins 2010). This area has since then grown into a necessity nowadays and age however even though it is often criticized for simply being an add-on. It can easily be a difficult topic to explain since many do not know quite how to explain it (Grant 2007).

There are several strategies when trying to evolve and shift a company's focus to a more green approach, such as trying to create innovative as well as creative new products (Cronin et al. 2011). Purchasing decisions are having a greater impact, concerning green consumption, shifting the strategies of companies not only externally but also internally towards its own company structure (Chen & Chang 2013 ; Cronin et al. 2011). There is also a danger in companies taking consumers for granted, when these individuals are

particularly critical towards eco-labeling on products (Mansvelt & Robbins 2010). Unfortunately there are some cases in which the companies are mistrusted when labeling themselves as green. The trust issues bare a huge part of why it is so important to have a forward-thinking honest business model (Mansvelt & Robbins 2010). It might be difficult for consumers to acknowledge which products are genuinely green leading to cynicism and misperception, this helps consumers feeling deceived and perplexed when it comes to such matters as greenwashing (Cronin et al. 2011 ; Mansvelt & Robbins 2010).

A difficulty when utilizing green marketing is that marketing promotes consumption whilst sustainability issues promote in doing the opposite and their needs to be balance, which can generate a spiritual profit regarding both sides (Grant 2007).

2.3. Eco-labeling

Consumers are willing to buy ethically conscious and environmental friendly products, which are similar to conventional products (Bleda & Valente 2009). Even though labeling can be traced back to the National Consumers League in the late nineteenths century its growth can be seen as more substantial nowadays (Micheletti 2003 ; Sklar 1998; cited in Boström & Klintman 2008). There has been a significant increase in demand for these niche products showing consumers eagerness to be a part of the development of sustainability (Akenji 2014 ; Bleda & Valente 2009).

Boström and Klintman (2008) defines labeling as:

> As a kind of eco standardization, green labeling is based on the standardization of principles and perspective criteria. This type of eco-standard is market-based and consumer-oriented, and it relies on symbolic differentiation. (Boström & Klintman 2008, p.28)

There are many arguments concerning labeling, both positive as well as negative. Many argue that it empowers consumers, since they are able to make up their own minds, other argue that it gives consumers less choices to select because of similar products with different labeling (Boström & Klintman 2008). Companies are able to claim an eco-label to their products as well as being seen in marketing and advertisements, however there has been critics regarding labeling and the usage in search of profits and/or market gains

(Bruce & Laroiya 2007). Eco-labeling or green labeling as it is also known, helps to guide consumers in their purchasing decisions and even though they might be paying a price premium they are willing to do so (Bleda & Valente 2009 ; Bruce & Laroiya 2007). They demonstrate whether or not you as a consumer are buying a safe, trustworthy, environmentally friendly and ethical product as well as simplifies complex packaging (Boström & Klintman 2008).

2.4. Greenwashing

A companies' main mission is to intrigue consumers and make profits while selling their products. However with the current growing market of sustainable products becoming a standard, companies have to meet the needs of an increasing customer demand (Dahl 2010). Companies wanting to meet these requirements, find themselves in a difficult situation, as well as trying to differentiate their own company from others competing in the same market (Dahl 2010 ; Lane 2013). In order to call your corporation green there needs to be many factors that correspond, which are not always taken into account for. This does not only mean trying to market a company as sustainable or green (Dahl 2010). On occasions, corporations chose to market themselves and their products as being eco-friendly or ethically conscious. However, the fact of the matter is that their products are at times misleading and inaccurate. For instance, one example might be genetically modified food with the use of pesticides and another may be the use of animal ingredients, which can be altered in order to reduce the cost of production. These ingredients may have been contaminated in different ways and do not comply with being green. A third example might be brands that sometimes mislead customers, by saying merchandises are organic while the product ingredients contain substances which are not environmentally friendly (Grant 2007). This phenomenon is called greenwashing and promotes a higher sustainable benefit concerning products and stems from the anti-corporate movement (Dahl 2010 ; Grant 2007).

Many companies deceive clients and consumers intentionally as well at times unintentionally, by not giving correct information about the environmental advantages of their products, leading to a wasted purchase. This terminology shows how far establishments go, in order to gain profits while depriving consumers from making an environmentally conscious choice (Mansvelt & Robbins 2010 ; Werther & Chandler 2011). Lane (2013) describes

greenwahing as a phenomenon that might increase since markets are crowded and many trying to move ahead as well as differentiation themselves as much as possible.

The concept of greenwashing can be divided into six different categories. According to a study by Terra choice marketing made in 2007, greenwashing can be (Mansvelt & Robbins 2010):

- Hidden trade-offs: A product, which promotes a green appearance whilst the truth of the matter is that many, maybe more important part of the production cycle, are not in fact green.
- No proof: Claims, which have no substance, are easy to detect due to research and investigating the certified third-party.
- Vagueness: Stamps or statements, which are unclear to consumer and might give the impression of a certain certification such as all natural or no-additives.
- Irrelevance: Statements, which have no relevance such as ingredients that have been banned for years but might be considered as accurate.
- Lesser of two evils: Statements, which might be true, however used as a distraction trying to mislead the consumer from realizing a greater danger such as organic cigarettes.
- Fibbing: Statements, which might harm, are fictitious and might wrongfully use eco-labels in order to claim certification.

Consumers are more aware nowadays forcing companies to release more information regarding the content of their products, in order to keep their customers as well as regaining trust from skeptical customers (Chen 2008). Nonetheless many companies, which are trying to change their ways and having a desire to become green, often receive critics and media attention. Greenwashindex.com is a website created in order to enable consumers to read information as well as post ads they find questionable, which anyone can rate (Ottman 2011). With today's social media the word of mouth travels quickly and can easily lead to the deterioration of a company, however by diminishing greenwashing companies can increase the green trust amongst consumers (Chen & Chang 2013).

2.5. Summary

Consumers are becoming more aware of the consequences of their purchasing decisions. Individuals have a greater impact on markets and due to this fact companies are shifting their strategies to meet these increasing demands. Marketers have found new ways of thinking leading to a development within the marketing area. As seen above, green marketing aims to improve their communication in terms of ethically conscious products. An example of this interaction might be labeling ones product with a certified label. This guides the consumers to a more sustainable lifestyle and generates an approachable product. Consumers are at times skeptical and companies need to be aware of the fact that trust is a main issue. However, along with the concept of green marketing, companies are sometimes misleading the consumers on their true intention, this phenomenon is called Greenwashing. This occurs when companies portray themselves to being greener than they actually are. Products are then marketed as sustainable whilst the fact of the matter is that is inaccurate and deceitful. The trust between business-to-consumers is damaged which can furthermore lead to boycott of the particular brand.

3. Methodology

This next chapter will present the chosen research methodology as well as the gathering of empirical studies. In order to receive a greater understanding for the individuals' point of view the study has been regarded through a consumer perspective.

3.1. Choice of method

The literature review describes two approaches which can be used in order to conduct a thesis, inductive as well as deductive. Deductive is more suited for this kind of study because it connects theory and research in a more natural way (Bryman & Bell 2011). The researcher has to deduct a hypothesis, which is the gateway in order to furthermore collect the empirical data (Bryman & Bell 2011 ; Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010). Inductive on the other hand starts with a collection of data followed by connecting the findings to relevant theory (Jacobsen 2002). The collection of data in this case is supported by the knowledge gathered by the author at forehand, leading to an inductive approach not being the correct course of action.

