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Attitude and Behaviour

– A study of consumers' explanations for the gap in
between

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Abstract

Title

Attitude and behaviour – a study of consumers' explanations for the gap in between

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Key-words

Attitude-behaviour gap, pro-environmental behaviour, green products, green consumption, environmental consumerism

Purpose

The purpose with this study is to explore how consumers explain the attitude-behaviour gap in the field of environmental consumerism.

Methodology

For this qualitative research, constructionism as an ontological approach was chosen to reach the purpose. Further, phenomenological philosophy has been the interpretative approach and in order to reach rich and nuanced empirical material focus groups were chosen as the procedure for this research.

Theoretical perspectives

The study's conceptual framework contains of research that can be used in order to explain the attitude-behaviour gap and begins with an introduction to barriers for the gap, followed by a presentation of research within marketing communication and values and beliefs.

Analysis

The analysis consists of interpretations of the findings from the focus groups that were conducted in order to answer the research question that this study is based on.

Conclusions

From the study it can be concluded that four themes were prominent as explanations for the attitude-behaviour gap: *price, lack of information, values and beliefs* and *marketing communication*. The first two can to some extent be overcome through marketing communication, however they all indicate that lack of motivation is an explanation for the attitude-behaviour gap.

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1. Introduction

The introductory chapter begins with a background to environmental consumerism and, in particular, the attitude-behaviour gap which is evident there. It is followed by a discussion regarding the problem in question, together with the purpose of the study. Finally, a number of often-used key-terms in the study will be defined.

1.1. Background

During the past decades, a rapid growth in the economy has occurred due to an increase in consumers' consumption around the world (Chen & Chai, 2010). This way of consuming, but also the on-going technological and industrial revolution, has had an impact on the way humans live their lives (Akerhurst, Afonso & Gonçalves, 2012). The environment and, in particular the natural resources, have faced the biggest consequences for this development and these changes (Chen & Chai, 2010). The effect on the environment has not been unobserved by the consumers and since the 1990s, which is considered to be *the Earth decade*, the awareness of environmental issues have had an impact on consumers. Moreover it has been believed that consumers that hold environmental concerns are more likely to purchase environmental friendly products (Akerhurst et al, 2012). The increased concern among society regarding environmental issues has caused organizations to intensify their focus on these types of issues and a sign of this is the increased supply of eco-labelled products (Tjærnemo, 2001).

A number of environmental researches have shown inconsistent results about the relationship between consumers' environmental concern and their purchases, and this is often referred to as *the attitude-behaviour gap* or *value-action gap* (Chatzidakis, Hibbert & Smith, 2007; Blake, 1999; Gupta & Ogden, 2009; Young, Hwang, McDonald & Oates, 2009). In this research the concept attitude-behaviour gap will be used when addressing this inconsistency between consumers' stated environmental concern and purchase behaviour. Furthermore, the attitude-behaviour gap implies that despite many consumers' environmental concerns, they often fail to transform these into regular environmental buying behaviour (Gupta & Ogden, 2009; Young et al, 2009). Research has for many years tried to explain the gap, but without any significant results (Young et al, 2010). Further research has shown that even though approximately 46-67 % of the population have positive attitudes for organic food, merely 4-10 % show this in their actual purchase behaviour (Hughner, McDonagh, Prothero, Shultz II

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& Stanton, 2007). However, other studies imply that consumers are willing to pay more for ethical products and that some of them have performed purchases based on the responsible reputation of an organization. Yet, regardless of their willingness to purchase such products, they do not act according to it (De Pelsmacker, Geuens & Van den Bergh, 2010). As Akerhurst et al (2012) asserts, the attitude-behaviour gap is still of significance for environmental consumerism, despite recent findings that consumers are becoming better in acting according to their attitudes and beliefs.

The term attitude is often described as an evaluation of an object that a person can hold positive or negative thoughts about. In other words, the object in question is what a person likes or dislikes (Scholderer, 2011). In order to understand consumer behaviour, attitude is considered to be a validated measurement (Gupta & Ogden, 2009; Udell, 1965). As Udell asserts, "attitude research offers a potentially useful device for explaining and predicting consumer behaviour" (1965, p 46). However in environmental consumerism, research about the attitude-behaviour gap has proven that attitude does not always predict behaviour (Gupta & Ogden, 2009). According to Blake (1999), the existence of the gap states that there is a difference between what people say and what they do. This fact has puzzled researchers and it has left marketers clueless of how to understand environmental consumerism. For instance, it has been proved that it is hard to target and segment the so-called *green consumers*, which makes it difficult for marketers to address consumers with environmental concern (Akerhurst et al, 2012; Gupta & Ogden, 2009; Wheale & Hinton, 2007).

