Are you a Mind Full or a Mindful consumer?

A case study exploring which factors influence the mindful consumption mindset and behavior of Swedish students

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the present study is to contribute to existing gap in the literature regarding mindful consumption, which is the fundamental subject of this thesis. The research is focused on the identification of factors that influence the sense of caring in Swedish student’s mindset and temperance in their behavior with respect to mindful consumption. The literature search revealed that these factors are yet to be identified. Therefore, the present study aims to contribute to existing gap in literature by exploring Swedish students’ mindful consumption and extracting the internal and external factors that influence it.

Research Methodology: By conducting an in-depth case study analysis, the present research relied on the application of mindful consumption framework in order to accomplish the above-mentioned purpose of the research. The present paper was conducted by applying a qualitative research strategy. A total of six in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted and the collected data were further analyzed by applying thematic analysis method for qualitative data analysis in which the data were first coded and later these codes were analyzed and grouped together in order to develop themes that would further indicate the factors that influence the sense of caring in mindset and temperance in behavior among Swedish students.

Findings: The findings have revealed that internal and external factors influence mindful consumption mindset and behavior of Swedish students. Furthermore, it was revealed that these factors highly interact which each other and together reinforce mindful consumption mindset and behavior. The findings further revealed that mindful consumption needs to be further promoted by governments, the media, lobby institutions and other organizations, especially because people view it as important and capable of contributing and changing current unsustainable consumption patterns.

Keywords: consumption; consumer behavior; mindful consumption.
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1. Introduction

‘Today humanity uses the equivalent of 1.6 Earths to provide the resources we use and absorb our waste. This means it now takes the Earth one year and six months to regenerate what we use in a year. We use more ecological resources and services than nature can regenerate through overfishing, overharvesting forests, and emitting more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than forests can sequester.’ (Global Footprint Network, 2017).

As Global Footprint Network (2017) remarks, today’s population overuses resources and services which consequently damages our planet. Government Offices of Sweden Ministry of Finance (2016, p. 3) asserts that many of the most pressing environmental issues can partially be attributed to people’s private consumption patterns which are harmful to the planet, and indicates the necessity to change the “how and what” people consume. Additionally, Håkansson (2014, p. 692) also observed that in the last centuries humanity has witnessed a substantial increase in consumption, and further refers to the concept of overconsumption which is widely used to criticize contemporary consumption patterns and their implications on the physical and psychological health, and on the natural environment (Håkansson, 2014, p. 697). Consumption is therefore seen as a highly problematic phenomenon nowadays with a growing number of people acknowledging and criticizing contemporary consumption patterns (Håkansson, 2014, p. 692).

Therefore, the previous argument confirms that consumption nowadays is unsustainable (Holt, 2012, p. 236) and effective initiatives are highly called for in order to alter this. These initiatives need to be concerned with the actions taken by people who live today in order not to jeopardize the prospects of succeeding generations, so that their enjoyed welfare and patterns of consumption can be comparable to those enjoyed by people living at present (Broomley, 2008, cited by Meng, 2015, p. 88).

Sustainability has been defined in many ways and there is still not a unified definition of what sustainability is (Jørgensen et al., 2013, p. 1441). Nonetheless, Carvalho et al. (2015, p. 402) argue that the most widely referred to definition of the concept states that fundamental concern of sustainability lies in “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”. This is the particular definition that we will rely on throughout this thesis, because we argue that it is compatible with the topic of the present study. Since the definition implies that you should meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations, we argue that this definition illustrates the same values as disseminated by the topic of the present research. Namely, you should be aware of how you an what you do affect the present and the future, and, more importantly, that you should be aware of your consumption since it has an impact on both the present and the future.

However, for many decades it appeared that measures related to enhancing sustainability were in the sole responsibility of the organizational level, and that it was primarily in the hands of the company executives to take into consideration the environmental consequences of their business operations (Kleindorfer et al., 2005, cited in Bask et al., 2012, p. 381). Therefore, the “triple bottom line” of sustainability was composed in order to emphasize that business performance should be reflective not merely of its economic (profit) results, but also of environmental (planet) and social (people) impacts that its
operations are generating (Sheth et al., 2010, p. 21). On the other hand, Bask et al. (2012, p. 381) note that it is of increasing significance to become aware of the implications caused to the environment within the entire supply chain. Therefore, the authors note that consumers are particularly crucial actors in promoting sustainability by, for instance, acknowledging the consequences of their consumption patterns and decisions and, as a consequence, by altering them.

Other authors who are also discussing the issues regarding overconsumption and its implications on sustainability are Sheth et al. (2010). According to the scholars, overconsumption refers to a situation in which ‘the level of consumption becomes unaffordable or unacceptable because of its environmental or economic consequence’ (Sheth et al., 2010, p. 25). To deal with this situation, the researchers presented a concept called Mindful Consumption (MC) which is a sustainable mindset for consumption consisting of elements that, according to the researchers, constitute consumers’ mindful mindset and behavior. This framework emerged as a ‘guiding principle’ for the Customer-Centric Sustainability approach which is an alternative for current sustainability approaches. It requires to adjust the before-mentioned triple-bottom-line dimensions of sustainability in order to include the consumer in sustainability related initiatives (Sheth et al., 2010, p. 22). This concept will be explained further in the theory chapter.

However, the authors further highlight that ‘research is needed to identify factors that influence the sense of caring in mindset and temperance in behavior.’ (Sheth et al., 2010, p. 34). Therefore, it indicates an existing gap in current literature which we will aim to fill by undertaking the current study. Therefore, the previously mentioned suggestion by Sheth et al. (2010) regarding future research, will be the main objective of the current study. In other words, based on the arguments above, the purpose of the present research is to contribute to existing literature regarding Mindful Consumption which is currently scarce. Hence, this work will focus on the characteristics of MC, overconsumption, and particularly consumer behavior. Furthermore, we have determined that the unit of analysis within the current research will be Swedish students where their consumption behavior and mindset will be thoroughly explored.

The underlying reason for selecting students is mainly guided by the fact that today’s students will be the future mass consumers with high income. This is essential since consumption is to a large extent influenced by the amount of income consumers have. Students in Sweden receive a grant from the government on a monthly basis, ten months in a year. The amount is approximately 10 000 SEK which equals 1 025 €, and is lower than the average wage in Sweden which, for the lowest paid worker, was 22 800 SEK in 2015 in the municipality (Larsson, 2016, p. 5). Certainly, the average wage differs depending on certain factors such as educational background, private or public sector, etcetera. Additionally, since we had issues to find respondents, they were chosen because they were the easiest individuals to access. It must, however, be underlined that if we had unlimited access to participants, students would not have been selected due to the fact that income is an important factor affecting and, of course, limiting consumption.

The choice of Swedish students for the investigation was guided by an important assumption that we have made and which we believe has a significant impact on the current research. Within this study, we are inevitably touching upon the subject of sustainability which is of extreme importance for Sweden to accomplish (The Swedish Research Council Formas, 2011). Furthermore, since our research question originates
from Sheth et al.’s (2010) suggestion for future research, we argue that in order to get the best and most reliable insights about mindful consumption, it is crucial to conduct this research in a context where people are aware and knowledgeable of sustainability. We assume that within Sweden the values regarding sustainability are already strongly established, rather than still being in the emergence phase. If we had also chosen to investigate international and exchange students, it might have occurred that these students originate from countries where sustainability does not receive as much attention as it does in Sweden, consequently having a negative impact on their knowledge, awareness, and concern regarding sustainability issues. Thus, we believe that the revelation of factors that influence the sense of caring in mindset and temperance in behavior with respect to mindful consumption will be most accurately accomplished in a setting where awareness and concern regarding sustainability is already strongly ingrained in that setting, which we assume is the case in Sweden. Later in the thesis, we will make further argumentation regarding why we have chosen to interview students specifically.

Therefore, since the purpose is to contribute to the existing literature gap, this leads to the presentation of the study’s research question which we will seek to explore and answer:

1. Which internal and external factors influence the sense of caring in mindset and temperance in behavior among Swedish students with respect to mindful consumption?
2. Research Methodology

This chapter presents the ontological and epistemological assumption taken within the current study. These methodological assumptions are significant since they drive the further execution of the research and the succeeding choices made during the research process are guided by these methodological assumptions. The chapter further presents the research approach, research purpose and strategy, as well as the research design. The chapter concludes with a discussion on research ethics and quality.

2.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the development of knowledge and to the nature of that knowledge. The selection of the research philosophy is particularly important because the further decision concerning research strategies, approaches, and other relevant methods will be dictated by the philosophical assumptions made (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 107). Furthermore, it is essential for business and management researchers to be aware of the philosophical engagements they make since it has significant influence on what they do and on how they understand what they are investigating (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 108).

2.1.1 Preconceptions

It is essential to underline potential preconceptions the authors may have within this study. First of all, both of us have a sustainable outlook because we are interested in this topic. Further, we have enrolled to classes that are providing information about sustainability, and consequently we are informed and possess knowledge about it. In fact, the research paper that is presenting the Mindful Consumption framework was presented to Izabelle during one of the courses she undertook named Marketing Ethics and Sustainability which is available at Umeå University.

The sustainable outlook could have implied that we addressed this topic in a favorable way which also implies that this thesis will, to some extent, be biased. However, since we are aware of the importance of being objective, we tried to exclude our personal opinions and values regarding sustainability. In order to succeed, we avoided to confirm or in any way behave in positive way if the respondents replied in a way that is positive with respect to sustainability. For instance, if a respondent explained that he or she did consider the environment when consuming, we avoided replying or reacting to it in a positive way. Instead, we had a neutral throughout this approach.

2.1.2 Ontology

Ontology refers to the theory of existence and it is concerned with the nature of reality (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 110; Lee 2012, p. 406) or that of social entities (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 20). In business and management research fields, it refers to the assumptions that researchers build about the nature of the world and how it operates, and to the commitment made by the researcher to a particular view (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 110). Ontology is divided into two main opposing positions of objectivism and subjectivism/constructivism. The former asserts that social phenomena exist independently or separately from social actors meaning that social phenomena have a reality that cannot be reached or influenced (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 21). It supports the view of reality as a concrete in nature, and the view of human beings as adaptive and responding mechanisms whose behavior is predictable and determinate (Morgan &
Smircich, 1980, p. 494). On the other hand, subjectivist/constructivist position claims that social phenomena are being formed and revised by social actors on a continuous basis (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 22). Moreover, according to the subjectivist/constructivist view, social reality is dependent on people’s minds, interests, points of view, and purposes. Consequently, it is argued that absolute objectivity is unattainable because social phenomena are naturally prone to being interpreted as human beings perceive them, but not as they really are (Slevitch, 2011, p. 77). Therefore, researchers who employ a subjectivist/constructivist stance are particularly interested in exploring the variety of experiences of their study participants that are accomplished through practices, interactions, or discourses. As such, subjectivist/constructivist position supports the existence of “truths” rather than just one indisputable truth (Cunliffe, 2011, p. 656).

If an objectivist perspective was taken within this thesis, consumption behavior and decision-making would be viewed as a process that is independent of human mind rather than being structured by it. Furthermore, consumers would be regarded as social actors who simply follow and adhere to the various external pressures that shape their consumption choices and that are beyond their impact. However, an alternative viewpoint is argued to be taken since consumption can be regarded as a social activity over which consumers can express self-control and be self-conscious about (Murray & Ozanne, 1991, p. 129). Moreover, it can be argued that consumers have subjective freedom to decide what they want to purchase and how they want to purchase, meaning that consumer purchasing decisions are determined by their wants, aspirations, desires, and purposes. This is arguably a social construct because consumers attach subjective meanings to their consumption behavior which further motivates their purchasing decisions (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 111).

In addition, it can be argued that the concept of mindful consumption is an outcome of human, and consequently our respondents’ interpretation and sensemaking of the surrounding environment, which makes it a social construct. With an objectivist position, we would ignore this aspect and assume that mindful consumption is perceived uniformly among the people whom we will investigate. As a result, we would lose the ability to take into consideration and understand people’s divergent interpretations of the concept in question, which we believe is the case. Consequently, this thesis will be written from the subjectivist/constructivist perspective of reality since it is crucial for us to explore how the different interpretations and perceptions of what mindful consumption is affect people’s actions with respect to purchasing and consuming.

2.1.3 Epistemology

According to Moser (2002, p. 1) epistemology refers to theories about the nature of knowledge. Carter & Little (2007, p. 1319) assert that each person, consciously or unconsciously, ‘adopts a theory of knowledge’. It appears to be of significance to define knowledge because it influences our way of perceiving the world, and in turn the way research is conducted. Once ‘we have such an understanding can we examine these assumptions, challenge them if we think it appropriate, and behave in a different way.’ (Saunders et al, 2008, p. 108-109).

However, the two most dominant epistemological paradigms are positivism and interpretivism (Gray, 2014, p. 21). Positivism claims that one single real world exists. In this unitary world, the only phenomena and events possible to observe and which are available to our senses, create reality (Smith, 2015, p. 10). Generalizations and ‘reducing
phenomena to simplest elements’ is further promoted (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 119). René Descartes (1637) and David Hume (1711-76) (cited in Ritchie et al, 2014, p. 9) both underline the importance of being objective, and of conducting research in an unbiased way, since subjectivity ‘might corrupt [the] analytical capacity.’ Moreover, positivistic researchers often take a deductive approach, meaning that they seek information about an existing theory which later is used to develop a hypothesis that in the end is tested. As such, the theory initially used will be developed by the results (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 113).

From another point of view, Kant (1781) (cited in Ritchie et al, 2014, p. 9) asserted that people do not only use direct observations with their senses, but that they also interpret ‘what the senses tell us.’ In contrast to positivism, interpretivism argues that information about the world emerges from people’s reflection and interpretations of the phenomena in the world. These facts, along with subjective meanings (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 119), are what constitute interpretivism (Ritchie et al, 2014, p. 13). In this way, interpretivism is similar to constructivism (Gray, 2014, p. 23).