When doing research there are several methods to be used. The quantitative method is more distant approach, in the way that researcher is allowed to be unaffected by their studies. The research is conducted on the basis of data collection and numerical conclusions, which are measured. The qualitative method on the other hand emphasizes an understanding of people's view and of what they perceive to be true. The research is based on data collection using words and description of the studied area. Moreover both are methods, which gather empirical data and are can be used in different manners (Jacobsen 2002). This thesis will use both quantitative and qualitative data but both will be analyzed with a qualitative method. The quantitative data will be gained from the results of an online questionnaire, as for the qualitative data they will be collected through semi-structured interviews.

3.2. Implementation

The collection of data used for the empirical studies can be categorized into two elements, primary and secondary. The primary data is collected first hand

straight from the source of information such as persons. Furthermore there is secondary data which is collected from others meaning that it has already been collected by others (Jacobsen 2002).

3.2.1. Primary data

Primary data is collected through the usage of different methods of question and observation like interviews, questionnaires and focus groups (Jacobsen 2002). The author has collected the empirical data by using semi-structured personal interviews and a questionnaire. The interviews were conducted as a pre-study for the questionnaire in order to obtain a more thorough and accurate consumer response. Semi-open personal interviews were better suited to answer the purpose of this study, due to the fact that there was an interest in understanding the individuals' way of thinking, their mindset as well as wanting few respondents (Jacobsen 2002). The Interviews were taped and later transcribed aiming at not missing anything of the respondents' opinions and comments (see Table 1). The purpose was to gain an understanding concerning the respondents' views regarding green marketing as well as greenwashing. This simplified the comprehension of their way of thinking, comparing subjects that generally consider themselves as green consumers to persons that do not.

Table 1. Personal Interviews - Dates and lengths.

Date	Name of the interviewees	Occupation	Length
2014-05-13	Cathy	Working	11 min
2014-05-10	Jan	Student	21 min
2014-05-13	Lisa	Working	14 min
2014-05-07	Mickaël	Student	13 min
2014-05-10	Sadik	Student	23 min
2014-05-10	Sahar	Student	20 min

The structure chosen for the interviews as seen in Appendix 1, is semi-structured with some questions as guidelines, but also consists of open answers. It was also based on real eco-labels and situations in order for the respondents to be able to relate better with real companies. However the eco-labels used will not be shown in the thesis, due to the fact that there needs to be a consensus from the companies and the author was not able to retrieve all of them. A hypothetical scenario was created in order to better grasp the respondents' feelings and knowledge towards the phenomenon greenwashing.

The questionnaire was made in order to quantify the results retrieved from the interviews. It was conducted as an online survey and created using the online survey tool provided by Karlstads University called Sunet: Survey & Report, targeting people who are studying as well as in the beginning of their professional careers. The purpose of was to focus on individuals with different backgrounds and knowledge concerning ethical consumption as well as targeting a younger age group as done in the personal interviews. However, a few respondents were not within this scope and on of the options given were the age group of 35+. The questions were constructed based on the pre-study and were aligned with the research area. The questionnaire was spread through social network and the objective was to gain a high number of respondents to extend the validity of the findings retrieved from the interviews. The result is expected to give a broader consumer perspective regarding ethical consumerism and green washing.

Whilst conducting both the personal interviews as well as the questionnaire, a concept of different mindsets emerged. This was especially visible throughout the semi-structured interviews when some individuals had a greener mindset than the others, concerning their knowledge about the research area. Diverse mindsets differentiate consumers from each other and may sometimes shape the way they are as consumers. Furthermore an interest in exploring this factor was generated.

3.2.2. Secondary data

Secondary data is collected through literature review searching for information from literature as well as articles (Jacobsen 2002). Books have been selected by looking at the research area and method. The articles chosen have been selected by using the criteria peer reviewed and searching with keywords such as *Green marketing, Sustainable marketing, Greenwashing, Climate change, Eco-labeling, Consumer behavior, Consumer behavior and Sustainability, Green consumerism and Ethical consumerism.* All of these words were used individually as well in combination with each other. This has lead to a number of useful scientific articles, which have been useful throughout the process of the thesis.

3.2.3. Sample group

Six individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with people selected from a sample group in the age group between 22-29 years old. The interviewees had different mindsets towards the research area and green

sustainable thinking. Four persons, are students at Malmö University and studying at masters' level with an alignment towards management and sustainability, their names are Jan, Mickaël, Sadik and Sahar. Two are working and are in the early stages of their professional careers. However they are not necessarily active or self-labeled as green consumers; their names are Cathy and Lisa. The scattering of the sample group has no particular significance and was supposed to be equal in numbers regarding the different mindsets. However, due to certain restraints it ended up being four to two individuals. The author believes it has no negative implications.

The questionnaire was spread mostly through the social network outlet Facebook to people from different age groups, cultural background and different knowledge regarding ethical consumerism. The sample group is based on 103 respondents. The age group selected throughout the study is based on the fact that the younger generation is more prone to involving their selves whilst making a purchase, regarding background information as well as regarding the underlying reason. Many argue that they prefer to better understand the green purchasing decisions made and that this will generate a higher profit for this particular market (Kanchanapibul et al. 2014).

3.3. Critic of the method used

Critic concerning the method can view in both a positive and negative way. There are other ways the method could have been conducted for example phone interviews, focus groups or group interviews. Focus groups are more interactive between the interviewees, who can lead to a decrease in control for the interviewer, this was not the intent of the author (Kvale 2007). The collection of data is more complicated to analyze, as well as summarize in order to gather information that can be used later on (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010). Jacobsen (2002) mentions that individuals are more comfortable speaking face-to-face than during a telephone interview. However, it is less time consuming as well as less expensive, with tis type of interviewing. Another factor can be that the interviewees might feel uncomfortable in the presence of the interviewer which can lead to a more abnormal behavior compared to a phone interview, this is called the interviewer effect (Jacobsen 2002). Due to time restraints and different personal conditions the personal interviews were better suited as a pre-study leading to a questionnaire. The author has deliberately kept the sample group within an age group, which

excludes those who are middle aged, and up. This was in order to keep the focus on individuals who are gaining or will gain financial stability. Moreover McEachern and Carrigan (2012) explain that older consumers cannot be taken out of the equation concerning ethically and environmentally friendly manners, since this age group will grow extensively over the coming decades.

3.4. Critic of the sources used

The theoretical framework is based on secondary data and has been collected from both literature as well as articles, from scientific journals. This has been retrieved from the databases provided by the libraries of Karlstad and Malmö University. The author has also collected articles from the database *Google scholar,* which gave access to a broader range of articles, however some of them were not accessible, for financial reason. The reliability of these secondary data is high since they are based on authors and scientist and they have been peer-reviewed. Regarding the information gathered from the personal interviews, some findings have not been used due to the fact that some of them could not be verified with facts, such as statements concerning existing companies. However, the respondents own experiences and opinions have been expressed and throughout the thesis the author has taken this into consideration. Only relevant and accurate information has been used in the thesis.