The issue with the attitude-behaviour gap should not be left undetected or ignored, since the industry of green products in 2006 was estimated to be worth over 200 billion dollars (Gupta & Ogden, 2009). In Sweden, the Government decided in 2010 to financially support a three-year long research project for investigation of the gap (Ljung, 2011). The reason for the project was based on the belief that by closing the attitude-behaviour gap, profit within the Swedish business industry, especially in the food sector, would be generated (Ljung, 2011). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that adopting an environmental management has a positive impact on companies' financial performance (Akerhurst et al, 2012). Likewise, many firms have started to use different environmental attributes in their marketing strategy to create competitive advantages (Chen & Chai, 2010).

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1.2. The relevance of examining the attitude-behaviour gap

The gap between attitude and behaviour has been stated to exist in environmental consumerism (Akerhurst et al, 2012), which makes it an interesting area to investigate further. Attitude has been considered to be a measurement for the understanding of consumer behaviour, yet this has not been the fact in environmental consumerism where attitude has been found to not always foretell people's behaviour (Gupta & Ogden, 2009). This creates an interest to explore how the consumers themselves perceive the attitude-behaviour gap and if they are aware of its existence and consequences. It also causes curiosity since research, as mentioned in the background, has shown that the fact that people do not do what they say they do, causes confusion for marketers and makes it difficult for them to focus on consumers that have an environmental concern (Akerhurst et al, 2012; Gupta & Ogden, 2009; Wheale & Hinton, 2007). Therefore, the fact that the attitude of the consumers is not always reflected in their behaviour makes this interesting to study, in order to obtain understanding of why their behaviour not always correspond with their attitude.

As emphasized in the background, the worth of the industry of green products was only a few years ago approximately 200 billion dollars and it has also been asserted by Akerhurst et al (2012) that the consumption of pro-environmental products is higher among consumers with environmental concerns. This in turn motivates further studies of consumers' thoughts regarding the consumption of pro-environmental products and what they believe has an impact on them when choosing not to consume such products.

1.3. The purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore how consumers explain the gap between attitude and behaviour that exists in environmental consumerism. Exploring how the consumers themselves explain the attitude-behaviour gap is something that, according to us, has not been sufficiently studied in present research about the gap. The research will therefore not focus on how to close the attitude-behaviour gap, but instead on why it cannot be closed. Furthermore, by studying the consumers' explanations about the attitude-behaviour gap, the aim is to contribute with new insights that can help understand and clarify the problem with the gap.

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Also the intention is to explore how consumers understand the purchase of pro-environmental products. Hence, the research question that this study is based on is as follows:

How is the attitude-behaviour gap in environmental consumerism explained by the consumers?

1.4. Central key terms

Pro-environmental behaviour is a frequently used term in this study. It has been explained as the actions of an individual or a group, which through its or their behaviour contributes to a sustainable use of natural resources (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Tan & Lau, 2011). Hence, pro-environmental behaviour can be understood as a generic name for green consumption, green products, green purchase behaviour and green consumers (Tan & Lau, 2011).

Furthermore the concept green consumer behaviour is in literature sometimes used alternately to pro-environmental behaviour (Young, Hwang, McDonald & Oates, 2010). In this study *green consumption* is used for consumption that contributes to minimal environmental damage. Note that green consumption does not necessarily involve purchases - it can for instance be consumption that involves saving energy (Young et al, 2010).

The concept *green products* include products that will not pollute the earth or reduce natural resources (Tan & Lau, 2011). This can for instance be, products labelled organic or ecological, products that will decrease the use of electric power et cetera. When using the term *green consumers* in this study, we mean people who are acting according to their environmental concern. The term *environmental concern* is, as asserted by Thøgersen (2010), referring to a person's awareness of environmental issues. Therefore this term is also used in this study in order to explain this type of awareness. *Green purchase behaviour* is the behaviour involved for purchase of green products (Akerhurst, Afonso, Gonçalves, 2012; Tan & Lau, 2011). Research that focuses on any of the subcategories in pro-environmental behaviour is in this study combined under the concept *environmental consumerism* (Gupta & Ogden, 2009). The concept green consumerism is sometimes in literature used alternatively to environmental consumerism; however in this study the term environmental consumerism will be used.