Therefore, our previous choice of constructivism with respect to the ontological position leads us to write this thesis from an interpretivist standpoint to knowledge. Interpretivism coincides with the ontological position of subjectivism/constructivism because interpretivists believe that social reality cannot be regarded as objective, rather it is subjectively construed and is shaped by our perceptions (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 45). Therefore, with mindful consumption as the prime area of interest of this thesis, it is essential to explore how individuals perceive mindful consumption as well as feel about it. With respect to interpretivist standpoint, the researchers of this paper will apply their interpretive understanding of the phenomenon in question, with an objective to also gain one throughout this study. Consequently, with an interpretivist viewpoint to knowledge, it is inevitable that the researcher is in a position where he/she can isolate himself/herself from the subjects being researched (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 45) Furthermore, our research is concerned with the exploration of individual’s mindful consumption mindset and behavior. Hence, in order to examine which factors influence the mindset and behavior of the individuals, it is crucial for us to untangle the underlying subjective details, such as various motives, reasons, values, and meanings which each investigated individual attaches to mindful consumption (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988, p. 511). Furthermore, the objects of this study are human beings. This implies that the nature of mindful consumption is and must to be understood as extremely perplexing and complex. Therefore, we aim to unravel how mindful consumption as a concept and as a way of behaving exists and is formed within human minds.

2.2 Research Orientation

2.2.1 Research Approach

Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 11-14) mainly discuss two research approaches for establishing the relationship between theory and research. These are deductive and inductive approaches. Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 11) present a deductive approach as a process that begins with the theory, then moves to the generation of hypothesis based on the theoretical considerations. After the hypothesis is developed, the collection of data is undertaken and the hypothesis is either confirmed or rejected based on the findings. Lastly, another step might be taken concerned with the modification of the theory. Therefore, a deductive
reasoning is a top-down process which is the reason why it is frequently associated with a quantitative research strategy (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 6). On the other hand, an inductive approach represents a reversed process since theory is not tested but is rather the outcome of the research conducted (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 13). Therefore, induction is concerned with the creation of knowledge through the observations of the world which in turn provides a strong foundation of evidence for the development of theory. Consequently, qualitative research is often understood as an inductive process (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 6-7). However, Ritchie et al. (2014, p. 6) highlight that there is no such thing that can be labelled as “pure deduction” or “pure induction” since deduction can entail an element of induction and vice versa (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 13). As a result, Saunders et al. (2009, p. 127) refer to another approach to link theory with research called *abductive*, which is concerned with the combination of deduction and induction into one research approach.

Thereby, within our study we will employ an inductive approach. Our research question is concerned with the identification of factors that influence the sense of caring in mindset and temperance in behavior regarding mindful consumption. However, while conducting literature search we have not been able to detect any existing literature that has attempted to identify these factors. Therefore, it was an indicator to us that we are exploring a completely new perspective in which theoretical contributions are lacking. Consequently, it was evident that these theoretical contributions can only be built by undertaking observations in the field of interest which would then provide a foundation for theory development. This approach can be linked to the inductive reasoning as described previously.

### 2.2.2 Research Purpose

There are three main classifications of research purpose presented by Saunders et al. (2008, p. 138-141). These are: exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive. It was determined that for the present research the most suitable approach is the exploratory research purpose which is concerned with clarifying and deepening one’s understanding about a problem, especially in cases when the nature of the problem is not known. In addition, exploratory researchers try to gain more comprehensive understanding about a specific group, process, activity, or situation of which there is no or little scientific knowledge. However, these researchers believe that these areas are worthy to be explored (Stebbins, 2001, p. 6). Furthermore, Saunders et al. (2008, p. 139) refer to Robson (2002) in highlighting that an exploratory study is particularly relevant when seeking new insights and perspectives about what is happening with respect to a certain phenomenon of interest. Therefore, because there are few research studies related to exploring the concept of mindful consumption and since this thesis aims to fill the gap in existing literature by identifying the factors that influence students’ mindset and behavior in mindful consumption, we believe that an exploratory research purpose will serve as the best approach in aiming to accomplish this. Furthermore, an exploratory research purpose is highly compatible with the chosen inductive research approach within this thesis. According to Stebbins (2001, p. 7-8) an exploratory research is primarily inductive in nature because it would not be possible to uncover new insights and observations by relying on a deductive reasoning alone. Within this thesis, we aim to generate new concepts and theories that do not exist in current literature regarding mindful consumption.
On the other hand, although a descriptive study may be regarded as an extension to the exploratory research, it was determined not to be a suitable approach because it requires having a thorough and clear knowledge about the investigated phenomena on which one will collect the data, prior to the actual collection of data (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 140). As mentioned previously, with respect to the present research, this cannot be accomplished due to the lack of existing literature in the current field of interest. Furthermore, an exploratory research purpose does not fit within the present study because the primary aim of an explanatory research is to uncover causal relationships between the examined variables. Therefore, this approach is more suitable for studies of a quantitative nature (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 140).

2.2.3 Research Strategy

In the field of research, two main strategies of conducting research exist: quantitatively or qualitatively. The latter refers to collection of non-quantitative information which later is deeply reviewed and analyzed. In contrast, quantitative research is characterized by a manner in which researchers are ‘defining variables … and then quantifying observations.’ This is often made through surveys or questionnaires (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. xiv). These two approaches will be explained further below.

Simply put, quantitative research ‘use numbers to describe what exists.’ (Gray et al, 2007, p. 42). As Saunders et al. (2012, p. 414) mention, before this data has any meaning, it must be processed with techniques, such as graphs, charts and statistics. Moreover, this kind of approach is also focusing on measuring ‘the relationship between quantitatively derived variables’ and the methods used are mostly deductive (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. 30). Its main advantage is that numbers are easily counted, stored, manipulated, and replicated, but on the other hand, quantitative information lacks deeper meanings (Gray et al, 2007, p. 42).

As mentioned before, qualitative research involves gathering of non-quantitative information in which the focus is held at ‘people’s subjective experience’. In contrast to quantitative research, there is a focus on ‘words … that convey what exists’ (Gray et al, 2007, p. 42). The purpose is to understand people’s meanings, perceptions, and constructions about the social world (Breakwell et al., 2012, p. 323) which also is the main contribution and benefit of this approach (Gray et al, 2007, p. 42). This does, however, imply that replication of qualitative researches may be more challenging than for quantitative researches. People use this approach since not all questions are measurable quantitatively and since the purpose is to fully understand human actions and intentions. This is something quantitative data will not provide (Breakwell et al., 2012, p. 326).

Breakwell et al. (2012) further refer to Finlay & Evans (2009) and Willing (2001) who argue that qualitative research is characterized by openness, and thus can be seen as an adventure. Accordingly, when researchers use this approach, they are open to all kind of answers they receive since they deeply want to understand how people think and feel. As such, because of this openness, qualitative research seldom involves predictions and testing of hypotheses. This is also why open questions are preferred (cited by Breakwell et al, 2012, p. 333).

Within this thesis, the objective is also to explore and comprehend how people think and feel with respect to mindful consumption. In order to accomplish this, a strategy is needed
that would allow for an in-depth analysis and understanding of the selected research participants, their mindset, and behavior with regard to the intricate matter of consumption. Therefore, a qualitative research strategy was determined to best provide for this ability. Furthermore, the previously taken philosophical assumptions are congruous with a qualitative research strategy, since qualitative research is frequently associated with an interpretivist philosophy which guides the current study, as well as qualitative research often takes an inductive approach (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 163). Furthermore, the current research is regarded as an adventure, as discussed by Breakwell et al. (2012), because we are striving to immerse ourselves into a new area that has not been explored extensively. Hence, we do not know what theoretical perspectives, if any, we will be able to draw from our study. Therefore, we must be open with respect to every answer we receive as well as be flexible in analysing the collected data and in making inferences.

2.2.4 Research Design

There are several approaches of research design in relation to an exploratory and inductive research. One of them is referred to as ethnography which is usually associated with an endeavor of immersing oneself in a group and observing the behavior, listening to conversations, and asking questions within that group (Bryman, 2012, p. 432). Consequently, ethnography is an extremely time-consuming research strategy that typically takes an extended period of time to conduct since the phenomenon is analyzed in the context in which it occurs (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 149-150). Another research design is called grounded theory and it involves a combination of an inductive and deductive reasoning in order to build new theory (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 148). Additionally, grounded theory is considered to be useful in explaining business and management related issues as much of it is concerned about people, such as consumers or employees (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 149). On the other hand, when collecting data in grounded theory, no formation of a theoretical framework is done initially as the observations need to be done first in order to be able to confirm or reject the generated predictions (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 149). Another research design related to an exploratory research purpose is case study design that is widely employed in business research (Bryman, 2012, p. 67). It refers to the description, understanding, prediction and control of the individual (Woodside, 2010, p. 1). However, it is pointed out that the deep understanding of the studied individuals, their interactions and behaviors undertaken in a specific process should be regarded as a key objective for analysis in case study research (Woodside, 2010, p. 6).

Within this thesis, a case study design was determined to be most suitable because our research question is concerned with the exploration of mindful consumption mindset and behavior of individuals in a specific context, i.e. students of Swedish nationality. A case study design will provide the ability to explore and understand this context in great depth (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 146).

2.2.5 Research Ethics

Research ethics is concerned with how the research is conducted, and with the ‘the moral values … that form the basis of a code of conduct.’ The most crucial issues refer to the participants and the way in which researchers handle the provided information. Several issues relating to this are voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 32).
The voluntary participation means that the participants have the right to decide themselves if they want to participate or not. This is not something that should be enforced by the researchers. Further, financial or material rewards should not be used as an attempt to get them to participate since this may lead them to provide biased information. The respondents should further be informed about the requirements of participating as well as the amount of time demanded. Researchers should, however, be careful in giving away too much of the information regarding the research and its purpose. Finally, it is not appropriate to harm the respondents by causing stress or other psychological harm (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 32).

Anonymity and confidentiality refer to the fact that the respondents’ identities and the information they provide should be handled in a professional and careful way. Unless they want to, the findings should not be linked or traceable to their names. These terms should be described and offered for the respondents. The anonymity and confidentiality part is of particular significance for this work since we argue it contributed to more open and honest answers from the participants. This is an important aspect because we are exploring a rather sensitive topic and the revelation of interviewees’ identities might have influenced them to provide more favorable and biased answers. In some circumstances, it may be of significance to actually link a participant with their name if that particular person is associated with a specific role. This must, certainly, be discussed with the participant since their consent is needed (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 32-33).

With respect to the present study, we made sure that our participants were given substantial information regarding the intents of the current project with regard to how their provided data will be used further in the analysis. Furthermore, after providing this information we made sure to give the respondents the opportunity to decide whether to participate in the research or not, by inquiring if they agree to be interviewed before the start of every interview. Moreover, the disclosure of the identities of the participants was not of relevance. Therefore, before the start of every interview we informed the respondents that their identities will be held in the strictest confidence, which they all assented to.

2.2.6 Research Quality

Validity and reliability are two highly emphasized terms when it comes to research. They qualify a good measurement and conducted research (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009, p. 59). The validity implies that a measurement should measure what it is supposed to measure as well as that the result should ‘reflect the phenomena under study’. Reliability, on the other hand, denotes that the conducted research should be easy to reproduce and that the same results should emerge if the same variables are tested twice. Thus, it should be consistent. It is also an indicator of how accurate and precise the measurement is. Reliability is of significance and often high for quantitative studies, while it is not as important for qualitative researches simply because it is not needed (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 52-53)

Validity is further subdivided into internal validity and external validity. The former refers to the degree in which the result emerged because of our interventions, and not any other factors (Saunders et al. 2012, p. 143) while the latter is synonym with generalisability, that is; how applicable the result is to other settings (Breakwell et al, 2012, p. 78). Another common form of validity is the face validity. Its purpose is to
confirm that, again, that the measurements should measure what they are aiming to measure. Moreover, construct validity is a term useful when the research includes hypothetical constructs, that is: activities and phenomena that may be hard to measure, such as motivation or satisfaction. Accordingly, construct validity measures to what extent the result reflect the constructs (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 53).

According to LeCompte & Goetz (1984) (cited by Whittemore et al, 2001, p. 523) these terms emerged initially for quantitative research. Hence, the terms above are suitable for quantitative studies. Additionally, Whittemore et al. (2001, p. 523) refer to Lincoln and Guba (1985) who modified validity and reliability with respect to qualitative research. As such, internal validity was translated to credibility, external validity to transferability, reliability to dependability, and finally objectivity to confirmability. Credibility has a similar meaning to internal validity, and means that the research correctly should identify and describe the respondents (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 53). Moreover, while internal validity is dependent on the instrument, the credibility is dependent on the researcher and his or her ability to measure (Golafshani, 2003 p. 600). The transferability is also referring to what extent the result can be applied to other settings. Dependability is concerned with how ‘systematic, rigorous and well documented’ the research process is. Finally, confirmability means that the research process should be described in detail and that it should be easy to evaluate ‘whether the finding flow from the data.’ (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 53).

Regarding these terms, we believe that the credibility is confirmed due to the fact that we did identify and describe each respondent in the most truthful way. For instance, we used open questions in order to ensure as realistic answers as possible. Further, we did not modify any of the replies with the purpose of making them appear as more suitable to our research question and purpose, as well as, again, ensuring that respondents’ replies are presented in the exact way as they were uttered by the interviewees. When it comes to the transferability, and whether or not the results are applicable to other settings, it is important to mention that with respect to qualitative research, the transferability of results is always limited, since settings and humans will always be fundamentally different. However, we want to underline that we described the scientific assumptions we made during the research process as clear and in an understandable way as possible since this increases the possibility for enabling transferability of results. Additionally, our research process was, first of all, well documented since we, for instance, recorded the interviews and also transcribed them. Secondly, we did also explain the process as detailed as possible in order to confirm the dependability and the confirmability criteria. As such, we would like to argue that we have tried to enable all of these measurements.
3. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, we present the relevant theories on consumer behavior in order to develop an initial understanding about our research topic and research questions. Therefore, we will present relevant definitions regarding the central subjects of the current study such as consumption, mindful consumption and further present the existing consumer behavior theories. Furthermore, the presented theories served as a guideline for the creation of our interview questions. The chapter will be concluded with the presentation of our own model of the theoretical framework.