3.5. Reliability

Concerning reliability, the result has to show that it has been conducted in such a manner that it can be repeated as well as trusted (Bryman & Bell 2011 ; Jacobsen 2002). It is important to achieve accurate research results in order to retrieve correct information. This can be replicable to any type of research (Jacobsen 2002). Moreover, according to 6 and Bellamy (2012), a reliable system of coding or measurement for your data is consistent, if you use it every time on the same data you will obtain the same result. The author will establish that the method and the data used are clear, in order to make certain that if the research is being repeated by someone else using the same data and level of method, the result will be the same. Additionally, according to 6 and Bellamy (2012), to assess the reliability of the method used, the researcher can utilize internal consistency method. The aim of this method of testing the reliability is to gather additional data using the same design (6 & Bellamy

2012). For instance, in this research the questionnaire was built in a way, that some questions were formulated in a different way but were aiming at giving the same results, if the respondents were giving the same answers, they are therefore providing some evidences that the questions were reliable.

3.6. Validity

Validity gives us an appreciation that our measurements reflect on what we are actually trying to measure (Jacobsen 2002). 6 and Bellamy (2012) defines validity as the extent to which our statements have an estimated accuracy. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), there are four types of validity:

- Measurement validity or often referred as construct validity, this criteria is usually used in quantitative research, which refers to the extent that these measurements allow us to attribute values (Bryman & Bell 2011). However, even if this research is a qualitative research, the questionnaire used for the data collection were using ordinal scale for some questions, it is therefore important to make sure of the validity of those data.

- Internal validity refers to the issue of causality between two or several data (Bryman & Bell 2011). It is important here to know is the relationship established from the data collection is really true.

- External validity aim at identifying if a research can be generalized and if the findings hold true in other settings (Bryman & Bell 2011). This research has been conducted from the consumer perspective. Therefore it is difficult to generalize, since so many factors might have potentially an influence on the results.

- Ecological validity according to Bryman and Bell (2011) deal with the question "of whether or not scientific findings are applicable to people's everyday, natural, social settings" (Bryman & Bell 2001, p.43).

3.7. Ethics

Ethics, according to Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010, p 20) "are moral principles and values that influence the way a researcher or a group of researchers conduct their research activities". The author will especially devote attention to many of the ethical issues one being correct referencing, by making sure

that all the credits and citations not made by the researcher will be properly cited.

Moreover, in business research one of the most sensitive processes in ethical principles is the relationship between researcher and participant. The ethical issues that need to be considered by the researcher are conducting the research without harming the participants, ensuring whether or not there is a lack of informed consent, if there is an invasion of privacy and finally if deception is involved (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

4. Findings

This chapter will present the findings collected from the research. The data has been retrieved from six semi-structured interviews as well as an online questionnaire. Both templates have been constructed with the knowledge retrieved from the secondary data. The presented findings reflect the opinions and perceptions of the interviewees as well as the respondents.

4.1. Personal interview

Six semi-structured interviews were conducted with respondents who have different backgrounds and knowledge about the research area. There is a clear understanding about the fact that there are different mindsets whilst researching ethical consumers. The two biggest mindsets in this research were having green knowledge versus not having green knowledge. This was presumed from the beginning however later confirmed. Cathy, Jan, Lisa, Mickaël, Sadik and Sahar had different understandings about the concepts and terminologies, which will be shown later on in the thesis. The respondents were all interviewed in a natural setting and asked to express their feelings. The interviews were a pre-study, which focused on a deeper understanding of the respondents' mindsets towards green marketing as well as greenwashing. The interviews ended with a hypothetical scenario as seen in Appendix 1, which had the purpose of exploring different views about deceptive marketing strategies. The beginning of the interviews started with an introduction of the author as well as the content and purpose of the thesis. The individuals were also asked to make a short introduction to their lives.

4.1.1. Green knowledge

The first objective was to determine whether or not the respondents knew anything about the topic of the interview, so the first question asked was if they have ever heard the term green marketing and greenwashing before and if so in which context. The four students all answered yes that they knew about both the terminologies and that they had heard it in relations to their studies since they had been studying sustainability and CSR, corporate social responsibility. One of them, Sahar, said:

"When I hear green marketing it's like organic produce or things that are not affecting the environment in a negative way or things that are helping the environment. About

greenwashing it's like the term brainwashing but greenwashing so they try to sell consumers products that they consider to be green. I think it's a very broad term." [1]

Sahar explained that she believes green marketing is a term, which has relations to organic products and are not affecting the environment in a negative way. Further more she explains that she thinks that greenwashing is according to her, similar to brainwashing for example trying to sell products that they consider to be green. She feels that the term of greenwashing is a broad one. Cathy and Lisa however, had never heard the term greenwashing before. Moreover they had both heard the term green marketing before but both said they were not sure about the meaning of the word completely but that a good guess was that it had something to do with a green purpose or sustainability.

4.1.2. Eco-labels

The next section of the interview was also dedicated to green knowledge but in another manner and this part had the objective to see if the respondents knew anything about eco-labels and if they had ever seen them before. The author was not able to receive approval by all the companies chosen in order to show their eco-labels in the thesis, therefore the logos will not be presented.

The respondents were subjected to eight different but common eco-labels that they might encounter whilst visiting a supermarket or a shop. All of the respondents recognized two of the labels instantly including their meaning and these were "the Mobius loop" for recycling and also fairtrade. The second most recognized label was the "MSC - Marine Stewardship Council", Certified sustainable seafood, all respondents but one recognized it's meaning. Four out of six recognized the Nordic environmental label and the rain forest alliance label was also recognized but not to the same extent as the others. The remaining labels were equally responded to as not recognized or not understanding the meaning. These were "Der Blaue Engel", the European eco-label and "FSC - Forest Stewardship Council".

Furthermore the respondents where asked if they had ever bought a product because of it's eco-label. The answers were similar to the extent that all of the individuals had bought a product stamped with an eco-label however not all of them agreed to the fact that they always know the meaning of them. One respondent, Cathy, answered:

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[1] Sahar, Female student at Malmö Högskola. Personal interview the 10th of May 2014.

"I think I have read some details before but now I've forgotten it. Some maybe just means that they support fairtrade and some means only that not all of the products in the process are ecological, just some parts." [2]

Cathy felt that she did not fully comprehend the meaning of some of the eco-labels and even though some products might just mean that they support a particular brand she does not think that all of the products in the process are ecological.

Another, Mickaël, answered:

"Most of the time if I buy a product I know the meaning of the eco-label. It's true that sometimes when I buy something they always refer to I love eco for example, so I assume that they are from ecologic agriculture. I don't necessarily check all the time what they are for. When there is a label I trust the brand." [3]

Mickaël explained that most of the time he knows the meaning of the eco-labels however, on occasion he assumes that he comprehends. He does not always look at the content as he has faith in the brands.

They were also told about different words that some products might contain like "no additives", "hormone-free" and "all natural", which give the impression of being eco-friendly but in fact have no meaning. A majority of the respondents agreed that these words are common amongst products, however many of them do not trust them to be legitimate. They prefer certified eco-labels. Though one respondent, Cathy, said she had in fact been mislead by these words and expressed that after she had seen a word like that on a product, she had stopped reading the rest of the ingredients.