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2. Method

In this section the method that has been used for the research process will be presented. Initially the scientific approach will be presented, where the ontological as well as the epistemological standpoint is described. Additionally, the presentation of the data collection and how this has been done in more detail will follow. Furthermore, the section will be concluded with reflections of the chosen method.

2.1. Scientific approach

For every research, it is important to try to define a scientific approach to be able to understand how the world should be understood in a graspable way (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Esterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2008). To decide the scientific approach for this research, the purpose of this study was used as guideline. The purpose of this study is to explore the consumers' explanations and understanding of the attitude-behaviour gap in environmental consumerism. When examining our purpose we as researchers will view the world, which all human beings operate within, as socially constructed. Hence the ontological view we undertake is *constructionism*, which consider the world and its existence as a social phenomenon whose meaning will constantly change due to social interaction (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Esterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2008). This means that the research will not be objective since, according to the ontological standpoint; it is believed that the world that aims to be studied will be best done through correspondence with subjective interpretations of individuals (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Accordingly to our purpose, *interpretivism* has been chosen as the epistemological approach. The essential in interpretivism is the capture of subjective meaning in a social world, which is believed to be contextual (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In social science interpretivism is often used, especially to help explain and understand the human behaviour (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Further, the interpretivism finds support for what should be considered acceptable knowledge within the *phenomenological philosophy* (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Phenomenology is a philosophy that is interested in how people make sense of different social phenomenon that occurs in their everyday world (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Thus, it is assumed that the important reality is what people perceive it to be and therefore the central issue is how individuals themselves understand and describe the world they operate within (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Palmer, Larkin, De Visser

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& Dadden, 2010). According to this, phenomenology is often considered as a suitable research philosophy when the aim is to understand and to explain human behaviour in relation to a certain phenomenon in a given context (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Palmer et al, 2010). We therefore hope to, by examining how our respondents ascribe meaning to their social world as well as how they make sense of the attitude-behaviour gap, be able to fulfil the purpose of our research.

2.2. Research strategy

In our research the purpose has been to explore how the consumers understand and explain the attitude-behaviour gap and this has been the reason for the choice of our research strategy. To make it possible for us to explore the consumers' explanations as well as their understanding of the attitude-behaviour gap, rich and nuanced empirical material was needed. According to this, we decided to use a qualitative research strategy with focus groups as procedures. Qualitative research is described in Malhotra (2009) as a research strategy that can provide insight and develop initial understanding of a certain issue or phenomenon. A qualitative research is often based on a small sample and can be used to try to explain findings obtained from a quantitative research (Malhotra, 2009). Furthermore, when applying a qualitative research strategy, the procedure, *focus groups*, can be considered in order to understand a phenomenon (Malhotra, 2009). According to Wibeck (2010), focus groups can be used to discover new things about a subject as well as study discussions in an everyday situation. Hence the choice of focus groups as method can generate understanding of people's underlying thoughts and experiences of a certain matter (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Malhotra, 2009; Wibeck, 2010). In other words, focus groups allow the researcher to reach depth and the context that is needed to interpret and gain understanding of why things are the way they are and/or how things appears (Malhotra, 2009; Palmer et al, 2010; Wibeck, 2010). As mentioned in Wibeck (2010), the discussion that generates in a focus group is a process where the subjects will take part of each other's thoughts and experiences. Thus the characteristic, with focus group as method, is that the discussions will generate new ideas which are formed in a social context (Wibeck, 2010). In turn this can be seen as corresponding with the ontological and epistemological position that this study has adopted, as well as with the purpose of research.