3.1 Consumption

Consumption refers to the final use of goods and services, and it is subdivided into public and private consumption (Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, 2010, p. 14-15). Our thesis will focus on private consumption which, according to Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (2010, p. 27), accounts for 80% of the total greenhouse gas emissions in Sweden. Private consumption can further be subdivided into four activities: eating, shopping, traveling, and housing. Within the present paper, the former two will be analyzed.

Shopping refers to the activity in which people purchase goods and services such as clothing, pets or IT-products (Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, 2010, p. 28). The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (2010, p. 33-34) has also provided a list regarding different categories in which shopping items are described:

- ‘Clothing and shoes’ also includes fabrics and repairs, but clothing is by far the largest item. Shoes are the second largest item with higher emissions per krona than clothing.

- Computers, telecom and TV electronics consists of manufacturing. Electricity use during operation has been placed under housing.

- Beauty products consists of three groups of products which are notable for the relatively high emissions intensity in belonging to the activity of shopping.

- The item of pets includes pet food.

- Other goods contains around twenty groups of products that cannot be attributed to the activities of eating, housing or travel. Sports equipment is an example. They do not each account for particularly high emissions, due to emissions per krona being low.

- Other services consist of just under twenty services that cannot be assigned to eating, housing or travel. Emissions per krona are also low for these services, but the amounts spent on services are relatively high. Examples are cinema and museum visits and private care charges.’

As mentioned, we will focus on the shopping and eating categories within this thesis, and in detail the listed items above.
One aspect regarding consumption that is of significance to highlight is the role of identity. Forehand et al. (2012) discuss how human identity affects the way we consume. Accordingly, customers ‘behave in ways that are consistent with what’ they believe, feel, and/or do (Forehand et al, 2012, p. 310). This must be taken into account since individuals will be interviewed within this research, and their identities will certainly affect their answers.

3.2 Customer-Centric Sustainability and Mindful Consumption

The Customer-Centric Sustainability (CCS) approach ‘refers to the consumption-mediated impact of marketing actions on environmental, personal and economic well-being of the consumer’. It is proposed that since marketing activities deal directly with the customer, they consequently account for the most relevant part of the CCS (Sheth et al, 2010, p. 24). They further explain the need for CCS by referring to researchers who illustrate the flaws in how businesses respond to sustainability (Sheth et al, 2010, p. 21-22). These papers point to the fact that corporations lack a consistent and proactive vision, plan, approach or clear case for sustainability (Lubin & Esty, 2010, p. 42; Berns et al, 2009, p. 5). Furthermore, these approaches are also failing to directly analyze the sustainability concerns of consumers which ‘seriously restricts both the efficiency and the effectiveness of sustainability efforts’ (Sheth et al, 2010, p. 23). The CCS framework is therefore established as an upgraded version of the previous sustainability approaches, but without their shortcomings (Sheth et al, 2010, p. 23).

Continuously, the dilemma regarding overconsumption is emphasized. It occurs ‘when the level of consumption becomes unaffordable or unacceptable because of its environmental or economic consequences, and affects negatively personal and collective well-being.’ In fact, consumption is often regarded as something positive, and therefore the issues linked to overconsumption have received little attention (Sheth et al., 2010, p. 25). This goes hand in hand with the traditional goal for corporations to maximize their profits (Hussain, 2012, p. 311), and would imply that companies always strive for increasing sales as much as possible. Accordingly, people may simply not regard too much consumption as a problem. However, during situations in which this problem has been noticed, people tend to take a greening approach. This means that they increase their purchases of eco-friendly products since they believe it ‘can neutralize the negative impact of any extent of increase in consumption.’ Instead of focusing on eco-friendly products, the authors suggest for minimizing the overall consumption since ‘even when green consumption practices come to be adopted more widely, a continuing rise in consumption would increase harm to the environment to a degree that net sustainability gains are negative.’ (Sheth et al, 2010, p. 25-26).

To facilitate this complex situation Mindful Consumption (MC) was presented, and partly be used as a ‘guiding principle’ for CCS (Sheth et al, 2010, p. 22). The definition presented is:

Mindful consumption connotes temperance in acquisitive, repetitive and aspirational consumption at the behavior level, ensuing from and reinforced by a mindset that reflects a sense of caring toward self, community, and nature (Sheth et al., 2010, p. 30).

Another author who is referring to Mindful Consumption is Emerich (2011). She discusses the concept and how it is linked to the customer segment LOHAS that stands
for Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability. To individuals who live in accordance with the LOHAS values, being mindful means living simple as well as ‘assessing a product’s lifecycle, not taking more than you need, and ending other avenues to self-fulfillment besides accumulation.’ Further, it implies being supportive to products and organizations that care for ‘worker rights, environment, and animal rights.’ (Emerich, 2011, p. 132).

However, MC is further subdivided into behavioral and mindset factors (Figure 1). In this, the Mindful Mindset aspects depict attitudes, values, and expectations regarding the consumer behavior. It provides initiatives for consumers to care about the nature, the self, and the community when consuming. In contrast, Mindful Behavior refers to how consumers engage in consumption. Accordingly, they should be moderate as customers, and try to avoid acquisitive, repetitive, and aspirational consumption. (Sheth et al., 2010, p. 27). To provide a deeper understanding, this concept will be explained in detail.

![Figure 1. The components of Mindful Consumption (MC)](image)

The mindful mindset advocates for a unified approach in which consumers should look beyond their own desires and needs. Rather, they should expand their outlook, and instead of caring for themselves only, they should make decisions that are beneficial for the nature and the community as well. The underlying purpose is to provide initiatives for a more sustainable consumption. (Sheth et al. 2010, p. 27).

Caring for self focuses on well-being, and in particular eudemonic (happiness) and economic factors (Sheth et al. 2010, p. 27). Regarding the happiness factors, Sheth et al. (2010, p. 27) refer to Frank (2004, p. 69) and Csikszentmihalyi (1999, p. 823) among others. The former asserts that happiness is not rooted in increased material consumption, but instead an increased consumption of ‘inconspicuous goods’ such as freedom, ‘family and friends, exercise, sleep, travel, and other restorative activities.’ Csikszentmihalyi (1999) underlines that consumption seldom is linear; ‘in most cases, what is good in small quantities becomes commonplace and then harmful in larger doses.’ By referring to these scholars, Sheth et al. (2010) demonstrate that happiness may not lie in material consumption. Then, looking at the economic factors, overconsumption is often self-defeating (Schor, 1999, p. 21) and results in less savings and higher debts.

Caring for community affects both the collective and the individual (Sheth et al. 2010, p. 28). There are three underlying reasons that explain why overconsumption negatively
impacts our community: (1) People who overconsume often value material possessions higher than non-material possessions which in turn affects relationships (Richins, 1994, p. 530); (2) It worsens the environmental degradation; (3) and according to Cross (2000) and Putnam (2000), it results in less spending on the collective since people spend it on themselves instead (cited by Belk, 2001, p. 7).

Finally, caring for nature is based on intrinsic, instrumental, and aesthetic values. Intrinsic values imply the need for maintaining the environment, while the instrumental values underline the useful characteristics of the environment since it provides resources and ‘absorbs waste’. This illustrates the need for conserving the environment. Lastly, the aesthetic perspective refers to other values linked to the environment that is providing ‘comfort, solace, or some other resuscitative value in the environment.’ (Sheth et al. 2010, p. 28; Kilbourne, 2006, p. 52).

The mindful behavior aspect consists of acquisitive, repetitive, and aspirational behavior, and due to these behaviors, temperance cannot be promoted. The goal is to provide initiatives for consumers to practice a moderate consumption that are in line with their values. The acquisitive behavior means that people purchase products they do not necessarily need or even can afford (Sheth et al. 2010, p. 28). Repetitive behavior implies a pattern in which people purchase, throw away, and then purchase again. Products included in this category are, for example, ‘paper napkins and towels, plastic and foam utensils, disposable razors, lighters and diapers.’ (Sheth et al. 2010, p. 29). Another factor contributing to this behavior is the obsolescence of products because of design, technological change, and/or fashion (Cooper, 2004). An aspirational manner is a pattern in which people consume in a competitive and/or comparing way (Sheth et al. 2010, p. 29).

Acquisitive, repetitive, and aspirational behavior is closely related to materialism. According to Belk (1984, p. 291) materialism ‘reflects the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions’. This way of acting may result in acquisitiveness and possessiveness, which negatively affect the environment (Belk, 1983, p. 516). Materialistic values are also linked to the aspirational manner since, as mentioned by Doyle (1999), they may influence people to perceive consumption as a competition in which they want to consume conspicuously (cited by Belk, 2001, p. 7). From another perspective, Kasser (2002) focuses on how materialism affects our community and planet. He asserts that evidence illustrates how materialistic values often mean that people underrate issues regarding the environment. Consequently, if nothing changes, there is a risk for disastrous ecological consequences (Kasser, 2002, p. 92-93).

Lim (2017) is also discussing the issues regarding current levels of consumption along with sustainable and mindful consumption. He is referring to Peattie & Collins (2009) who are underlining that consumption is the opposite of sustainability because consuming means ‘to use up’ or ‘to destroy’ something. This is not what sustainability is about. Another problem, they argue, lies within the fact that consumption is focusing on the term ‘purchasing’ when, in fact, consumption should be understood ‘as a process of decisions and actions that include purchasing, product use and dealing with any remaining tangible product after use (Peattie & Collins, 2009, p. 107). Lim (2017) is further referring to Sheth et al.’s (2010) definition of Mindful Consumption, and highlights some of the shortcomings regarding this concept. Accordingly, one of the disadvantages is the narrow focus with respect to the three types of behavior presented. This makes it harder for future
research since it means that scholars will focus on these three behaviors only. Another shortcoming is the fact that Sheth et al. (2010) are focusing on products only, and not services. Finally, their work is based on private consumption, thus does not include public consumption (Lim, 2017, p. 75). The second and third factors mentioned are, however, not a problem for our work since we are focusing on private consumption and products as well. With reference to the former, we understand that other behaviors may be influencing mindful consumption, even though we are focusing on the three suggested behaviors. This is mainly because this work is based on the definition presented by Sheth et al. (2010) and their future research suggestion. We will instead suggest it as a future research to identify other types of behaviors that influence mindful consumption. However, the author further advances the Mindful Consumption concept by, in short, adding public consumption as well, but this detail is not of significance for this work either since the focus is, as already mentioned, held at private consumption (Lim, 2017, p. 75).

### 3.3 Consumer Behavior Theories

#### 3.3.1 Consumers as Rational Decision Makers and Bounded Rationality

Traditionally, consumers have been described as rational decision makers meaning that they carefully examine all available options until they have the relevant information needed to make a decision (Solomon et al., 2006, p. 259). As such, they act as problem solvers when consuming (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982, p. 132). This goes in line with the consumer decision-making process, first presented by Engel et al. (1978). According to this model, consumers’ purchase decisions are based on five steps: (1) problem recognition, (2) information search, (3) evaluation of alternatives, (4) product choice, and (5) post-purchase evaluation (Engel et al., 1978). The traditional view of consumers as rational decision-makers has, however, been questioned because consumers do not always make decisions in such a way (Kassarjian, 1978; Olshavsky & Granbois, 1979, p. 98; Mowen, 1988, p. 16; Solomon et al., 2006, p. 259).

One reason for this could be attributed to the concept of *bounded rationality* which is thought to be first weaved by Herbert Alexander Simon (1955) who stipulated that the rationality of most human beings is only partial, and that the rest of human actions can be described based on their emotionality. With this view, the scientist challenged the concept of a rational agent against that of a real human being (Ballester & Hernández, 2012, p. 28).

Moreover, bounded rationality proposes that there are several limitations that prevent rational decision-making. Ballester & Hernández (2012, p. 29), for instance, suggest that the rationality of individuals is finite due to the fact that human beings confront with limitations in solving complex problems and in processing information. These limitations originate from information shortage and imperfection, also from the cognitive limitation of human minds and the limitation in human computational ability. Therefore, in a considerable number of instances, individuals lack the ability and resources in order to adopt the most optimal solution. As a consequence, decision makers first and foremost greatly simplify the choices available, and only then employ their rationality (Ballester & Hernández, 2012, p. 29).
3.3.2 Factors Stimulating People's Decision to Consume

Sigmund Freud has, according to Solomon et al. (2006, p. 100), contributed with ideas that influence the perception of human behavior. Freudian theory, as they name it, asserts that individuals have to balance the fulfilment of their own needs with the requirements from the society in which they operate. In this, three systems exist: \textit{Id}, \textit{superego}, and \textit{ego}. \textit{Id} means that people strive for fulfillment of one’s own needs to ‘\textit{maximize pleasure and avoid pain}’ in an unconcerned manner of the consequences. In contrast, the superego advocates for decision making that is beneficial for society. Lastly, \textit{ego} is in which people try to be the best citizen possibly, simultaneously as they make decisions with the aim of increasing their own happiness (Solomon et al., 2006, p. 100-101).