4.1.3. Green products

The respondents were also asked to express their feelings toward green products and if they expect them to be 100 percent "green" as well as if it is unrealistic to expect this. Some individuals answered yes that they do have these expectations and that as a consumer you should expect it. Others said no because you cannot expect a whole supply chain to be completely green. One respondent, Sadik, answered:

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[2] Cathy, Female Working. Personal interview the 13th of May 2014.
[3] Mickaël, Male student at Malmö Högskola. Personal interview the 07th of May 2014.

"I can appreciate if the green product is green but I wouldn't affiliate it with the whole company. They wouldn't be my favorite company just because they are producing green products." [4]

Sadik answers that he appreciates when a product, which is green, is in fact green however he does not associate the whole company with being green. He would not prefer this company to another because it is producing green products.

There were divided opinions concerning whether or not expectations are unrealistic and some individuals felt that it is not possible nowadays since pollution affects everything from seeds to the end consumer. Another, Lisa, assumed that this was not an issue and fully possible. One respondent, Jan, said:

"Probably yes because I think for some products it's just not possible to ensure that it's 100 percent accordingly. Specially with the eco-labels and genetically modified seeds and so on." [5]

Lisa says that she does not believe that it is possible for some products to be completely green.

4.1.4. Trust and Loyalty

Another interesting factor to explore was how the respondents felt about trust and betrayal towards companies. They were asked if they trust companies producing eco-friendly products as well as if they found out that a company was not as green as they portrayed themselves to be, how would they feel. Half of the respondents say that they trust these companies and the other half feel that they do not. One, Lisa, said:

"I don't know if I trust the companies because I don't know so much about them really but I would be a bit disappointed and not buy from them again because then there is no point since they're usually more expensive than normal products." [6]

Lisa answered that she does not know if she trusts the companies or not because she does not have so much information about them. She would however feel disappointed and not buy from the company again.

Another, Mickaël, answered:

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[4] Sadiq, Male student at Malmö Högskola. Personal interview the 10th of May 2014.
[5] Jan, Male student at Malmö Högskola. Personal interview the 10th of May 2014.
[6] Lisa, Female working. Personal interview the 13th of May 2014.

"Most of the time I trust them but if I found out that they are doing something wrong I will avoid buying from them." [7]

Mickaël feels that he trusts companies however if they would be doing something wrong he would avoid buying from them further.

The respondents were also asked if they would feel betrayed after learning that a company is not being what they portray themselves to be and the majority felt that they would experienced betrayal. However one, Lisa, said she felt that the feeling was more towards upset than betrayed.

4.1.5. Green marketing strategies

Continuing the topic of what the companies portray to consumers the question of its importance was asked. The respondents all agreed that this was something of a significant importance. The majority of the respondents said that it is really important in order to keep your customers since consumers these days are more aware. One respondent, Sadik, expressed that it is important to be truthful since nobody forces you to make any claims the companies are responsible for their own prerogatives.

They were also told that because of today's social media outputs should companies be more aware of their green marketing strategies. All respondents agreed that it is important to be aware of what you as a company are communicating to consumers and especially because of social media, which can spread a bad reputation quicker than ever. Last question concerning green marketing strategies is if any of the respondents would ever stop buying a product or boycott a brand. The feelings were not mutual because some individuals said definitely to both questions whilst others were not so certain. One, Lisa, responded:

"This is hard to say because like H&M if you think about this company they're the only place where I buy my clothes but I think I would think a second time before I buy something in that actual store. I don't think I would stop completely because I'm like everyone else wanting to save money and they have cheap prices." [8]

Lisa explains that she does not know if she would boycott a brand for example H&M due to the fact that she is a frequent buyer of their clothes. She would

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[7] Mickaël Male student at Malmö Högskola. Personal interview the 7th of May 2014.
[8] Lisa, Female working. Personal interview the 13th of May 2014.

however think twice before making a purchase but she does not believe she would stop completely.

4.1.6. Greenwashing

After reading the hypothetical scenario as seen in Appendix 1, respondents where asked some questions linked to greenwashing in order to see what their feelings towards this term was. Everyone was asked how they felt after reading this description and five out of the six respondents expressed that this was a familiar scenario. Many responded that they had heard this happened to existing companies and didn't feel that it was something unusual these days One individual, Sahar, said:

"I think this is something that can happen these days... This is like a marketing ploy it's just marketing unfortunately and because it's a hype you know like organic, ecological, ethical and those things it's a bit of a hype that a lot of companies are riding on." [9]

Sahar answered that she feels that this is something that might happen due to the fact that many companies are "riding the hype" of organic, ethical and ecological products.

Further the respondents all said they would probably stop buying the product, of this hypothetical brand. Last they were asked to express how they think this imaginary company should act at the end of this hypothetical scenario, from their perspective as the consumers. Three respondents, Cathy, Lisa and Sahar, answered that they think this imaginary company should issue a public statement or press release explaining what happened and express their regrets if they have any. They also felt like this company should either stop or actually try to make eco-friendly products. Another respondent, Mickaël, said that he felt that it depends on the company and if they are relatively new to the market their probability of survival is minimum. On the other hand if they are an established company they should probably remain stable.

4.1.7. Respondents

At the end of the interviews the respondents where asked the question if they felt differently about the topics given in this interview. Furthermore the individuals were asked if there was something that they would like to add in addition to the conversation. All the respondents added their own personal

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[9] Sahar, Female student at Malmö Högskola. Personal interview the 10th of May 2014.

opinions. Moreover one individual, Jan, said that concerning the topic of eco-labels he felt that it really depends on which type of product he bought for example if it concerns food he says he looks for ecological or fairtrade. On the other hand if he considers cotton he says he does not pay attention at clothing shops for these labels. Another, Mickaël, says he will try to be more vigilant regarding products with no eco-labels. A third, Sadik, said:

"Their action is production and consumption is our action" [10]

According to Sadik the action of the company is production whilst consumption is our action as consumers.

The two mindsets differ in the understanding of the area concerning knowledge. First and foremost the four students Jan, Mickaël, Sadik and Sahar responded that throughout their studies, they had acquired a comprehension for what it means to have a sustainable lifestyle. Their knowledge regarding the subjects was to a greater extent than people who have not studied the area before. Moreover Cathy and Lisa had no previous knowledge except for what they had experienced while making a purchase. They knew about green marketing and recognized many eco-labels however, they did not comprehend the concepts fully.

4.2. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was made in order to quantify the result retrieved from the personal interviews. A more general view of ethical consumerism and ethical consumption was generated in order to understand consumers' views. The total of 103 respondents answered 15 questions regarding ethical consumption and greenwashing, the last one being optional and open for respondents to add anything they wanted in addition to the already answered questions (see appendix 2).