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The research that, to-date, has been done in environmental consumerism within the field of consumer behaviour, have foremost been of quantitative research method (Akerhurst et al, 2012). In the research conducted by Akerhurst et al (2012), it is suggested that research in green purchase behaviour should try to use a qualitative approach, like focus groups, to better explore the green consumers. Further it has also been suggested that more research should use more interpretative types of research methods to gain richer insights about consumers' green purchases (Hughner et al, 2007). Therefore the belief is that with a qualitative research strategy and by using focus groups, it will be possible to get empirical material to interpret how these respondents understand the world in order to better understand the inconsistency that exists between attitude and behaviour in environmental consumerism. Furthermore, to accomplish a well performed qualitative research, a conceptual framework will be conducted to make it possible to interpret the results of this study in a rich and nuanced way. Conceptual frameworks are sometimes conducted to help researchers to analyse the regularities of data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this study the conceptual framework has served as a guideline for our content analysis when identifying themes and this will be further presented when discussing the choice of analysis. The conceptual framework will consist of a literature review of previous research that have been conducted in order to try to explain the attitude-behaviour gap.

2.3. Data Collection

2.3.1. Focus groups

As mentioned in the research strategy, focus groups were used for data collection in order to generate a rich and nuanced empirical material to understand the inconsistency in consumers' attitudes and behaviour in purchases of environmental products. A focus group can be seen as a type of group interview with a research technique that collects data from interaction between groups of people who discuss certain matter/-s decided by the researcher (Malhotra, 2009; Wibeck, 2010). In the work by Wibeck (2010), the essential in focus groups is described as the interaction between the participants. Further she mentions that a focus group that functions well has participants that try to understand each other and are interested in how others deal with the same situation as themselves (Wibeck, 2010). Hence the participants' understanding of each other should be understood as coming from the interaction between one another (Wibeck, 2010). Another reason for focus groups is to allow different voices to be

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heard at one time (Palmer et al, 2010). It is then possible that a group discussion in a focus group will, through interaction between the respondents, generate rich empirical material (Palmer et al, 2010).

The size of a focus group has often been discussed in literature, however in literature reviews it is often concluded that small groups are to prefer over big groups (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Malhotra, 2009; Wibeck, 2010). Malhotra (2009) argues that a standard focus group contains eight to twelve respondents while so called mini-groups only contains four to five respondents. However, Wibeck (2010) concludes that a focus group should contain no less than four and no more than six people to be considered an appropriate group. The argument for no less than four is built on the fact that a group of three people is considered to be a triad which means greater risk for tensions between group members. If a group consists of more than six people, there will be a risk for construction of subgroups which will disturb the interaction between the group members (Wibeck, 2010). Further, Wibeck (2010) argues that depending on the aim with the focus group a heterogenic versus homogeneous group can be discussed. If the aim is to reach intimacy and agreement, a homogeneous group is preferable, while a heterogenic group is to prefer in certain types of research, more specifically participatory research when the participants often represents an organisation and not only themselves (Wibeck, 2010). However, when the researcher seeks to compare different viewpoints, this is best done by using different groups that are homogenous within (Wibeck, 2010).

Another question that often appears when using focus group as method is how many groups that will be needed (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Wibeck, 2010). According to Bryman and Bell (2011) one focus group will not generate satisfying results to analyse, since another group might hold different answers. However, Wibeck (2010) argues that it is not possible to state how many groups are needed for a satisfying research. Instead the number of focus groups should depend on many factors where one is the complexity of the phenomena being studied (Wibeck, 2010). Further the availability of both time and resource will affect the number of focus groups (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Wibeck, 2010). However, it is worth to mention, that there seems to be strong arguments for saying that too many groups and too much information will make it difficult to analyse the data (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Wibeck, 2010).

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2.3.2. Selecting focus groups

In our research we wanted to understand the inconsistency between consumers' attitudes and behaviour in environmental consumerism. To accomplish this, we used focus groups, since we hoped that the respondents would be able to explain and understand the attitude-behaviour gap through interaction with each other. Further we decided to use two focus groups with four respondents in each group. Choosing two focus groups were based on many factors, especially our willingness to combine the discussions between the groups to generate more insights. Another factor was that because of this study's short time reference, two focus groups with four respondents in each seemed appropriate in order to be able to interpret the empirical material thoroughly. The number of respondents was also based on the fact that we, as researchers, lacked experience in moderating group discussions. Using only four respondents in each group made it easier for us to moderate the discussions. This in turn was believed to have resulted in richer and deeper conversations with the respondents. Furthermore we argue that our two focus groups were enough to be able to examine how consumers can explain the attitude-behaviour gap, in order for us to gain a richer understanding of it.