Solomon et al. (2006, p. 312) further illustrate various reasons for why consumers consume. Regarding these reasons, they are all originally presented by Arnold & Reynolds (2003). Accordingly, they describe five rationales for going shopping:

1. \textit{Shopping as an adventure} which means that people do it for enjoying themselves as well as for social matters in which they want to meet people;
2. \textit{Gratification shopping} meaning that it functions as a stress reliever;
3. \textit{Idea shopping} in order ‘\textit{to keep up with trends and new fashions, and to see new products and innovations}’;
4. \textit{Role shopping} which is referring to the happiness, excitement and hype received from shopping;

Solomon et al. (2006, p. 312) also refer to Groeppel-Klein et al. (1999) who continuously emphasize Westbrook & Black’s (1985, p. 87) contribution where they present seven drivers to consumption:

1. \textit{Anticipated utility} meaning that consumers seek products they may benefit from;
2. \textit{Role enactment} described as ‘\textit{culturally prescribed roles regarding the conduct of shopping activity}’;
3. \textit{Negotiation} in which people seek for economic advantages;
4. \textit{Choice optimization} meaning that consumers search for products that satisfy them the most;
5. \textit{Affiliation} which, again, refers to the social advantages of shopping, that is to meet and interact with people;
6. \textit{Power and authority} where consumers want to exercise power, for example where they want the personnel to serve, respect, and help them;
7. And receiving \textit{stimulation} from going shopping in terms of enjoying themselves.

Finally, Solomon et al. (2006, p. 313) illustrate five different types of consumers, in which four of these originally are presented by Stone (1954) and the fifth by Bellenger & Korgaonkar (1980). Stone (1954, p. 39-40) describes the first four consumers as
1. *The economic shopper* who is ‘sensitive for price, quality, and assortment of merchandise’;
2. *The personalized shopper* who looks for stores in which he or she has a relationship and/or are recognised by the retail personnel;
3. *The ethical shopper* who consumes in smaller and maybe less successful stores to show his or her support, and are willing to buy more expensive goods to be supportive;
4. And finally, *the apathetic shopper* who does not enjoy going shopping, but instead do it as a requirement.

The fifth consumer is described as the *recreational shopper*, and includes people who genuinely enjoy going shopping (Bellenger & Korgaonkar, 1980, p. 83).

These five reasons for why consumers consume, the seven drivers of consumption together with the five different types of consumers mentioned above have all been helpful and useful in the construction of the interview guide. As already discussed, previous research within this particular area is scarce, which implies that there were not any previous interview guides which we could use as a tool for creating our own guide.

### 3.3.3 The Theory of Adaptive Consumer Behavior

Katona (1968) presents the theory of adaptive consumer behavior which is based on the fact that consumers do not have a general purchasing pattern because they blindly and strictly follow. It consists of four principles in which three are relevant for this work. The first principle illustrates that behavior is influenced by consumers’ surroundings and themselves, or as Katona (1968) describes it: ‘human response is a function both of changes in the environment (stimuli) and the person.’ As such, motives, attitudes and expectations have great impact on how consumers perceive and respond to different alterations (Katona, 1968, p. 20). The next principle underlines that people are influenced by individuals in their surroundings, especially groups of friends, families, neighbors and colleagues, and sometimes their country. This implies that people are affected by other people’s values as well as political and economical trends. These trends also provide initiatives for consumers to evaluate their monetary means. Moreover, consumption is also influenced by consumers’ ability and willingness to buy. The former refers to the income level, while the latter ‘depends primarily on attitudes and expectations about personal finances and the economy as a whole.’ (Katona, 1968, p. 21-22).

### 3.3.4 The Theory of Buyer Behavior

The Theory of Buyer Behavior (also *Howard-Sheth Model*) is stated to be the most widely referred to among various research models (Juan et al., 2017, p. 2). The theory was developed by Howard & Sheth (1969) attempting to illustrate the various constructs and their flows in the decision-making process by the consumer. Although developed primarily to explain consumer decision, the theory is useful and has been applied in other fields ranging from voting behavior, job choice and family planning to marketing behavior and choices regarding product classes or specific brands (Lehmann, 1974, p. 43). One of the most recent applications of the Howard-Sheth model was done by Juan et
al. (2017) in analyzing the behavioral factors that influence people’s decisions with respect to green building purchasing and price premium acceptance.

Howard & Sheth (1969) claimed that the major objectives of their model were to identify the elements that are involved in the consumer's decision process and to observe the changes in these elements over time caused by their repetitive nature. Additionally, the authors aimed to show the impact that the combination of the elements has on the various processes involved in the decision-making process such as search processes and information incorporation (Howard & Sheth, 1969, p. 467). Regarding the identification of the elements, the authors found that input factors and output factors play a critical role in motivating consumer decisions and stimulating purchases (Juan et al., 2017, p. 2). Figure 2 presents the major components that constitute the Howard-Sheth model.

![Figure 2. The major components of the Howard-Sheth model](source: Juan et al., 2017, p. 2)

The model consists of four components which are believed to have an influence on consumer behavior. These are input variables, hypothetical/intervening variables, exogenous variables, and output variables. The input variables are concerned with a variety of stimuli that come from the consumer’s’ environment which can be categorized into two categories: the commercial (brands) and social environment. The commercial environment involves the marketing activities that companies undertake in order to communicate the information about the product/brand and to attract the buyer’s attention. The social environment is mainly concerned with the word-of-mouth communication and the interaction with social actors such as family, friends, reference groups, through which the buyer receives and processes the information about the product/brand.

Additionally, the stimuli can be further classified into significative and symbolic stimuli. Significative stimuli implies that brand’s/product’s attributes such as price, quality, availability, distinctiveness, etcetera are communicated through brand/product objects. On the other hand, if the before-mentioned attributes are communicated via mass media, catalogues, billboards, etcetera the stimuli are then classified as symbolic (Howard & Sheth, 1969, p. 470-472). Therefore, the input variables serve as providers of information to the consumer (Juan et al., 2017, p. 2).

Hypothetical constructs or intervening variables are further classified into perceptual constructs which serve the purpose of obtaining and processing the information, and learning constructs with a purpose of concept formation (Howard & Sheth, 1969, p. 472). In other words, perceptual constructs describe how consumers perceive and respond to
the information obtained from input variables, whereas learning constructs assist consumers in forming motives related to purchasing behavior such as defining their goals and attitudes, analyzing selection criteria and confidence with respect to purchases (Juan et al., 2017, p. 3). Furthermore, perceptual constructs include three main components (Howard & Sheth, 1969, p. 477-478):

- **Sensitivity to information** – the flow and quantity of stimulus information controlled by the consumer.
- **Perceptual bias** – the alteration and distortion of the information by the consumer in order to match the newly acquired information with an already existing amount of information stored in the consumer’s mind.
- **Search for information** – the consumer’s active search for information due to feeling ambiguity regarding the brand/product meaning.

Moreover, Howard & Sheth (1969, p. 472-473) present six major learning constructs:

- **Motives** – the non-specific (general) and specific motives which provide incentives for action. The consumer may be motivated by expectation or anticipation.
- **Decision mediators** – the buyer’s mental rules that match purchasing alternatives with motives and rank these alternatives based on their “want-satisfying capacity”.
- **Evoked set** – the evoked set of alternatives which have the potential to satisfy the consumer’s motives.
- **Predisposition** – the consumer’s preference toward the brand in his/her evoked set.
- **Inhibitors** – the environmental forces that create disruption in the purchasing decision and prevent the consumer from satisfying his preferences such as high price and lack of availability of the product, time pressure, and the consumer’s financial status.
- **Satisfaction** – the post-purchase evaluation of the purchasing decision related to the actual consequences and the expected consequences of the purchase.

The *exogenous variables* are external factors deemed to have a significant effect on consumer purchase behavior and as such they are not directly involved in the decision-making process. The exogenous variables may include consumer’s evaluation of the purpose and importance of the purchase, also the influence stemming from consumer’s personality traits, cultural background, financial position, and time pressure. *Output variables* represent the variety of responses and courses of action for the consumer (Juan et al., 2017, p. 3). The five output variables, discussed below, represent a step-by-step evaluation which eventually leads to the actual purchase (Howard & Sheth, 1969, p. 479). These are:

- **Attention** – the sensitivity to information and the magnitude of the information intake.
• **Comprehension** – the knowledge about the brand/product in possession of the consumer at any point in time.
• **Attitude toward a brand/product** – the buyer’s evaluation of whether the brand/product can potentially satisfy his/her motives.
• **Intention to buy** – the buyer’s prediction of the brand/product that he/she is likely to purchase.
• **Purchase Behavior** – the consumer’s actual purchase behavior in connection to any inhibitors that may be present and still have an influence.

### 3.3.5 Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior is one of the most widely used models in attempting to explore pro-environmental behaviors. The application of the model varies from understanding recycling, energy consumption and food choice behaviors to water conservation intentions (Jackson, 2005, p. 50). The theory of planned behavior was developed by Ajzen (1991) in order to allow for explanation and prediction of human behavior in specific contexts (Ajzen, 1991, p. 181). According to the theory, it is the behavior intentions, which are the central aspect of the theory, that drive individual behavior. Behavior intentions constitute of three main elements: an individual’s **attitude towards the behavior**, **subjective norms**, and **perceived behavioral control** (Figure 3). Furthermore, intentions indicate how strong is people’s willingness to try to perform the behavior as well as how much effort people are planning to exert. As a consequence, the stronger the intention that an individual has, the more likely it is that he/she will perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991, p. 181-182).

![Flowchart](image)

**Figure 3. The components of the Theory of Planned Behavior**  
Source: Ajzen, 1991, p. 182

One of the major elements of the theory of planned behavior is the before-mentioned perceived behavioral control which refers “to people’s perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior of interest.” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 183). According to Ajzen (1991,
p. 184), this notion of perceived behavioral control is mostly compatible with the concept of *self-efficacy*, where the likeliness that an individual will perform a certain type of behavior is determined by the confidence in the person’s ability to perform it. The theory of planned behavior postulates that the conjunction between perceived behavior control and the intention to perform the behavior, can alone directly determine the achievement of the behavior (see: Figure 3). On the other hand, Ajzen (1991, p. 184) expresses some degree of caution when applying this hypothesis. The author observes that such a linkage between perceived behavioral control and intention can be inaccurate since perceived behavioral control can be in itself unrealistic particularly in cases when an individual’s information about the behavior is insufficient or when the emergence of new and unfamiliar variables is capable of changing the situation (Ajzen, 1991, p. 185).

Other significant variables in the theory are the *attitude toward the behavior* and the *subjective norm*. The former relates to whether the individual evaluates the behavior as favorable or unfavorable, whereas the latter refers to the social pressure felt by an individual whether to perform or not to perform the behavior. The basic relationship between these three previously mentioned variables is that the more favorable the attitude and subjective norm that an individual holds about the behavior, the stronger is the perceived behavioral control, and the more it is likely that the person’s intention to perform the behavior will be enhanced and the person will perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188).

### 3.4 Our Model of the Theoretical Framework

The discussion above of the existing theories regarding consumer behavior reveals that there are a multitude of different variables that have an impact on consumer decision regarding purchasing and consuming. Therefore, they are especially useful to us in familiarizing ourselves with internal and external forces that influence consumer behavior, especially because our research question is concerned with the identification of factors that influence consumer’s mindful consumption mindset and behavior. Therefore, by relying on the existing theories of consumer behavior and applying them to the mindful consumption framework presented by Sheth et al. (2010), below (Figure 4) we depict our own developed model of theoretical framework.

The model below is a representation of Sheth et al.’s (2010) mindful consumption framework presented previously. However, the model has been further adapted and elaborated in order to achieve a fit with respect to our research purpose and research question. The model depicts how each component of mindful consumption framework is, presumably, influenced by its own internal and external factors, which means that clear delimitations can be drawn as the primary assumption is that the factors do not overlap or intertwine with each other. On the other hand, the questions marks present the existing research gap which we will aim to fill by the actual identified factors that affect each component within the framework, as Figure 4 demonstrates.
Figure 4. Our model of the Theoretical Framework
4. Practical Methodology

In the current chapter, we will present our selected practical choices for data collection method. We will present our sampling technique as well as outline the details with respect to the choice of respondents and interview guide formation, and the execution of interviews.

4.1 Sampling

According to Saunders et al. (2008, p. 212), the selection of a sample is necessary in cases when (1) it is impracticable to survey the entire population, (2) the budget is inadequate to survey the entire population, (3) the time constraints do not allow for the entire population to be served, and (4) all the data is collected, but quick results are needed. As this study is currently undertaken as an academic research, the outlined aspects above are especially important to take into account because this work is highly controlled by them. Therefore, the selection of a sample is the most preferable approach in this case so that the collection of data is utilized to the utmost extent in order to be able to answer the research question.

In order to collect rich data on the selected topic and to be able to answer the research question, the decision concerning the most suitable sampling method was based on several important criteria. First and foremost, there was a need to access students who are studying at Umeå University and interview them, and secondly, these students had to be of Swedish nationality.

The choice of students was to a large extent influenced by the time limit on writing this thesis. Another reason for choosing students is because we assume they are the ones who are the most likely to contribute to this research. This is because we will interview students who are studying in the same program as us, i.e. either International Business Program or Civilekonomprogrammet. Due to this, it might be postulated that these students have previous knowledge on sustainability since they had to take courses related to the before-mentioned subject. Therefore, it might be further highlighted that they are the people who will mostly likely understand the context that we are immersing ourselves into. As a consequence, they are most likely to contribute to the present research.