4.2.1. Respondents

There were a higher number of female respondents, which answered the questionnaire, with a response rate of 67 being 2/3 compared to 36 male respondents an equivalent to 35%. Out of these 103, 2/3 where students and other occupations included working, unemployed, on parental leave and military. The respondents ranged from the age groups starting at 18-20 years

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[10] Sadiq, Male student at Malmö Högskola. Personal interview the 10th of May 2014.

all the way up to the age group of 35+. The highest number of respondents' where between the ages of 21-29 years old.
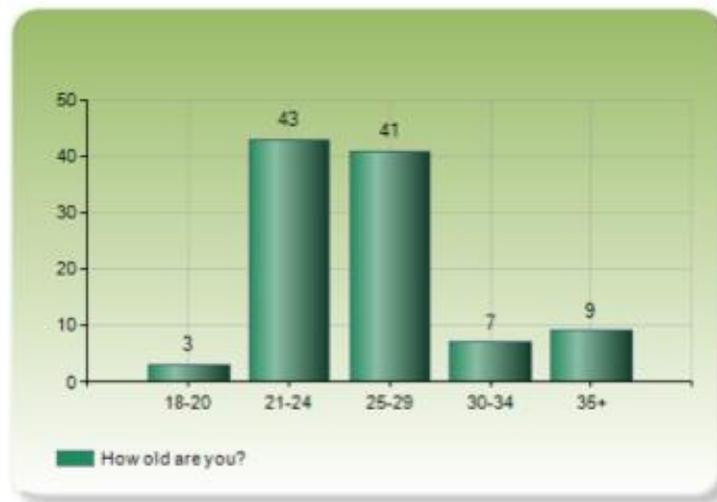

Figure 1. The rate of the respondents' age.

4.2.2. Consumption of ethically conscious products

The first question that strikes an interest, concerning ethically conscious products, is what consumers feel are products that can be place in this category. A number of alternatives where given, with an obvious delimitation or else the options would be too many for this questionnaire, but with an option of adding a product of the respondents own choice. This question was a multiple-choice and lead to a result of the highest rate being fairtrade and eco-friendly products, as seen in figure 2. Organic and sweatshop free had a satisfying result and products branded with eco-labels ended up with the lowest rate. 1.9% answered that they do not know and on the open choice some respondents added some alternatives, which were not given as an option for example sustainable, locally produced and free from animal harm.
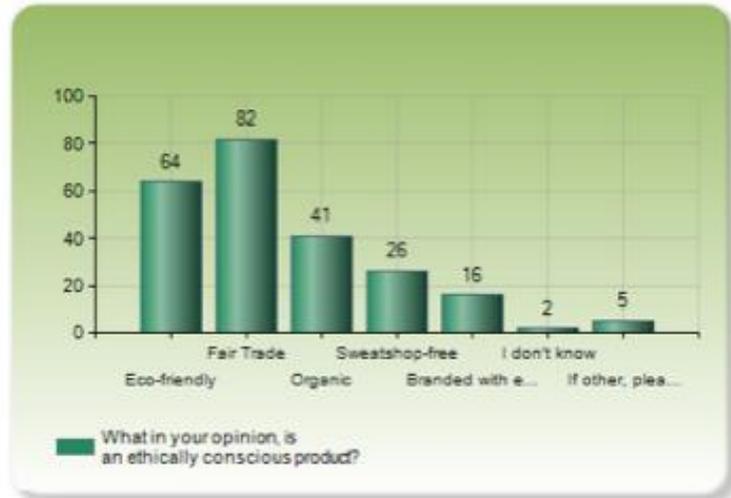
Figure 2. The respondents opinion of what an ethically conscious products is.

Another interesting factor was to explore how many actually buy a product that is ethically conscious and the results showed that 24 respondents answered yes that they do in fact buy these products. The high number of 69 answered that they sometimes buy ethically conscious products, 9 individuals answered that they do not and 4 people said that they do not know if they buy or not. The following two questions are based on the previous answer and ask if you buy these product why do you do so respectively if you do not so why. The highest rated response amongst the individuals that do purchase these products, is that it is good for the environment and then the responses were equally divided between the alternatives health conscious, personal beliefs and that it is the right thing to do. One response added their own opinion, which was labor exploitation and 7 responses had no opinion as their choice. Amongst the individuals that do not purchase these products, there were a significantly high number, 77% of the responses concerning a specific factor, which was that it is too expensive (see figure 3). Some individuals, who responded with their own answers said that they are lazy, it is not available and that there is a lack of options.
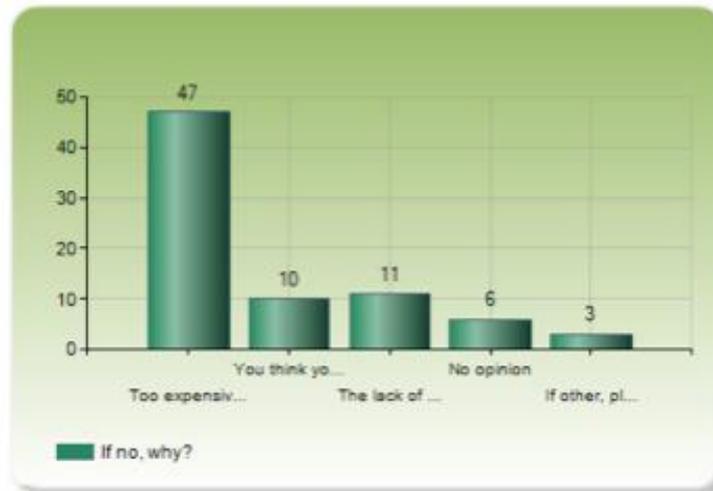
Figure 3. The respondents rated reason for not buying ethically conscious products.

Of the respondents that answered the question concerning which kind of ethically conscious products they buy there was a different spread throughout the different options given. Many individuals replied that the product that is the most purchased amongst them is different kinds of food the answer rate was 84 out of 210, this high number stems from the fact that this question was a multiple choice leading to several answer from the respondents. Other such as beverages, clothes and accessories, health products were also highly rated and the respondents felt that these are something they usually purchase. A few individuals said cosmetics and flight services as their own addition to the question. When looking at the frequency of the purchase habits many respondents were equally spread over the different alternatives. Everything from more than once a week to once a month and only two individuals chose the option once a year. Also as many as 20 answers were given to the alternative I do not know. When the question, if respondents notice eco-friendly products when they go shopping, was made the highest rate of 55 individuals answered sometimes while 41 answered yes. Only 5 respondents answered that they do not know if they notice products when the go shopping and 2 individuals said that they do not know.

4.2.3. Personal views & beliefs

Regarding the questions concerning the respondents own views and beliefs, the question if they were given a choice would they buy ethically conscious products over other, the higher percentage of answers were yes with 67% compared to two individuals answering no. There were 69 responds to the choice of possibly as well as 7 the alternative maybe as seen in figure 4. No