2.3.3. The respondents

For the group discussions to become rich and nuanced, we arranged the groups so that the respondents in the groups had as similar socio-demographic factors as possible, but at the same time different experiences in environmental consumerism. By selecting respondents with similarities in socio-demographic factors like household, age, gender, education, hometown and occupation, our aim was to contribute to a feeling of recognition and belonging between the respondents. Then through different experiences in environmental consumerism discussions could easily take form. All the socio-demographic information was collected in a short one-on-one interview as soon as respondents assigned to participate in our research. For the selection of the respondents KRAV's market report from 2013, a Swedish label who is the key player for the organic market in Sweden, was used. According to KRAV (Krav, 2013), the typical consumer in Sweden who shops organic food products is a young woman in the age around 20-30 years old. KRAV (Krav, 2013) further states this typical woman is well educated and lives in urban cities. A market report from Sweden was used since the research was conducted in Sweden and aimed to explore the perception of the attitude-behaviour gap among Swedish consumers. Further, we also used a report from the

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Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, Naturvårdsverket (2008), which showed that more women than men are more concerned about environmental consumerism. Therefore, the respondents for this study were women between the ages of 20-30 - average age was calculated to 24.5 - well educated and who lived in two urban cities in Sweden, Malmö and Lund. We believed that by selecting women in Malmö and Lund in between the ages 20-30 years, it would be possible to capture respondents that according to the statistics are likely to belong to a segment that can be addressed as a consumer with environmental concerns.

Further, these focus groups were conducted in Malmö and Lund, Sweden for three main reasons. First, since the Swedish market of organic food products has continually increased in sales since 2006 (Krav, 2013). Further, a research in Sweden conducted by Naturvårdsverket (2008) showed that nine out of ten consumers stated that they were environmental concerned about climate and consumption. We believe that this indicates that the Swedish consumer is aware of some sort of environmental consumerism, hence it would be interesting to examine the Swedish market further and investigate how the attitude-behaviour gap can be understood and explained according to Swedish consumers. Second, since we are both from Sweden, we are most familiar with and have knowledge about the Swedish market. Third, due to our short time reference, Sweden became a suitable choice especially since we were already familiar with the Swedish market. Because of the choice to target Swedish consumers for our research, we made the decision to hold the discussions in Swedish in order to not lose participants due to lack of skills in English.

2.4. Research design

2.4.1. Moderators

In our two focus groups we decided to use a so called dual-moderator group. In dual-moderator group there are two moderators, in this case the two of us - one responsible for the flow and the other responsible for ensuring that specific issues are discussed (Malhotra, 2009). When using focus groups, the moderator is responsible for the group discussion to generate useful empirical material (Wibeck, 2010). Hence it can be good to use two moderators to ease the pressure on one single moderator (Wibeck, 2010). Since we were inexperienced as moderators it was comfortable for us to be two. It also made it possible for us to compare our differences as well as similarities between our observations to help us interpret the material in rich sense, especially since we were responsible for different tasks

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during the sessions (Wibeck, 2010). Further we expected, by being in the same age as our respondents, it would help to make them feel relaxed and comfortable in the discussions.

To prepare ourselves as moderators we designed an interview guide with topics and questions for discussions that were based on our conceptual framework (Bryman & Bell, 2011). To ensure that our questions and topics were comprehensible we let peers read and confirm them. However to be flexible to new insight as well as new topics, the interview guide was only used in order to align the topics we aimed to discuss (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Wibeck, 2010). Further, our approach was to only interfere if necessary, for example if no discussions were created, to ask respondents to develop their view if their answers were unclear or if the discussion took unpleasant turns. This was done in concern of letting the respondents interact with each other as a group and in the biggest extent leave us as researcher out of their explaining and understanding of the gap between attitude-behaviour. Not interfering was also done in order to avoid us, as moderators, to set a social accepted norm which could make our respondent afraid of not answering according to the norm.