Furthermore, as mentioned previously, it was of interest to interview Swedish students. The reason for choosing Swedish students was based on the fact that we believe that choosing as clearly determined sample as possible would greatly improve the quality and accuracy of the data collected, because, by focusing on this approach there is an opportunity to investigate the mindful consumption mindset and behavior of a specific context. If a diverse group of people with respect to the nationality has been chosen, such an approach would have yielded burdensome complications with regard to the analysis of the results and would have not contributed to answering the research question. Further, it would also imply that different aspects should have been considered, such as, for instance, the circumstances under which students of different nationalities have to study in Sweden. One of such circumstances that would have needed to be considered is related to the financial situation of students. Although students in general have to track and scrutinize their spending habits, however it might be the case that international or exchange students have to do so to even a greater extent than Swedish students. Although, this is argument is only based on an assumption, because we do not know with certainty.
Therefore, it might have been probable that their answers could have been highly affected by their financial situation. Furthermore, their stay in Sweden is limited, which arguably does not contribute to their mindful thinking and behavior since they might feel less encouraged to contribute to the Swedish society by consuming mindfully. On the other hand, it might be pointed out that students of Swedish nationality are confronted with fewer considerations and obstacles of such kind, and that they study and live in Sweden under relatively similar circumstances. Therefore, by focusing on Swedish students specifically within this thesis, we are able to explore students’ mindful consumption behavior in as little impacted and altered environment as possible which will provide more accurate results.

4.1.1 The Choice of a Sampling Technique

According to Saunders et al. (2008, p. 210), sampling techniques present a variety of methods that are useful in enabling the researcher to reduce the amount of data that need to be collected since only data from sub-groups rather than from all possible cases or elements are taken into account. The authors introduce two primary sampling techniques available to the researcher which are probability and non-probability samples. Probability sampling techniques allow for the statistical illustration of the characteristics of the population from the sample because the probability that each case will be selected from the population is known and equally applies to all cases. On the other hand, non-probability sampling techniques do not allow to make statistical inferences about the characteristics of the population because the probability of each case to be selected from the total population is not known (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 213). As we do not aim to make statistical inferences within this thesis, we have chosen to employ a non-probability sampling technique. On the contrary, we aim to undertake an in-depth study in order to answer our research question. This will allow for the collection of fruitful information and to gain deep theoretical insights. Under such considerations, non-probability sampling is most suitable (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 233). Furthermore, non-probability sampling methods are more proper to use when taking into account the time constraints on conducting the research, because probability sampling techniques are more time consuming (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 243). Another reason guiding our selection of a non-probability sampling method is that it provides a possibility to gain access to a wide range of individuals that are relevant for the research question, which is specifically what qualitative researchers aim to ensure (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 428).

Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 190-194) present several types of non-probability sampling techniques such as convenience, snowball, and quota sampling. Because our research question is focused on the identification of factors that influence Swedish students’ mindful consumption, we have decided to employ a convenience sampling technique within this thesis. Convenience sampling is concerned with the selection of those cases that are the easiest to access for the researcher (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 241). Therefore, we have decided to collect our data from Swedish students who are currently studying at Umeå University. However, one of the main flaws of using a convenience sampling technique is that it will not allow us to generalize the findings to a larger population because of the existence of bias in the sample and because of the uncertainty about what population the sample is representative of (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 190; 2015, p. 201).
4.2 Data Collection Method

Another essential aspect for the researcher to consider is related to how one will collect the empirical data in order to meet the study’s objectives. The data used in a research can either be primary or secondary. Primary data refers to data that the researchers have collected and analysed themselves, while secondary data refers to a situation in which the researchers are analysing another researcher’s data (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 13).

As discussed previously, we have employed a qualitative research strategy within this thesis. Therefore, we will rely on the collection of primary data through interviews, which is the most widely relied upon method in qualitative research (Bryman, 2012, p. 469; Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 238). An interview is defined as a discussion between two or more people guided by a specific purpose (Kahn & Cannell (1957), cited in Saunders et al., 2008, p. 318) and it is typically employed due to its usefulness in gathering reliable information that can be further used to meet the study’s objectives. Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 466-467) present several types of interviews used in qualitative research according to their level of structure. These include: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews.

Structured interviews rely upon the usage of questionnaires where the interviewer asks respondents pre-determined and identical questions. In structured interviews, it is essential that the researcher reads the questions exactly as they are written and keeps the same tone so that no bias is produced. Structured interviews are used for the collection of quantifiable data. Hence, the answers are typically pre-coded (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 320). The structured interview was not considered to be appropriate to use in the present research because it would have undermined the ability to explore people’s own and divergent perspectives.

Additionally, the unstructured interviews are the least formal and they do not rely on a predetermined list of questions. In fact, the researcher might ask one question during the interview and then explore those points on the interviewees answers that appear worthy to be addressed (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 467). The unstructured interview technique was again thought unsuitable for the current research. It is important to note that both researchers of the present paper have limited experience in interviewing, and the unstructured interview technique would have been too demanding on the researchers since it requires for a comprehensive understanding of the topic and the mastery of interviewing skills. Therefore, in order to provide answers to the research question, which is to identify factors that influence mindful consumption of students, we have decided to hold individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews.

To us, individual interviews were more preferable than group interviews because, regarding the latter, there is a risk that the respondents are influenced by each other (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 516). Semi-structured interviews rely on questions that are partly pre-determined, which also means that each interview may take another direction depending on the provided answers (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315). This aspect is particularly important for the present paper because it will allow for flexibility of the interview and the researchers will be able to ask additional questions in order to enrich the data being collected.
Regarding the number of interviews that must be performed, Taylor et al. (2015, p. 106) refer to Kvale (1996) who simply argues that one should conduct interviews until the answers to the research question(s) are obtained. Additionally, it is underlined that the number of interviews should be decided during the research process (Taylor et al, 2015, p. 106). Furthermore, Cleary et al. (2014, p. 473-474) highlight that data redundancy or saturation determines the cessation of interviews and further information gathering. Redundancy is achieved when the interviewees begin to reiterate each other's viewpoints. Saturation occurs when new concepts or themes no longer emerge in succeeding interviews. In addition, since this is a Bachelor’s level thesis and the time is limited, we determined that conducting 5-10 interviews were appropriate and will be enough for the collection of substantial data.

4.3 The Formation of Questions and The Interview Guide

After deciding to use a semi-structured interview technique, the interview questions were constructed. Since this research is addressing factors that influence consumer behavior and consumers’ mindset, the questions are based on the theories that are presented in the theory chapter together with the purpose of the current research. The interview guide provides a list of issues or questions to be addressed during the semi-structured interviewing (Bryman, 2012, p. 473). Furthermore, because the research question is concerned with the mindset and behavior components of mindful consumption (Figure 1), the interview guide is structured in accordance with these components. Therefore, the guide was divided into several sections.

First, personal questions were developed in order to address students’ general consumption patterns and how they understand their consumption, then moving to the exploration of the concept of mindful consumption in order to explore the respondents’ own understanding and interpretation of the concept, and then breaking down the concept of mindful consumption in order to investigate the caring for self, community and nature components in mindset separately as well as the acquisitive, repetitive, and aspirational purchasing components in behavior (Appendix 1: Interview Guide).

According to Saunders et al. (2008, p. 374), when developing the interview questions, researchers either adopt or adapt the questions that have been previously used in other questionnaires, or construct their own questions. Since we cannot replicate or compare our research and its findings with other studies because research regarding mindful consumption is scarce, we had to develop our own interview questions. Moreover, we have decided to primarily use open questions which are frequently employed in semi-structured interviews (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 375). The usage of open questions provides a number of advantages such as, for instance, the freedom for respondents to reply in their own terms and the emergence of unconsidered responses which allow the researcher to uncover new areas for exploration (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 249).

Furthermore, in developing our questions, we constantly considered that we will interview students who are non-native English speakers. Therefore, in order to overcome the language barrier and to limit confusions that might arise due to misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the questions, we tried to design them by using the language that is as simple and comprehensible as possible to our participants.
4.4 Respondents

As discussed previously, we have decided to use a convenience sampling method which means that we will interview Swedish students at Umeå University. Moreover, we have determined that both male and female participants should be interviewed. However, one of the major issues that we encountered was related to how we should search for the respondents. One method that we have decided to try out was going to one of our supervisor’s lectures and asking students if they were interested to participate in our study. First, we have presented ourselves and then introduced what kind of research we are conducting. We have received questions from students regarding the length of the interview and eventually, two students agreed to partake in the study. Also, we have provided both of our e-mails in case if more students were interested to participate. Although, no additional students from the lecture have contacted us afterwards. However, considering the time pressure we had to conduct this research and the low participation rate yielded from the lecture, we have decided to abandon this method. We have determined that it will be more time-efficient to contact our classmates instead.

By relying on this technique, we ended up with four students who have agreed to be interviewed. When contacting the potential respondents, the information provided to them was concerned with communicating the purpose of the research, presenting the topics of interest, and informing them with the length of time it will take to perform the interview. We did not disclose the actual topic of the research, which is centered on mindful consumption, since we did not want to influence our participants in the way that they might have considered it necessary to educate themselves about the topic before being interviewed. Instead, it was conveyed that the current research is conducted with a focus on sustainability, consumers and consumption behavior, and the impact of consumption on sustainability.

However, the optimal choice for any research is to investigate people whom the researcher has never met before and is not acquainted with (Saldaña, 2011, p. 34). On the other hand, it is important to note that the researchers of this thesis did not contact and interviewed mutual classmates. Therefore, the participants were known to only one of the researchers. Consequently, in order to avoid the creation of bias and the distortion of the data collected to as large extent as possible, we have decided that in cases when the respondent is the classmate of one of the researchers, that researcher will not dominate or lead the interview. It will be the interviewer with whom the respondent is not acquainted with that will predominantly conduct the interview. We believe that by conducting our interviews in such a manner, we have reduced the impact on the respondent to a considerable degree.

4.5 Execution of Interviews

All the interviews were conducted between May 8th and May 12th, and six (6) interviews were conducted. Three (3) of the interviewees were male, and three (3) of the other interviewees were female. During the preparation for the interview, the choice of an appropriate location is important to consider in advance because the place might have an impact on the data being collected. Choosing a quiet and private place where any interruptions and distractions are mitigated to the utmost extent, will ensure that the interview is carried out in a smooth way (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 474). The ideal selection of the location should equally be based on keeping the participant’s comfort and
convenience constantly in mind (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 329). Therefore, it was decided to conduct the interviews in group study rooms at Umeå University Library. Each interview began from reminding the interviewees of the topics of interest of the present research. Also, the participants were informed about the length of the interview, which has been set to maximum of an hour. The interviewees were additionally informed that for the current research there is no necessity for their identities to be revealed. Therefore, we have assured our respondents that their confidentiality is guaranteed. The participants were further notified that the whole interview will be recorded, which no respondent objected against, and lastly, we inquired if the interviewees still agree to participate in the interview.

As mentioned previously, the interview questions were designed by attempting to develop them in as simple and comprehensible way as possible. However, confusions regarding the meaning of few of the questions and concepts we have used still arose during the interview, which can be attributed to the existing language barrier. On the other hand, as one of the researchers is a native Swedish speaker, we did not consider the emergence of confusions to be a significant issue since we could easily eliminate them by explaining the questions or parts of the questions in Swedish. Furthermore, we told the interviewees that if they experience difficulties in expressing themselves in English, they are allowed to speak in Swedish as well. In addition, it is important to note that majority of the interviews were carried out with the presence of both researchers. As both researchers are inexperienced in interviewing, this approach facilitated the interview proceedings and ensured a fluent course of the interview by, for instance, allowing the interviewer to intervene where judged necessary (e.g. prolonged silence, probing further into the topic or change of direction).

Furthermore, although majority of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, we also had a telephone interview with one respondent. Telephone interviewing is used to a lesser degree in qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 488). On the other hand, telephone interviewing is appropriate in cases when the interviewee cannot be interviewed face-to-face because of the distance (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 479). Therefore, since the participant at the time of writing the thesis was away from Umeå, telephone interviewing was most suitable to use.

In addition, Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 481) assert that interview recording is mandatory with respect to all intents and purposes as it helps to, for example, overcome the limitation of human memories and it allows to analyze the interviewee’s answers repeatedly and therefore, more thoroughly. Moreover, recording allows the researcher to concentrate and listen attentively to the respondent as well as observe the interviewee’s expressions (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 339). Hence, the interviews were recorded on two computers and transcribed directly after the interviews were finished. The reason for recording the interviews on two computers was to make sure that in the case if one recording was of a bad quality, we had another recording that might be used for transcription.

The process of transcribing the interviews should be done word-by-word so as not to distort the information collected. Furthermore, sometimes researchers might decide to send a final copy of the transcript to the interviewee. However, in our case we have decided not to do so because of the likeliness that the respondents will express a wish to correct their language and their answers (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 485). Table 1 below provides a summary of the interviews that were conducted.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Type of interview</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>53:36 min</td>
<td>2017-05-08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>51:00 min</td>
<td>2017-05-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>38:50 min</td>
<td>2017-05-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>40:46 min</td>
<td>2017-05-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>50:00 min</td>
<td>2017-05-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>44:13 min</td>
<td>2017-05-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Summary of the conducted interviews

4.6 Analysis of Qualitative Data – Thematic Analysis and Implementation

There are various methods in analyzing qualitative data, such as grounded theory and critical discourse analysis, in which one of the most common one is the thematic analysis. It is conducted with the purpose of finding themes and subthemes. These themes consist of repetitive and similar answers, or codes, identified during the interviews and that are relevant to the research question. In order to find them, the reader must transcribe the interviews and then read them over and over again. The findings are firstly structured into core themes, and secondly into subthemes. When it comes to this approach, there is not a fully clear approach that exists regarding the exact way of using it, and many researchers, for example, interpret the word ‘theme’ in different ways. To some, it is the same as a code, while for others, ‘it transcends any one code and is built up out of groups of codes.’ (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 599).