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respondent felt the need to answer I do not know. An interesting question to explore was how people feel about the fact that if their purchase makes a difference or not and the respondents were able to rate from 1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree. 13 individuals answered between 1-2 and 3-5 were spread almost equally amongst the answer rate. The highest number 34 out of the respondents chose 4 and only one individual chose to answer I do not know. One question was structured to understand the term of greenwashing and was formulated as to what the respondents would feel towards a company that is not being as green as they are portraying themselves to be, would they stop buying their products. As many as 59 chose maybe and 37 yes, 2 answered I do not know and finally 8 answered a respectful no. The final question to be answered was if any respondent has ever boycotted a company because of conflicts with their own personal beliefs. As many individuals as 72 said yes, 27 no and 4 I do not know.
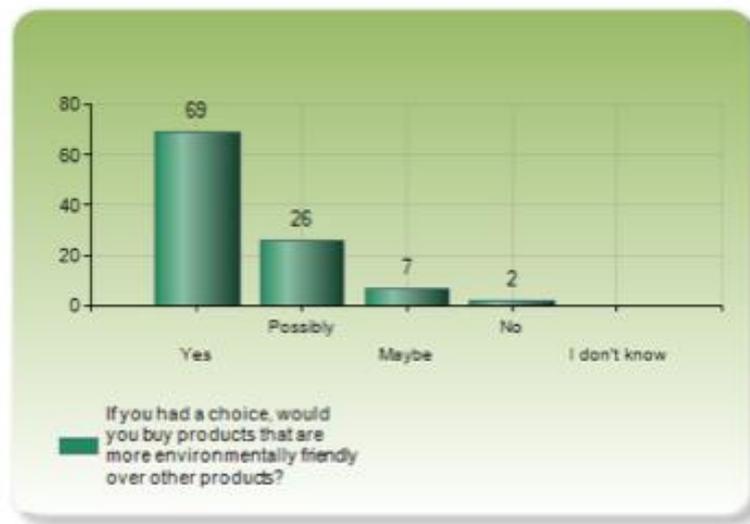

Figure 4. The respondents' choice of buying environmentally friendly products over others.

4.2.4. Respondents opinions

The last question was an open and was free for anyone that wished to express their own opinion concerning the topic of ethical consumerism and adding to anything they felt had been left out. This was added in order to receive important feedback as well as ideas surrounding the research area. Many discussed the factor of finances and that everyone do not have the same means and even if the desire to purchase green products exist many feel that they cannot afford it. Another respondent added that many supermarkets are very proud of their eco-section and product lines while at a clothing shop you might not see a garment is green until you look at the label.

5. Analysis

This chapter connects the theoretical framework with the empirical findings. The discussion will be based on the problem identification and the most relevant findings will be examined with the theoretical framework, which has been presented earlier in the thesis.

5.1. Consumers green knowledge

The first important factor was to determine how scattered the green knowledge was amongst the interviewees and the respondents as well as finding out how green they perceive themselves. The interviewees, who were students, all had extensive green knowledge answering that they comprehended both terminologies asked, green marketing and greenwashing. One, Sahar, said:

"When I hear green marketing it's like organic produce or things that are not affecting the environment in a negative way or things that are helping the environment. About greenwashing it's like the term brainwashing but greenwashing so they try to sell consumers products that they consider to be green. I think it's a very broad term." [11]

However Cathy and Lisa, two of the interviewees, who are at the beginning of their professional careers, had both heard about green marketing before but not the term greenwashing. This complies with Chamorro et al. (2009), who mention how nowadays there is an increase and demand for this area of research, which is shown in the student's knowledge. In the questionnaire, a few questions concerning this were tapped into starting with, *what in your opinion is an ethically conscious product?,* the respondents answered equally to fairtrade, eco-friendly and organic.

They were also asked, *do you buy ethically conscious products?,* 2/3 answered sometimes and 24 with yes. Another question asked was, *if you had a choice, would you buy products that are more environmentally over other products?,* as many as 69 responded yes (see section *4.2.2.*). These three questions align with Ottman (2010) who mentions that a majority of the population nowadays comes in contact with some type of green product and that people feel that it is an important issue. Also the higher response to the option sometimes complies

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[11] Sahar, Female student at Malmö Högskola. Personal interview the 10th of May 2014

with the 30:3 syndrome where 30 percent of the consumers are green thinkers but only 3 percent stand for the market share, meaning they do not practice it (Krahmann 2013). According to Chen and Chang (2013) consumers are more aware of their purchasing decision nowadays leading to the questions of why some consumers purchase ethically conscious product and some do not. Many respondents answered good for the environment, it is the right thing to do, health conscious and because of personal beliefs. The one who do not buy answered mostly because of that it is too expensive with 47 answers (see section *4.2.2.*). Consumers have to understand that in order to put pressure on companies there has to be some sacrifice and dedication from the consumer's perspective (Akenji 2014 ; McEachern & Carrigan 2012).

The questions are also focusing into the area of eco-labeling and whether or not there is knowledge about that. The interviewees were shown and asked about eco-labels in order to determine whether or not they had any knowledge about them and what they views are concerning labeled products. Bleda and Valente (2009) talk about how consumers are willing to buy environmentally friendly products, which are alike to regular products. This was an interesting thought to explore further starting with asking the respondents which eco-labels they recognized and if they knew what they stood for. The most recognized amongst the interviewees was the Mobius loop and fairtrade, also the MSC – marine stewardship council was highly recognized. According to Boström and Klintmann (2008) eco-labels provide a trustworthy and safe option for a consumer while making a purchase and simplify an already complex world of no reliable ingredients. One respondent's answer to this was:

"Most of the time if I buy a product I know the meaning of the eco-label but it's true that sometimes when I buy something they always refer to I love eco for example so I assume that they are from ecologic agriculture but I don't necessarily check all the time what they are for. When there is a label I trust the brand." [12]

This also complies with Kanchanapibul et al. (2014) who state that there is less significance concerning the influence knowledge regarding green purchases. Often individuals trust the companies blindly and feel that it is their right to do so as consumers. Furthermore all respondents answered yes to the question, *have you ever bought a product because of an eco-label?* (see section *4.1.2.*) Others argue that companies take advantage of labeling trying to gain profit

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[12] Mickaël, Male student at Malmö Högskola. Personal interview the 7th of May 2014.

giving the consumers less choices by producing similar products and branding them with different labels confusing the individuals also utilizing false marketing to enhance your product (Bleda & Valente 2009 ; Bruce & Laroiya 2007). A respondent, Cathy, explained that (see section *4.1.2.*):

"I think I have read some details before but now I've forgotten it. Some maybe just means that they support fairtrade and some means only that not all of the products in the process are ecological, just some parts." [13]

Moreover the interviewees were asked, *do you expect a green-labeled product to be completely green?* and *is it too unrealistic to expect a product to be completely green?*. The respondents thought were divided and some said yes and others no because of the supply chain cannot be completely green. One respondent, Sadik, said:

"I can appreciate if the green product is green but I wouldn't affiliate it with the whole company. They wouldn't be my favorite company just because they are producing green products." [14]

The younger generation has a broader sense regarding the information gathered before a purchase (Kanchanapibul et al. 2014). It is important to be educated as consumers in order to make more correct purchasing decisions it is crucial to have an understanding of production not only external information (McEachern & Carrigan 2012 ; Wells et al. 2011). Further also to be consistent in purchasing patterns and learning about the production process (Barnett et al. 2005 ; Peters 2005 ; Williams 2005). Concerning the question of whether or not it is unrealistic some respondents felt that it is not possible at this time but maybe in the future. This might not be an issue in the future since more companies are taking into consideration environmental issues and changing their strategies towards sustainability (Ankit & Mayur 2013 ; Chen & Chang 2013). However one respondent that was positive, Jan, said:

"Probably yes because I think for some products it's just not possible to ensure that it's 100 percent accordingly. Specially with the eco-labels and genetically modified seeds and so on." [15]

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[13] Cathy, Female working. Personal interview the 13th of May 2014
[14] Sadiq, Male student at Malmö Högskola. Personal interview the 10th of May 2014
[15] Jan, Male student at Malmö Högskola. Personal interview the 10th of May 2014

5.2. Companies shaping consumer behavior

The importance of reliability of a company and how they represent themselves respondents were asked in the personal interviews with the question *Is this something you find important and do you feel it is important for companies to be honest in what they are portraying to the consumer?* A majority of the respondents answered that it is a given that companies need no be truthful and one, Sadik, answered it is your own responsibility since no one has forced you to make these claims (see section *4.1.5).* This can also be seen in the theory looking at the six different categories of greenwashing constructed by Terra choice marketing in 2007, many claims are not always accurate or have any substance (Mansvelt & Robbins 2010).