2.4.2. Procedure

In every focus group session, we started with an introduction of ourselves in order to help the respondents get familiar with us as persons (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Further we asked the respondents to read a paper with information about the study. The paper contained information about, for instance, that the group discussions would be recorded, that we would disguise the respondent's identity in our analysis and that they, as respondents, were allowed to discontinue at any time during the focus group session. When the respondents had read the information we then asked them to sign their consent of understanding the information. When informing and asking respondents to sign the papers we tried to adapt a professional approach for the session but in a way that made the respondents feel comfortable.

To get rich and nuanced discussion between people that do not already know each other, the quest to build a social environment that is friendly and familiar is crucial (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Wibeck, 2010). This was done in a group room in the library, Orkanen at Malmö University with one group and in a group room at the School of Economics and Management, Lund University with one group. In the beginning of both focus group sessions we offered refreshments and something to eat. The group room only contained the respondents and the moderators. The session started, as recommended in Wibeck (2010), with opening questions

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to start conversation and to let the four respondents introduce themselves and get familiarised with each other. These opening questions were mostly based on facts rather than attitudes and were not included in the empirical material for analysis; rather their function was to encourage the respondents to participate in the discussions. The next part was to introduce the topic that should be discussed and this was done through questions which opened up for the respondents to reflect. In order to let the respondents reflect, we followed Krueger's suggestion, mentioned in Wibeck (2010), to start the introduction phase with open questions. For a group to start discussing central issues researchers can use transitional questions in order to make respondents aware of how others view this issue. As suggested in Wibeck (2010), the amount of questions concerning the central issue in a focus group should be two to five. Further it is stated that the discussions around these questions should be significantly longer than around the other questions. In the interview guide we had prepared two questions regarding our central issues for our focus groups. When these two questions had been discussed properly, we finished the session by asking the respondents if they wanted to add something. This final question was asked to let the respondents reflect over the discussions, as well as expressing a final opinion if necessary. During the whole session, we as moderators, focused on achieving good discussions and interactions between the respondents. Furthermore, the time duration for each focus group was approximately 60 to 90 minutes long, which can be understood as a reasonable length according to Malhthora (2010) and Wibeck (2010).

2.5. Interpretation of data

2.5.1. Content analysis

To analyse the material from the focus groups content analysis can be seen as suitable, thus the purpose of analysis is to reach rich aspects and content (Wibeck, 2010). Worth mentioning is that a lot of existing literature omits suggestions of how to interpret data from focus groups. This is something that has been taken in consideration when choosing content analysis for the material in this study. A content analysis can be described as an approach in order to reach content's aspects of what have been said in a focus group (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Wibeck, 2010). Wibeck (2010) suggests that a well-designed analysis will regard the respondents' statements according to the *frequency*, *extent* and the *intensity of them* in order to identify

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themes in the empirical material. The frequency is the number of times a certain subject will occur. Extent will answer how many of the respondents that talks about the issue. This can be done through agreement between respondents and it will help assign the issues support. The intensity can be captured in many things for example the volume of voice, pronunciation of words or how fast a respondent talks. In other words the intensity will be explored by examining the flow in a discussion and therefore the silence will also be important. Further, observation of the context is suggested and this is done by trying to identify stimuli that give rise to those statements that are considered interesting. By identifying stimuli, the researcher will also be able to notify if any spontaneous subject arose in the focus group. If spontaneous subject arose these subjects shall be taken into great consideration since it is most likely to mean something to the respondent who uttered it (Wibeck, 2010).

2.5.2. Interpretation of empirical material

For our analysis we followed the suggestions by Wibeck (2010). Further, we tried to analyse our empirical material systematically in order to make sure that the results were verifiable. This was done by using the conceptual framework as a guideline when interpreting our empirical material. By doing so, we could identify themes based on the content analysis' three criteria, frequency, extent and the intensity of statements. Moreover, the analysis was based on voice recording from the focus groups sessions as well as on a shortened transcription of the discussions. A full transcription of the sessions with a following analysis would have been preferable, but due to the time limit of this research this was not seen as an option. Moreover, in the analysis some statements from the respondents were used in order to exemplify the empirical material in a satisfying way. When presenting parts of focus groups' discussion in this research, the respondents' identity has been disguised by using X1-X8 instead of their names, where X1-X4 represent respondents from one focus group and X5-X8 represent respondents from the second group. Furthermore, these statements were translated from Swedish to English by us in order to be understandable when presented in the analysis.