Ryan & Bernard (2003) emphasize the importance of identifying themes by asserting that without themes, ‘investigators have nothing to describe, nothing to compare, and nothing to explain’ (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 85). They define various characteristics of themes and what researchers should look for. This includes repetitions: subjects that are discussed many times; indigenous typologies or categories: local, unfamiliar expressions; metaphors and analogies; transitions: different ways topics shift, for instance, paragraphs in written text, or a pause or change in voice tone, may imply for a shift in speeches; similarities and differences: compared to sayings of the same respondent and compared to others; linguistic connectors: emphasizes different words, for instance ‘since’ and ‘because’ that point to causal relations, or ‘if’ and ‘rather than’ that point to conditional relations; missing data; and finally theory-related material.

Smith (2015, p. 222) presents a chapter in ‘Qualitative Psychology’ written by Clarke et al. (2015) regarding Thematic Analysis. Despite the fact that this book is focusing on psychology, the provided explanation of this approach was, to us, very helpful. Therefore, we decided to implement it. According to Clarke et al. (2015), a thematic analysis consists of six phases: familiarization, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally writing the report. The former means that researchers should carefully read or listen to their data, and simultaneously taking notes, before they begin the process of coding. (Clarke et al, 2015, p. 230-231). Next phase, coding, refers to the process of labeling and identifying codes, that is; ‘something of interest in the data in relation to the research question.’ Two types of codes exist: semantic and latent. The former refers to ‘codes that stayed on the surface of the data’ while the latter means
reflecting over what was not explicitly stated. (Clarke et al, 2015, p. 234-235). Phase three, searching for themes, involves grouping codes together, and whether this group accounts for a theme or not is depending on to what extent the group shows a clear aspect of the data and whether or not it asserts something of relevance to the research question. Strong themes have a ‘key analytic point’ while weaker ones are missing it. (Clarke et al, 2015, p. 236). Once the themes are stated, the next phase underlines that they should be reviewed. Thus, you make sure that the themes match the codes. (Clarke et al, 2015, p. 238). Then, when this phase is completed, you define and name the different themes, often by shortly describing them and their ‘essence, scope, and boundaries’. Finally, the last step includes writing up, and the authors recommend general guidance for writing qualitative research. (Clarke et al, 2015, p. 240-241).

Regarding the implementation, these six steps were completed. The familiarization meant that we listened to the recordings several times as well did the same with respect to reading the transcripts. As the authors recommended, we tried to read and listen ‘in a curious and questioning way’ and to not only absorb the data (Clarke et al, 2015, p. 231). This meant that we tried to understand why the respondents argued the way they did, and instead of looking at each answer separately, we tried to get a good overall view of each respondent and what type of consumer they are. Moving on to the second phase, coding, we focused on both semantic and latent codes which were used to develop the framework that was presented above. This framework will be further expanded in the analysis. Once the codes were found, we did group them together and then, they were reviewed and finally named. The final result of the themes can be viewed in the results below, in which the headings of each table is the theme, while the citations in the tables represent the sources of data from which we have developed the codes.

In other words, the empirical findings chapter below consists of tables that include quotations from the respondents that we have determined to contribute to each theme. Thus, the quotations were especially relevant in extracting these factors from our collected data.
5. Empirical Findings

This chapter presents the findings derived from a total of six semi-structured interviews that were conducted. The chapter begins with presenting empirical findings with respect to what drives consumers to shop. This will contribute to providing an overall image of the kinds of consumers we were interviewing. Further, we will outline the factors with respect to the mindset and behavior components of the mindful consumption, that were extracted by conducting thematic analysis on the collected data. Also, we will present the most relevant replies of the respondents that were used in order to identify the latent and semantic codes which were then grouped together in order to derive the themes which constitute the factors that influence mindful consumption mindset and behavior. We have grouped these factors into self, community, nature, and mindful behavior factors, since we considered it will be easier for the reader to follow.

5.1 The Drivers of Shopping and Consuming

One of the starting points in understanding consumer behavior, is to analyze the motivational factors that encourage consumers to go shopping and consume. By understanding this, further analysis and comprehension can be undertaken with respect to people’s pro-environmental behaviors, such as mindful consumption. Therefore, when asked about what motivates the person to go shopping, Respondent 1 replied “I shop in two different ways: either because I need something, so I just go out and buy what I need and then I go home. And then I shop spontaneously or impulsively. I see something I like and I buy it”. Furthermore, Respondent 1 said that he/she regards shopping as a hobby where he/she can get something extra that is felt deserving, as well as that shopping rarely produces the feeling of regret because at the time of shopping is was something that he/she found “fun” and enjoyable.

On the other hand, Respondent 2 highlighted that his/her main motivators for shopping are the person’s well-being and needs because “<...> Mostly what I need and also a lot of aspects of what is going to be good for me [motivates me to go shopping], because I think the older I get, the more I feel that what I eat affects me as well as what I wear.“ Also, the person revealed that the shopping intentions differ with respect to different categories of products. With respect to clothes, for instance, Respondent 2 acknowledged that the purpose of shopping is more “superficial”, whereas with respect to food the person takes more time to deliberate on what food products to buy because „<...> food is like fuel I need to think about, that it’s not only „crap“ food.“. Respondent 3, on the other hand, in his/her deliberation on the motives for shopping referred to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and argued that people in Sweden have already passed the stage of buying clothes, for instance, just to be warm. Instead, the person said that shopping is associated with the achievement of one’s full potential and that “<...> it’s more [about the] fashion trends. Like, this is fashion and I’m gonna buy [it because] this looks good.“. On the other hand, the motives with respect to food were revealed to be concerned about the respondent’s way of living a healthy life. Consequently, food is regarded as important to the respondent and to constitute a big part of his life.

Furthermore, Respondent 4 revealed that the motives with respect to clothes are concerned with the person’s appearance because the person is focused on “looking nice”. However, Respondent 4 also said that generally happiness can be regarded as his/her main motivator for going shopping. According to Respondent 5, „what motivates me is that I
want to have new clothes that look good and I want to be presentable… And when I buy
the things for my apartment I want it to look good when others come and visit me.“. Also,
Respondent 5 said that he/she is frequently exposed to the feeling that a lot of his/her
finances were wasted because of shopping. Respondent 6, described that “It is just the
feeling“. Furthermore, Respondent 6 revealed that shopping for food is more concerned
with planning because of the revelation that he/she over-consumes in cases when
shopping is performed spontaneously.

5.2 Mindful Mindset Factors

In the succeeding section, we will demonstrate and present the factors that were identified
to be related to the mindful mindset part of the Mindful Consumption framework (Figure
4). Therefore, the factors congruous to the “self”, “community”, and “nature”
components of the framework will be outlined accordingly.

5.2.1 Self Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived direct impact of consumption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 2: “What you eat affects you, and therefore you buy ecological food because it is better for you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 1: “You may have to spend a little extra on ecological food, but it is good for you and worth the money.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perceived direct impact of consumption is one of the major factors that influence the sense
of caring in mindset with respect to the “self” component of mindful consumption. As
illustrated by the quotations in the table above, it implies that individuals comprehend
that there is a direct relationship between what the individual intakes regarding food, and
his/her well-being. In other words, people feel responsibility toward themselves, their
health and well-being, which makes them to make more mindful choices with respect to
food consumption specifically. Therefore, this comprehension impacts the persons to
consume in a more mindful way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-purchase reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 5: “I feel happy at the beginning, but then I every time realize that these are the things that I don’t really need or will have the use of... It kind of feels like a waste of money sometimes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 6: “I don’t think I feel bad when I’m doing it, but afterwards I can feel some regret, like: ‘Do I actually need this? ... No, why did I buy this?’ I don’t think it’s one or two weeks after I have bought it, like one month afterwards when I have processed it.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the respondents have revealed that initially after shopping they do not take time
to reflect on their behavior, or on the products that they have bought. However, after some
time, individuals go through the process of reflection where they begin to realize that the purchases they have made are not necessarily useful or needed. Consequently, due to the post purchase-reflection the persons might experience negative emotions such as, for instance, regret or anger which push them to consume more mindfully.

**Saving money/Positive on economy**

| Respondent 5: “Yes, I do [save money]. I have not much, but I think it’s quite much for being a student. For me, I think it’s important to have money saved for trips or when you are going to travel to different countries and stuff like that. So I save money.” |
| Respondent 4: “It’s important to save money, since I have a lot of saved money... Depending on what you want to buy with your saved money, it comes to a level where you feel like you have saved enough.” |

Saving money is another factor that was found to have an impact on mindful consumption. However, the respondents revealed that the money is saved with a goal of spending it in the future. Therefore, saving money as a factor influencing mindful consumption, is argued to be effective only in the short-run, since the long-term perspective of the consumer with respect to the saved money is still further consumption.

**Personal interest**

| Respondent 2: “I don’t think everybody has the same knowledge. If there’s a clip about the environment, I might look at it and then there comes another one, and so on.” |

Personal interest is another factor that can be attributed to the “self” component of mindful consumption. It signifies that people are intrinsically driven to be knowledgeable about current environmental issues. The knowledge and information absorbed by the consumer shapes the respondents’ educational level regarding consumption and its impacts which, as a consequence, contributes to the person’s mindful consumption

**Experienced positive emotions**

| Respondent 3: “I try to think one more time, like, if I’m gonna buy this product, is it gonna increase my happiness or not?” |
| Respondent 2: “<...> we shop a lot at second hand, because it’s cheap and it feels good to know that it’s not a waste of those type of clothes.” |
| Respondent 5: “<...> but when I shop eco-friendly things, it feels like I’m doing something good for the nature.” |
| Respondent 6: “You feel good about yourself [when you shop mindfully]. Sometimes, you feel like your need can be pleased by saying no, and to realizing that you are not needing things <...>” |
Experienced positive emotions is another major factor that influences mindful mindset in favor of consumption. Respondents revealed that when their shopping behavior is guided by more mindful considerations, they feel good about themselves as well as about the notion that they have contributed to, for instance, the preservation of nature.

5.2.2 Community Factors

**Feeling empathy for others**

| Respondent 6: ‘You ask yourself: ‘Do I really need this?’ and start thinking about children that actually have been producing the products you are thinking of buying.’ |
| Respondent 4: ‘If a clothing line has bad reputation in the way it treats its workers and so on, you don’t buy from them.’ |
| Respondent 4: ‘Good to spend money on environmentally friendly products so more people can raise their standards.’ |

Feeling empathy for others illustrates that some of the respondents are driven by empathy for others in their consumption, and that it pushes them to consume mindfully. For instance, the above illustrated quotations demonstrate that when consumers are aware that workers, for instance, are not being treated fairly, consumers act accordingly (e.g. they do not buy from the store anymore). Therefore, the respondents’ consciousness guides them towards mindful consumption.

**Contribution and positive effects**

| Respondent 2: ‘It feels better when you know that you have made a less negative impact on the planet and your surroundings’ |
| Respondent 4: ‘The joy of buying a product stays longer if you know you have done a good thing for the production chain.’ |
| Respondent 6: ‘It creates a positive atmosphere in the society when people do not feel stressed in having to change products all the time’ |
| Respondent 6: ‘It would be a better society if everyone took their part and minimized their consumption because people who have bad working conditions would get other opportunities in other industries.’ |

Contribution and positive effects factor illustrates that some of the respondents are motivated by the positive effects that mindful consumption generates, as well as the overall contributions that consuming in a mindful way generates. As can be seen from the quotations, these positive effects are primarily associated with the emotions that the respondents experience (e.g. joy, feeling better) as well as having a broader outlook with respect to the positive effects that mindful consumption has on the society (e.g. releasing stress on the society’s level).
Clear information

Respondent 1: ‘Too much to think about. When I walk into the store I can’t just look at everything, or think that maybe this is made by children in Pakistan.’

Respondent 1: ‘The lobby organizations, that wants us to shop mindfully, have failed, because you never see or hear anything about it. And, most of all, there is no system for grading what’s mindful or not.’

Respondent 2: ‘Not as much sustainable thinking when it comes to clothes: harder to know.’

Respondent 2: ‘Hard to see the immediate effect of your shopping on society.’

Respondent 3: ‘Not so much emphasize that recently have been put on how these products are produced and how it affects climate, nature, and resources. So, people go somewhere and buy it but don’t really think about where it comes from. The same goes for me.’

Respondent 4: ‘As a single individual, you don’t affect that much.’

Clear information shows that the lack of clear information makes it harder to be a mindful consumer. It might be argued that consumers want shopping as an activity to be quick and easy. Hence, it might be implied that clearer information would help and motivate consumers to be more mindful in their consumption, since it will not be as demanding on the consumers who simply cannot access all the information needed in order to make more mindful consumption choices. Therefore, it is the duty for the organizations to step in and take necessary actions (e.g. promotion, clear labels on clothes, etc.) in order to simplify consumer decisions in favor of mindful consumption.

Ripple effect of information

Respondent 2: ‘You affect people you live/hang out with, but in the end people themselves have to decide.’

Respondent 3: ‘If I speak to my friends and family, and then they start consuming more mindfully perhaps, and they spread it.’

Respondent 6: ‘You affect others to consume less by being sustainable things and sustainable food.’

Ripple effect of information illustrates that some of the respondents are influenced by and influence others in being mindful. Respondents have revealed that they believe they have the power to influence others to consume more mindfully. In addition, they believe that the spread of information takes the form of the “ripple effect”, meaning that there are continuing and circulating results in one’s endeavor to affect more people. Thus, a spread of information due to the ripple effect, contributes to mindful consumption.
More truthful information implies that consumers would be driven to be more mindful if companies, society, the media, and other organizations more explicitly talked about the impacts of consumption. Moreover, the respondents divulged that people altogether have to step in and communicate more openly about the impacts of current consumption, which is unsustainable, and therefore convey and promote mindful consumption as a desirable way of consuming. Furthermore, respondents revealed that if the society instead of all the time promoting “buying as much products as you want” type of mindset, instead encouraged you not to, then mindful consumption would be encouraged even more. Due to these reasons, the factor of more truthful information can be seen to overlap with the ripple effect of information factor, discussed above.