There are some companies, which misrepresent themselves in order to gain market shares. These companies intentionally/unintentionally create a deceptive approach toward their consumers stating an incorrect view of their product (Mansvelt & Robbins 2010 ; Werther & Chandler 2011). Grant (2007) says that companies, which mislead their consumers, represent themselves and their products as being eco-friendly or ethically conscious when this is not the case. A hypothetical scenario was created in order to understand the respondent's feelings towards the subject of green washing in a more in-depth way, as seen in Appendix 1. The respondents were asked to express their feelings and their thought concerning theses types of scenario, after reading the scenario. Several answered that it was mostly familiar an one, Sahar, explained her feelings (see section *4.1.6.)*:

> *"I think this is something that can happen these days… This is like a marketing ploy it's just marketing unfortunately and because it's a hype you know like organic, ecological, ethical and those things it's a bit of a hype that a lot of companies are riding on."* [16]

They later go on saying that they would all stop buying this particular product. This shows consumers sometimes are more aware an unfortunately have to settle for company's actions and false statements. In order to receive bigger response to this question it was also asked in the survey, *If you find out that a company is not being as green as they portray themselves to be, would you stop buying from this particular brand?,* the respondents of the questionnaire were not as straight forward as the interviewees. A higher number of 59 responses were given to the option maybe and 37 to yes. Meaning even thought the respondents were divided it still an answer reflecting that the majority would consider it.

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[16] Sahar, Female student at Malmö Högskola. Personal interview the 10th of May 2014

Since more companies are having to share information about their sustainability strategies and with social media creating an arena for worth-to-mouth to travel instantaneously companies have to be careful so that they don't loose the consumer trust (Chen 2008 ; Chen & Chang 2013). The subject of greenwashing can create a deception amongst consumers as well as leaving them perplexed (Cronin et al. 2011 ; Mansvelt & Robbins 2010). An interesting factor was to see how the respondents felt about this from a consumer perspective. They were asked do *what do you think is the best way for the company to act, from a consumer perspective?,* and three of the respondents, Cathy, Lisa and Sahar, all felt that the best way to make amends with consumers would be to issue a public statement (see section *4.1.6.).* This complies with Ottman (2011) that more companies are trying to change and wanting to become greener and further they might see this as the right outcome.

Another factor is determining if consumers feel differently with some product than with others, one interviewee, Lisa said (see section *4.1.5)*:

"This is hard to say because like H&M if you think about his company they're the only place where I buy my clothes but I think I would think a second time before I buy something in that actual store. I don't think I would stop completely because I'm like everyone else wanting to save money and they have cheap prices." [17]

This complies with Rettie et al. (2012) referring to some difficulties defining "the green consumer" since some individuals have green beliefs however feel differently to others. Even if you have green intentions this might not always be so easy to change (Balabanis 2013). Another respondent, Jan, also complied with Rettie et al. (2012) expressing that he does not pay attention to sustainable clothing as much as food due to the fact that he looks for eco-labels in the supermarket however not in clothing shops (see section *4.1.7.*) Respondents in both the interviews and the questionnaire where asked about boycotting and the interviewees answered both yes and no. However the question, *have you ever boycotted a brand because of their ethics conflicting with your own personal beliefs?,* more than 2/3 answered yes which is a fairly high number, as seen in figure 5.

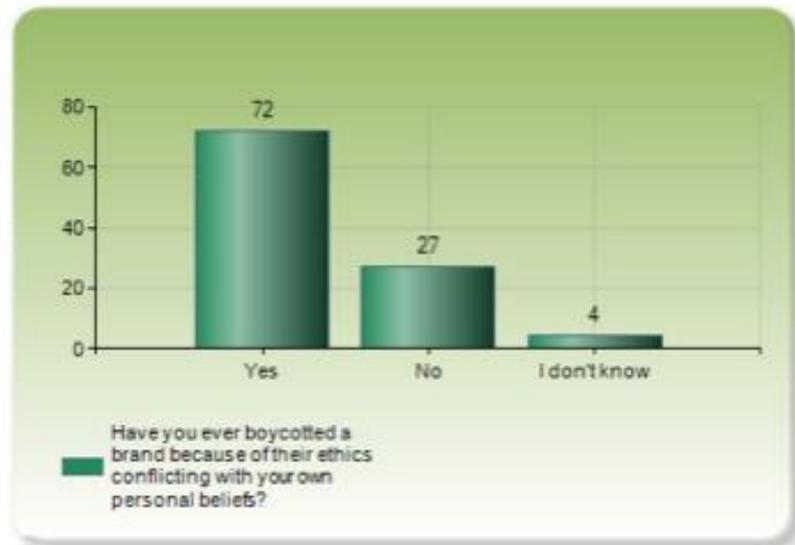[17] Lisa, working. Personal interview the 7th of May 2014

Figure 5. The respondents' rate of boycotting brands conflicting with their own personal beliefs.

This corresponds with Balabanis (2013) view, which explains that even if you might be deeply rooted with your loyalty towards a particular company you might still factor in things that make you more prone to boycott.

6. Conclusion

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations made from the standpoint of the problem identification. The discussion will be based on the opinions and thoughts of the author.

6.1. Are consumers affected by green marketing, whether or not having green knowledge?

There seems to be awareness about ethically conscious products and many individuals se themselves as green consumers. This is crucial for the future while the green consciousness amongst both companies and consumers is increasing. However as seen in this thesis many individuals are green thinkers but might not always be green practitioners. Kanchanapibul (2014) mentions that the younger generation is more prone to having intent of making a green purchase. The actual behavior needs to change rather than just the intentional. Furthermore some individuals might want to purchase more ethically conscious products but are hindered for financial reasons. Hopefully this will change and green products will become the norm. Concerning the topic of green knowledge the most important is to be educated and to be aware of what you are purchasing many consumers might not always be aware of what they are buying. Fairly often individuals think that they are educated green buyers when in fact they do not always have the complete knowledge regarding products, labeling and sustainable supply chains. Many respondents, which were students in this thesis had a knowledge about sustainability and there needs to be more information for people which have not chosen to study or work in this area. An important lesson is that consumers are able to change the views and strategies of companies by making better choices and the awareness of how your purchasing decisions is not known to a greater extent. This has to change and gathering information about different ingredients as well as the processes around the end product is vital in becoming a green consumer. This way we as consumers are not just blindly trusting companies and embracing their statements and claims. There has to be a sense of responsibility in addition to consumer behavior making consumers feel that they are doing something meaningful.

6.2. Do companies who misrepresent themselves intentionally/unintentionally affect consumer behavior, from a consumer perspective?

Companies need to be honest in what they are portraying to the consumers since it is their own choice to claim certain green statements. It is a shame when companies are "caught" for having misrepresented themselves and as a consumer you would expect or even feel that you demand truthfulness from companies. Unfortunately there will always be those who take advantage of the easy targets, in this case not well-informed consumers. There is always the option of either buying a conventional product versus an ethically conscious one and the opportunity to have this possibility is for some imperative. Consumers have to view products and companies with a more critical eye making sure that what they are claiming is accurate. The term greenwashing needs to be more communicated more through information channels in order for consumers to be more aware of it. Companies have to be held accountable if they are greenwashing their products as well as they have to stand for what they are producing. Even though companies might not be greenwashing intentionally it interferes with consumer loyalty and trusts and can be damaging for a companies image. It also leads to consumers changing their way of thinking and becoming more reprehensive and suspicious towards green product. This can lead to people becoming more anti-green whilst their intensions were good from the beginning. However even though in a perfect world no company would be greenwashing this will not be possible nowadays and many consumers, whilst wanting to have a more sustainable lifestyle will not be able to change for many reasons such as financial, loyalty to a brand or even the fact that they know it is wrong but they just do not care.

6.3. Further research

Further research would be interesting since there are still many areas to focus on and because of delimitation there was not a possibility to cover all of it in this thesis. Moreover concerning these research questions another approach would be to further investigate the consumer's responsibility compared to the companies. Often the blame is put on the company but how much responsibility do we have as consumers?

Another research question would be to target the older generation and investigate their views on the increasing sustainability phenomena as well as

researching to which extent they are green practitioners and if that's not the case can their views be changed.

Also researching to which extent feel responsible for example at the market or supermarket, or whilst buying an eco-friendly car or maybe even while planning an ethically conscious vacation.

These are all areas worth exploring and suggestions for further research.

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Appendix 1: Template for personal interviews

(Semi-structured)

Author presentation: Lisbeth Alvina Urzua - Green marketing & ethical consumption.

Respondent presentation – background

This interview will be divided in to two sections one regarding green marketing and the other about green washing. These sections will be merged at the end linking the interview together.

- ➢ Learning about this subject and area of research, have you ever heard the terms green marketing and green washing before, in what context?

First and foremost the author of the thesis will introduce the term concerning each section letting the respondent retrieve an understanding for the research area.

The author will start by showing selected eco-labels letting the respondent see if they recognize any of them and what they think they stand for. This way the knowledge of eco-labels is set. It is to establish whether or not it is important for consumers to understand what they are buying or if it is just for the sake of the purchase.

- ➢ Do you recognize these labels?
- ➢ Do you know what they stand for?
- ➢ Have you ever bought a product because of an eco-label?

Later a discussion about how trustworthy the respondent feels that companies are while making their purchase. For example if you buy a t-shirt at H&M because it has a label stating it is eco-friendly, is it in your mind a certainty that all the company or at least the production behind the making of the t-shirt, is ethically conscious. Giving the author an insight to B2C relationships as well as how trust relates to it.

- ➢ Have you ever bought an ethically conscious product?
- ➢ Do you expect a green-labeled product to be completely green?
- ➢ Is it too unrealistic to expect a product to be completely green?
- ➢ Do you trust the companies producing eco-friendly products and how would you feel if you found out that they are not being what they are portraying themselves to be? Like, H&M for example..
- ➢ Would you feel betrayed?

- Is this something you find important and do you feel it is important for companies to be honest in what they are portraying to the consumer?
- Do you think that in today's society revolving around social media, companies can get a "bad reputation" quicker and that they should be more aware of their green marketing strategies?
- If the trust gets broken would you stop buying from this particular company/brand?

Then there will be an introduction of the term greenwashing. The respondent will be given a hypothetical scenario of a company that does not exist, letting them get in touch with their own feelings towards this kind of situation also letting them respond to what they think is the best way to act.

Hypothetical scenario:

Imagine a company named Greenest Inc., which produces many personal hygiene products, have had a lot of success with their brand. They were the new it company and thanks to big ad campaign they managed to spread their wonderful products all over blogs, social media, magazines etc. Due to the growing popularity in greener lifestyle and eco-friendly products over the recent years, the initial strategy of Greenest Inc. was to be an ethically conscious company. They marketed their products as ecological and organic, free from any harm to the environment, selling their product in bio-shops. Ads where made portraying products as eco-friendly making consumers believe that this was a genuine brand wanting to preserve the earth. However slowly it started to pop up on social medias that consumers where calling Greenest Inc. a fraud leading to more and more accusations. It had been publicly known that this green company was not in fact as green as they were portraying themselves to be. Many of the ingredients were inorganic chemicals and in some cases even dangerous to the environment. This lead to a decrease in popularity for Greenest Inc. and they had to face the truth about their deceptive ways.

- How do you feel when you read this story?
- Would you stop buying their product?
- What do you think is the best way for the company to act, from a consumer perspective?
- Would you think/feel differently if you were a green consumer? (Question for respondents which don't identify themselves as being a green consumer)

Finally the two sections will be linked together and the respondent will explain if they learned something and if their views have change.

- Do you feel that your views have changed concerning green marketing and greenwashing?

Appendix 2: Template for Questionnaire

1. **Gender**
   -Male
   -Female

2. **How old are you?**
   - 18-20
   - 21-24
   - 25-29
   - 30-34
   - 35+

3. **Are you currently?**
   - Student
   - Working
   - Unemployed
   - I don't want to say
   - If other please specify _____

4. **What in your opinion is an ethically conscious product?**
   - Eco-friendly
   - Fair Trade
   - Organic
   - Sweatshop-free
   - Branded with eco-labels
   - I don't know
   - If other please specify _____

5. **Do you buy ethically conscious products?**
   - Yes
   - Sometimes
   - No
   - I don't know

6. **If yes, why?**
   - Good for the environment
   - Health conscious
   - Personal beliefs
   - The right thing to do
   - No opinion
   - If other please specify _____

7. **If no, why?**
   - Too expensive

- You think your purchase will have no impact
- The lack of visibility at the shop, supermarket or market
- No opinion
- If other please specify_____

8. **If you are buying ethically conscious product, which kind do you buy?**
   - Food
   - Beverages
   - Clothes accessories
   - Furniture
   - Health products
   - Car
   - If other please specify _____

9. **If you are buying ethically conscious products, how often do you do so?**
   - More than once a week
   - Once a week
   - Every two weeks
   - Once a year
   - I don't know

10. **If you had a choice, would you buy products that are more environmentally friendly over other products?**
    - Yes
    - Possibly
    - Maybe
    - No
    - I don't know

11. **Please grade by choosing the alternative that best suits your opinion. 1= Strongly disagree, 5= Strongly agree**
    - Do you think buying eco-friendly product makes a difference?

12. **Do you notice eco-friendly products when you go shopping, for example a supermarket or clothing shop?**
    - Yes
    - Sometimes
    - No
    - I don't know

13. **If you find out that a company is not being as green as they portray themselves to be, would you stop buying from this particular brand?**
    - Yes
    - Maybe

- No
- I don't know

14. Have you ever boycotted a brand because of their ethics conflicting with your own personal beliefs?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

15. If you feel that something has been left out concerning the topic of ethical consumerism, please feel free to express your opinion.