Public opinion illustrates that the positive opinion of the public about mindful consumption as an acceptable and a highly desired way of behaving, drive some the respondents to be mindful consumers. Furthermore, respondents have mentioned about the ingrained norms in Sweden regarding sustainability and mindful consumption, revealing that due to the persistent norm in Sweden regarding these pro-environmental behaviors, consumers to a large extent are inevitably encouraged to sustain that norm by engaging in mindful consumption.
5.2.3 Nature Factors

Knowledge/effects factor shows that some of the respondents are encouraged to consume mindfully because the more knowledge they accumulate about issues related to consumption, the more driven the respondents are to alter their already-established consumption patterns. Furthermore, it was revealed that the knowledge about the effects of the certain product also encourage respondents to consume more mindfully. However, this factor is highly related to clear information factor mentioned previously, because, as seen from Respondent’s 4 reply, he/she demands the kind of information that is not typically displayed and shared in order to be encouraged to consume in a more mindful way.

Knowledge/effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent 2: ‘I feel very encouraged because we have so much effects now: The more you know the more encouraged you’re to change your behavior.’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Respondent 4: ‘The level of knowledge about the product encourage me to purchase sustainable. If, for example, it said when you buy a product that you give 10 SEK to a little African guy, I’d probably feel more encourage to buy.’ |

Caring for others and the environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent 2: ‘Stupid/ignorant not knowing about your consumption since the earth is not here forever.’</th>
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| Respondent 2: ‘Consumption affects the close environment negatively.’ |

| Respondent 3: ‘There is this Swedish community for outdoor people. in this community we have saying that ‘everytime you’re out in nature, you should be like a ghost pretty much; you shouldn’t leave any tracks, always cover your tracks, don’t affect anything. ’ You know... I have the same kind of values, like I try to affect the climate as little as possible.’ |

| Respondent 6: ‘Too much consumption affects animals, humans, and the future negatively, and contributes with pollution’ |

| Respondent 6: ‘The joy of buying a product stays longer if you have done a good thing for the environment.’ |

The factor of caring for others and the environment implies that some of the interviewees are aware of the negative side effects of consumption. The respondents have embraced wide-ranging thoughts about the ugly side of consumption starting from its effects on the close environment, the animals and nature, as well as human beings and the future altogether. Therefore, due to these contemplations, respondents are encouraged to be mindful consumers because they know that it affects the environment and, most importantly, the future negatively.
Recognition of responsibilities illustrates that these respondents’ interpretation of their responsibilities motivates them to be more mindful in their consumption. All the interviewees acknowledged that they are inseparable from the planet. Hence, what nature gives to you, as a response you have to give something in return. All the respondents were in agreement that every human being has responsibilities toward nature and they need to constantly fulfill them.

### 5.3 Mindful Behavior Factors

In this section, we will present and provide discussion for the mindful behavior section of our developed theoretical framework (Figure 4). Therefore, this section will outline the factors that were identified to influence the respondents’ temperance in behavior with respect to acquisitive, repetitive and aspirational shopping.

#### 5.3.1 Acquisitive, Repetitive, and Aspirational Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-determined goal/Shopping list</th>
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<tr>
<td>Respondent 2: “I think, it [shopping list] contributes not only to mindful consumption, but to also not exceeding your needs. If I don’t have the list, I might get the feeling that “this looks good” and I need to buy this. &lt;...&gt; With a list, it’s more organized.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 4: “That would affect me to consume in a more mindful way. Like, that’s depending on how much money I have to spend as well. If I, lets say I have a lot of money, and you compare it with having a goal and not, then it would be better to have a goal if you have a mindful approach.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Having a *pre-determined goal*, which is frequently for respondents associated with the *purchasing list*, was recognized as influential with respect to temperance in acquisitive, aspirational, and repetitive shopping behaviors. This is because respondents have said that having a pre-determined goal or a shopping list naturally makes their purchasing activity more organized. Furthermore, respondents have revealed that having a pre-determined goal encourages them to take a more mindful approach to consumption.

### Functionality/durability

| Respondent 2: “So, you might not have to buy super many of the same thing to make it last as long as the other thing. In food, I’m not sure, I think it’s more about a better taste and you don’t have to waste as much.” |
| Respondent 1: “I try to buy good products, like wool clothes instead of synthetic but that’s because they are better for me, it have better functionality.” |

*Functionality* and *durability* of products influence temperance in the sense that people do not overbuy and do not have to engage in repetitive shopping. Furthermore, respondents have revealed that certain products are more preferred by them because, again, their functionality is better for their well-being, which, arguably, overlaps with the “self” component of mindful consumption.

### Economy/Price

| Respondent 3: “Because [by shopping mindfully], I affect climate less on the planet, and it is also positive for my own economy.” |
| Respondent 4: “If I know it is environmentally bad, or just expensive in general. Those are the two: Price and environmental effects.” |

*Economy* and *price* are two other major factors that influence temperance in respondents’ behavior, since people frequently are forced to restrain from overbuying due to their finances. Therefore, as our respondents are students, they have to scrutinize their finances more attentively, which eventually discourages acquisitive, repetitive and aspirational shopping behavior because respondents consumption is dictated by their financial situation.

### Post-purchase dissatisfaction

| Respondent 4: “Definitely affect me to think a little bit more before I buy something. It is always in the purchase decision, you are weighing pros and cons, so if the pros are outweighing the cons when you buy the product. So being educated about what you buy is a good way to avoid dissatisfaction.” |
| Respondent 5: “If I buy something and I get dissatisfied with the product, I would think once more or even twice when I buy a similar product.” |
Post-purchase dissatisfaction was identified to influence temperance since the respondents have revealed that experiencing dissatisfaction about their purchases makes them to deliberate about their successive purchasing behaviors. Therefore, people by considering their previous experiences from shopping, are encouraged to be more temperate with respect to purchasing, because of striving to avoid experiencing dissatisfaction repeatedly.

### Unmet expectations

| Respondent 5: “Yes, I would say it’s probably more about the electrical or technological things [that I get dissatisfied about]... If they don’t meet my expectations I will probably be dissatisfied. <...> If my expectations are super high and then I get really dissatisfied after my purchase, I wouldn’t buy something similar to that product.” |

Unmet expectations factor makes people to restrain from buying the same or similar product again, especially in cases when people have pre-determined expectations about a certain product, and they are not fulfilled from the purchase. Hence, the unmet expectations factor influences respondents to restrain from acquisitive, repetitive, and aspirational shopping because consumers strive to experience the same negative emotions that the previous and consequently the next purchase might involve.
6. Analysis

This chapter is concerned with the analysis of the factors that were presented in the empirical results section. They will be analyzed in accordance with the theoretical framework. Furthermore, we present and discuss the modifications that were performed as a consequence of the empirical findings. Moreover, we also outline the linkages between the identified factors and the theories of consumer behavior we have discussed previously.

6.1 Revision of the Previous Theoretical Framework

Despite the fact that the interview questions were constructed in a way so that the self, the community, and the nature factors were explored separately, they will all be analyzed together. This is simply because, as discussed in the results section, these factors are interdependent and influence each other. In fact, this aspect becomes even more evident when one examines the respondents’ replies. All the answers together constitute an entity. This argument implies that our previously presented model of the theoretical framework needs to be revised. Therefore, Figure 5 presents an altered version of the previous model. The main changes made are concerned with the treatment of external and internal factors. In the previous image, it was assumed that internal and external factors yet to be identified have an influence on a single element within the model such as, for instance, care for community is influenced by its own internal and external factors. However, by conducting our research we have discovered that both internal and external factors are inseparable from each other and that they all concurrently influence mindful consumption. Hence, the current model depicts the interconnectedness between these factors.

Figure 5. Revised model of the Theoretical Framework
6.2 Rational Decision Making of the Mindful Consumer

In a sense, the mindful consumption framework requires consumers to be rational decision makers, as the traditional standpoint argues (Solomon et al., 2006, p. 259). This is because being mindful about the nature, the community and the self is to be aware, and to have all information needed about these groups. Also, this information needs to be available to them, and then, in accordance with the information, individuals will have to make decisions that are beneficial to all these three groups. This is how consumers act mindfully: they reflect about the products they purchase and the potential causes it may have. Continuously, these arguments depict a world characterized by Sigmund Freud’s society in which ego reigns. As previously highlighted, this means that consumers are trying to make decisions that is beneficial to them and the society (Solomon et al., 2006, p. 100-101). Thus, they balance advantages and disadvantages about products they buy, both from a nature, community and self perspective, and finally make their decisions as good as possible. The participants may want to act according to the ego society, although this may be only an idealistic world and also quite hard to do since they do not have all the information needed, but also because they are impacted by other constraints such as, for instance, the time they have to process the information. Nevertheless, many of the answers have implied that the participants are trying to live in accordance with these values; the majority of respondents try to reflect as much as they possibly can before purchasing.

Regarding the rational consumer, this optimal and described individual did not really appear during the interviews. First of all, the participants illustrated a world in which it is hard to see the impacts of one’s behaviors. Secondly, they did not seem to be rational decision makers, maybe because of the vast volume of information. Thus, there seems to be too much information for consumers to handle, as respondent one (1) argued that it is ‘too much much to think about. When I walk into the store I can’t just look at everything, or think that maybe this is made by children in Pakistan’. Simultaneously, the available useful information is depicted as too small and difficult to access. For instance, the third respondent said that there is ‘not so much emphasize that recently have been put on how these products are produced and how it affects climate, nature, and resources. So, people go somewhere and buy it but don’t really think about where it comes from. The same goes for me.’ Further, respondent one (1) said that ‘the lobby organizations, that wants us to shop mindfully, have failed, because you never see or hear anything about it. And, most of all, there is no system for grading what’s mindful or not.’ As such, it appears slightly paradoxical, and difficult to actually be mindful in today’s society since, firstly, there is too much information available, and secondly, at the same time, the relevant information that is needed when shopping is not explicitly stated nor easy to access. More important, if the respondents cannot see the actual impact of their consumption, how could they possibly reflect about it?

6.3 Linkage Between the Factors and the Theories

The performed interviews did provide information that goes in line with the theory of adaptive consumer behavior. As mentioned previously, this theory asserts that ‘human response is a function both of changes in the environment (stimuli) and the person’ and also that motives, attitudes and expectations as well as individuals in their surroundings influence this particular response. Finally, it claims that individuals’ ability and willingness to buy impacts consumption. (Katona, 1968, p. 20-22). With reference to this
theory, first of all, many of the answers illustrate that consumer behavior is driven by their motives and attitudes. All of the “self” factors, which were: the perceived direct impact of consumption, the post-purchase reflection, the saving money/positive effect on society, the personal interest, and the experienced positive emotions illustrate that these individuals act according to their internal values. To highlight some of the answers, for instance respondent one (1) did argue that ‘you may have to spend a little extra on ecological food, but it is good for you and worth the money’ and respondent five (5) said that ‘...when I shop eco-friendly things, it feels like I’m doing something good for the nature.’ These arguments are, indeed, based on feelings which are perceived as valuable to these two respondents.

However, it is not only the internal factors that influence consumer behavior, but the external factors are simultaneously stimulating these individuals, just as the theory of adaptive consumer behavior advocates (Katona, 1968, p. 20). In turn, the external factors affect their identity as consumers and their way of acting. The community factors illustrate that the respondents often act in a particular way because they believe it is the best for others or the environment. They feel empathy for others, they feel that they contribute with positive effects, and that they are affected by the public opinion. This is a pattern visible for the nature factors as well, since, for example, many of the respondents were driven by the responsibilities they felt they have with respect to nature. All these factors can be linked to the theory of adaptive behavior which argues that, as already mentioned, the environment is one of the aspects that makes a consumer behave the way he or she does (Katona, 1968, p. 20).

Finally, the theory of adaptive consume behavior also states that consumption is dependent on the economy and income level which it, indeed, is Katona, 1968, p. 22). Some of the respondents referred to the price of ecological food and clothes as a restraint. As such, this is also one of the external factors influencing consumer behavior and their ability to be mindful. Hence, mindful consumption appears to be driven by internal factors and external factors, and these together are influenced by societal norms.

These arguments can further be linked to the theory of planned behavior which argues that attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence individual behavior (Ajzen, 1991, p. 181-182). Accordingly, this theory states that when an individual has a favorable attitude about a certain behavior, and the social pressure to perform this behavior is stronger, and therefore the possibilities that a person will perform the behavior increases (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188).

As mentioned above, many participants receive positive feelings when they act as mindful consumers, thus they have a favorable attitude towards being mindful in their behaviour. Accordingly, since many of the replies from the interviews imply that the respondents act mindfully to minimize the effects of their consumption on the planet, the community and their surroundings, one could argue that these reflections emerge from the social pressures and norms in the world and in Sweden. Some of the respondents spoke of the public opinion as an influencer, and respondent four (4) explicitly said that ‘the norm in the society affects me I think, like the norm in Sweden is to buy mindful ... and I think I’m just one of the people in Sweden who enforces the norm of buying mindfully.’ Consequently, the favorable attitudes about behaving consciously is obviously affected by the world since it is promoting a more sustainable and mindful manner. Therefore, society pushes individuals to act according to this environmentally friendly behavior, which also may be
the reason for why the respondents act, or at least want to act, the way they do. For example, the first (1) and the second (2) respondents argued that they buy eco-friendly food because it is better for them. It might be argued that this term, better, is to some extent planted and fixated in their minds by the society, and consequently society drives them to purchase this type of food. In other words, the consumers have a favorable attitude towards being mindful because the society advocates and pushes it forward, which in the end creates respondents who believe that acting in a mindful way is beneficial.

Additionally, the factors regarding the self, nature, community, and temperate behavior that were identified to influence consumer’s mindful consumption can further be linked to the Howard & Sheth (1969) model presented previously. According to the model, it is the interplay of the input, external (exogenous), and intervening variables that determine the output variables, i.e. the actual consumer behavior (Howard & Sheth, 1969, p. 471). The factors within the current study that were identified to influence consumer’s mindful consumption can also be grouped according to Howard & Sheth’s (1969) classification. Some of the identified factors regarding mindful consumption have a clear-cut connection and similarity with those variables discussed by Howard & Sheth (1969). On the other hand, other factors lack this attribute. However, we will provide explanations for why our variables are placed in a certain category, as depicted by Figure 6 below.

As discussed previously, the input variables are determined by the consumer’s environment which is concerned with commercial and social environment. Therefore, the functionality and durability of a product is one of the input variables that influence consumer’s more temperate behavior and hence, the mindful consumption of the consumer. Thus, the functionality and durability in part determine the overall quality of the product, which is one of the significative stimuli, as discussed by Howard & Sheth (1969, p. 470-472), that we argue encourage consumers to shop more mindfully. As stated by Respondent one (1) “I try to buy good products, like wool clothes instead of synthetic, but that’s because they are better for me. They have better functionality”.

Furthermore, price was another factor that has been identified to influence consumer’s temperance in shopping and which coincides with Howard & Sheth’s (1969, p. 471) outlined input variables. Therefore, the functionality and durability together with the price as the attributes of a product, influence individuals to be more mindful about their consumption. Furthermore, the factors of clear information and more truthful information also fall within the input variables category because it is related to the commercial, promotional and informative activities undertaken by various organizations in order to communicate the information about the mindful consumption to the consumer. For instance, Respondent one (1) has noted that “The lobby organizations that want us to shop mindfully have failed, because you never see or hear anything about it”. Therefore, more information is required by consumers from various organizations that have the biggest power to convey these values.

External variables, on the other hand, can significantly affect the purchasing behavior of the consumer (Juan et al., 2017, p. 3). As mentioned previously, it is concerned with the consumer’s evaluation of the purpose and importance of the purchase. As such, there are many factors that may have an influence on consumer’s evaluation. From our identified factors that influence consumer’s mindful consumption behavior, factors such as public opinion, saving money, personal interest, and knowledge/effects were identified to fall within the category of external variables. Juan et al. (2017, p. 3) in their application of the
Howard & Sheth Model identified that the “educational level” of the consumer is one of external variables that may affect consumer purchasing. Therefore, it can be argued that the factors of public opinion, personal interest, and knowledge/effects are significant with respect to consumer’s knowledge, understanding, and educational level regarding mindful consumption. Also, as mentioned previously, Howard & Sheth (1969, p. 471) argued that the financial situation of the consumer is a significant external variable that shapes his/her purchasing behavior. Hence, the saving money factor was determined to fall within the category of external variables.

Intervening variables, are concerned with obtaining, processing and responding to the information. Intervening variables also relate to consumer’s learning about the purchase such as, for instance, defining the motives of purchase, determining the purchasing goals, and analyzing selection criteria (Juan et al., 2017, p. 3). Therefore, we argue that our identified factor of pre-determined goal/shopping list relates to Juan et al.’s (2017) ideas because our respondents have revealed that they have learnt that without the purchasing list, which they have regarded as a considerable part constituting their shopping goals, they tend to overconsume because their shopping activity is less organized. For instance, Respondent five (5) said that he/she has learnt that the shopping list contributes to having a clearer shopping plan and not engaging in spontaneous shopping behavior.

Furthermore, Howard & Sheth (1969, p. 475) in their discussion about intervening variables refer to the concept of satisfaction which relates to the post-purchase evaluation regarding the actual and the expected consequences of the purchase, as discussed previously. Our identified factors of post-purchase reflection and post-purchase dissatisfaction are highly related to each other. Although, post-purchase reflection may not necessarily result in dissatisfaction per se as it is more related to the deliberation with respect to purchasing and may result in feeling regret or resentment because of one’s actions with respect to shopping. We argue that these factors coincide with Howard & Sheth’s (1969, p. 475) ideas and that they are concerned with the overall post-purchase evaluation by the consumer. Therefore, these factors were placed in the intervening variables section as displayed in Figure 6. Also, we argue that the unmet expectations factor as well relates to the post-purchase evaluation of the purchasing decision because the consumer engage in this evaluation only after the purchase has been performed.

Lastly, it was determined that all the remaining factors which have been identified to influence consumers’ mindful consumption behavior fall within the category of intervening variables (Figure 6). The factors were revealed to have a positive impact on the respondents’ environmental attitudes and values, as well as to have a favorable impact regarding the attitudes with respect to mindful consumption. Lastly, mindful consumption is regarded as the underlying output variable.

Therefore, by relying on the Howard & Sheth model together with its most recent application by Juan et al. (2017), we have connected our factors together and grouped them into different sections because, as depicted from our initial model of the theoretical framework, the identification regarding which external and internal factors influence mindful consumption mindset and behavior is the main objective of this thesis that has guided our research. Therefore, Figure 6 displays how the relation and interplay among input, external, and intervening variables reinforce and result in mindful consumption mindset and behavior of the consumer.
Figure 6. The major components of Mindful Consumption
7. Conclusion/ Discussion

This chapter presents the conclusions that were derived from conducting the present research. Also, the discussion about and the answer to the study’s research question will be presented.

7.1 Conclusion and Theoretical Contributions

Within the current study, by focusing in student’s private consumption patterns, we have aimed to identify the factors that influence the sense of caring in mindset and temperance in behavior with respect to mindful consumption. The exact purpose was to contribute to the existing literature gap, since there are no studies that have accomplished this. Therefore, the proposed research question was to identify ‘which internal and external factors influence the sense of caring in mindset and temperance in behavior among Swedish students with respect to mindful consumption.’ This has been accomplished, and the identified factors are listed in the results chapter. Furthermore, by relying on Howard & Sheth’s (1969) model as well as its recent application by Juan et al. (2017), we have developed our own model by identifying and arguing for which of our discovered factors fall within each configuration, as displayed in Figure 6. As such, we have contributed to the scarce literature regarding mindful consumption by providing factors that influence the sense of caring in mindset and temperance in behavior among Swedish students.

7.2 Managerial Contributions

From the analysis, it can be concluded that not all the participants are aware of the concept of mindful consumption. Some participants showed more awareness than others, however, some participants experienced hesitations in describing what mindful consumption is and what implications it has with respect to them and the society. Consequently, this must further be promoted. The respondents have revealed that the reasons for their lack of awareness regarding mindful consumption are that government, lobby organizations, the media and other actors are constantly failing in communicating and spreading their initiatives and ideas in order to reach a larger scale of people. Furthermore, respondents are not rational decision makers either, but they indeed have to be with respect to mindful consumption. This is mainly because being mindful is to be aware of how and to what extent one’s purchase behavior affects nature, community, and self. Many participants argued that this was difficult because (1) there is too much information to handle and simultaneously (2) too little useful facts, but also (3) the fact that they cannot see the immediate effect of their consumption. We believe that organizations, with the help from the society, must step in and be active regarding these issues. They need to actually provide information that is easily accessed and not overwhelming, as well as make it easier for consumers to understand the actual causes of their consumption. As such, organizations and corporations could improve their communication by providing clearer information regarding their impact and their influence on environment, which includes the society and nature in which individuals and animals exist and operate. Furthermore, one of the respondents did suggest a grading system that indicates how environmental friendly corporation’s products are. This could be implemented, even though we are aware of the difficulties in creating such an evaluation system. However, organizations must in some way provide clearer information for their consumers in order to enable Mindful Consumption.
7.3 Limitations

One of the most evident limitations, which from the perspective of the present research can be argued as one of the strengths, is the limited access to research regarding Mindful Consumption. On the one hand, it means that we have had restricted information to actually build this work on, but on the other hand, it also implies that our work is not limited to or biased on what other scholars believe. Therefore, this aspect ensures the authenticity and originality of the present study. It would, for example, have been easier to formulate the interview guide in line with previous authors. The causes of this limitation are that we cannot guarantee that we actually did measure what we were aiming to measure, since we are not experts in this area. But again, the fact that we constructed these questions ourselves, with the help from the presented theories, may have resulted in a broader report that is not restricted to previous work.

Another limitation is the number of interviews performed, even though we believe we received enough answers to actually make a conclusion and, even more important, a contribution. It would in no way have harmed this report if more interviews had been conducted, rather the opposite. A larger number of interviews would have resulted in more information for us to base the result and analysis upon, and also, hopefully, have ensured more trustworthy results since more people would have participated. Another limitation of the study is that we have chosen to interview our classmates. We believe that this decision inevitably created some bias in their replies. Although, we tried to mitigate this effect to as utmost extent as possible by implementing the methodological choices, we have discussed previously, in order to overcome this (i.e. the interview is held and dominated by the interviewer who is not acquainted with the respondent).
8. Future Research

As already discussed, Lim (2017) underlined that one shortcoming of Sheth et al.’s (2010) presented framework of Mindful Consumption is the narrow focus of only three types of behaviors. This is something we did not consider since we focused on their particular formulation of the concept as well as their proposed research area. It is, however, possible for future research to expand this concept and actually take this bias into account. This means that future research would elaborate on the Mindful Behavior factors.

Furthermore, this work focused on private consumption, and in particularly more all different types of products and food. This could also be elaborated. Future research could try to identify which factors influence behavior regarding different types of products and, for instance, try to find more detailed facts regarding how individuals behave when purchasing a specific type of product. Future research could, as such, conduct a comparative study and, for instance, try to analyze whether there is a difference between, for example, clothes and IT products, but other products too of course.

Further research is also needed with respect to investigating the subject of mindful consumption in divergent contexts. Within this thesis, we have chosen to explore mindful consumption among Swedish students mainly because of the accessibility of research participants, since we are students ourselves. However, mindful consumption should further be investigated by addressing, for instance, different age groups and income levels of citizens. This will allow for a better comparability with respect to findings which can further be addressed by different organizations that aim to promote this and hence, will allow to target their initiatives accordingly.

Furthermore, in connection to the previous suggestions, more qualitative research is called for in order to identify the factors that influence mindful consumption mindset and behavior in differing contexts. However, with respect to the current paper, quantitative research could be undertaken in order to investigate whether our identified factors are significant in influencing consumers’ mindful consumption.
Reference List


Appendix 1: The Interview Guide

Thank you very much for your time and for attending this interview. We would like to point out that this interview is conducted for the purpose of writing a Bachelor’s level thesis. The objective of the interview is to investigate students’ way of consuming, with a particular focus on their attitudes towards sustainability and sustainability related issues and what impact their consumption has on sustainable development. Furthermore, any information you share during this interview, including sensitive information such as, for instance, your name, will not be revealed. Therefore, we ensure the highest degree of confidentiality. Moreover, we would like to remind you that the interview will be recorded. Do you agree to participate in this interview?

Personal questions – How do the persons consume?
1. How would you describe the way you consume?
2. What do you think about the way you consume?
3. Do you consider the impact of your consumption?
   → If yes: What/whom do you think it affects?
   → If no: Why not? What/whom do you think it affects?

General questions about Mindful Consumption
1. Have you ever heard of the concept of Mindful Consumption?
2. What do you think of when you hear Mindful Consumption?
3. How do you understand this concept? Give your own definition/explanation.
4. Why do you think mindful consumption/consuming in a mindful way is important?
5. Do you think consumers consume in a mindful way?
   → If not: what do you think prevents mindful consumption?

Mindset, Caring for Self
1. Why do you go shopping? What encourages/motivates you to go shopping?
2. How do you feel when you are shopping? (excited, satisfied, anxious, etc.)
3. How do you feel afterwards? (excited, satisfied, anxious, etc.)
4. Would you say that consuming makes you happier? Motivate!
5. What do you think about saving money? Is that something you do?
6. How do you feel about materialism? How do you think it affects you?
7. What/Who encourages you to consume/shop mindfully? (family, media, education, etc.)
   If no one: What/who could make you consume mindfully?
8. How do you understand/estimate your own ability to improve the current situation of overconsumption by/knowing that you’re shopping mindfully?
9. How do you understand your ability to influence others to start shopping mindfully by shopping mindfully yourself?
10. How does it make you feel knowing that you shop in a mindful/thoughtful way?
11. How information from the media impacts your decision to shop mindfully?
12. What kind of information (negative/positive appeals) do you think is more efficient in impacting your choice to shop mindfully? Why?
13. How do you think communication with social groups (family, peers etc.) influences your mindful shopping?

Mindset, Caring for Community
1. How do you think your shopping behavior affects the society?
2. How important is it to you that the society would consume/shop in a mindful way?
3. What thoughts do you have when consuming/shopping mindfully about the community?
4. How do you think it would affect you if society at large would consume/shop mindfully?

Mindset, Caring for Nature
1. How do you feel about environmental degradation?
2. How do you think your shopping behavior affects the planet?
3. What kind of products do you usually buy: eco-friendly or not? Why or why not?
4. How do you feel when you buy environmentally friendly products?
5. How do you think materialism affects nature?
6. What obligations/responsibilities do you think you have with respect to nature?
7. To what extent are you encouraged to contribute to the environment by shopping mindfully yourself?
8. How do you understand the relationship between nature and your mindful shopping?

Behavior: Acquisitive, Repetitive, and Aspirational
1. In what way making a purchase list before going shopping contributes to mindful consumption/shopping?
2. What motivates/influences you to restrain from buying a particular product? / What thoughts do you have in mind when deciding between buying and not buying a certain product?
3. What do you think about yourself knowing that you restrained from unnecessary shopping?
4. What is your goal of going shopping? (e.g. leisure, need/want fulfillment, other)
5. How do you think having a goal before going shopping influences temperance in behavior?
6. How do you think post-purchase dissatisfaction influences your temperance in shopping?
7. How do you think the quality and durability of a product influence temperate shopping behavior?
8. How other people influence your temperance in shopping? (or) What influence other people have on you with respect to affecting your temperance in shopping?