Additionally, during the interpretation of the empirical material, we as researchers had the so called interpreter's *foreknowledge* in consideration (Thurén, 1991). This was done since we cannot ignore nor attest that the knowledge we had about environmental consumerism before our research has not affected our work in one way or another. Our foreknowledge about environmental consumerism was limited, however our interest for the environment has been

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crucial for both of us during a long time. Hence we have come in contact with issues concerning the environment in different ways during our life. For instance one of us is an active member in the Nature Conservation, Naturskyddsforeningen, while the other has been interested in issues concerning the environment and retail industry. However, we do not believe that it has affected our work in a negative way; rather we believe it has enriched our work as researchers and improved the interpretation of the empirical material.

2.6. Reflection of method

Research is often evaluated according to three criteria, reliability, validity and generalizability (Malhotra, 2009). With a qualitative research approach two of these three criteria, reliability and generalizability, have been difficult to reach since these are considered impossible to verify in qualitative research. However, according to Malhotra (2009), a qualitative research is misused if its results are used to make generalizations to population of concern as well as being considered absolute. Also worth mentioning is that the aim of our research is not to generalise the results rather it is to find new insights that can be used to generate new research ideas. Further in order to obtain validity we have tried to achieve Lincoln and Guba's four criteria that are suggested for qualitative research in the work of Bryman and Bell (2011). The first criterion is *credibility* and emphasizes trustworthiness in research. To obtain trustworthiness in our research we have used the technique, respondent validation. By allowing our respondents to see their citations and confirm them, we believe that we have ensured our empirical material. The second criterion is *transferability* and can be seen as an alternative to generalizability. Transferability aims to underline those insights that can be transferred from one context to another related context. In order for others to transfer insights from this study we have provided this research with as detailed descriptions of our research as possible and also tried to be systematic in our interpretations of the empirical material. The third criterion is *dependability* and it can be seen as an alternative to reliability. We see this criterion as important thus our process of the empirical material has been an interpretation hence the insights from this become subjective. To reach dependability we have had our work crosschecked and validated by our supervisor during the whole research process. The last criterion is *confirmability* and focus on which degree the results can be confirmed and/or validated by others. This has been important to us since our research cannot be seen as

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objective. It has also been crucial to consider this criterion since we have translated the statements by the respondents, from Swedish to English, by ourselves. Hence it is impossible to rule out that this might have affected our interpretation of the findings. However to not let our personal values or our conceptual framework only allowing us to see what we want to see, we have once again let our supervisor play a crucial role and validate our work during the whole research process.

2.6.1. Limitation of research

We want to notify our readers that we are aware of our small sample as well as the limitations of only using respondents of the same gender. However, by selecting respondents that according to the statistics would be considered to belong to the market segment for organic food, we believe that useful insights were gained for our research. The small sample was based on many factors where the short time reference played a crucial part. In order for us to interpret our empirical material in a satisfying way a smaller sample was preferable over a bigger. We are aware of that our sample cannot be considered as conclusive or representative in any kind, however our aim was to collect rich and nuanced empirical material that we got despite of the size of the sample. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, we believe that our sample was enough in order for us to gain understanding of how consumers can explain as well as understand the attitude-behaviour gap. Further, it has been impossible to eliminate that parameters like body language, group dynamic, interview setting as well as our lack of experience of focus groups in practice et cetera may have affected the collection of empirical material. To reduce these parameters we have been accurate in our groundwork when creating our interview guide and we have also been trying to be as systematic as possible in the collecting of empirical material. Additionally we want to underline that our aim with this research has been to explore how the consumers understand and explain the attitude-behaviour gap. In order to do so we turned to the consumers themselves and let them explain their own perception and understanding of the gap in focus groups. In other words this study does not try to find answers that will end the discussion about how to close the attitude-behaviour gap, instead the aim is to open up the gap and view it from a different angle in order to clarify how the consumers explain and perceive the inconsistency between attitude and behaviour within environmental consumerism .

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3. Conceptual Framework

In this chapter, different research that can be used in order to explain the attitude-behaviour gap will be presented. To begin with, an introduction to barriers for the gap will be given, followed by other theory that is of significance in environmental consumerism to explain the attitude-behaviour gap. Furthermore, the chapter ends with a summary of the different theories presented in the framework. The summary also contains two figures that aims to illustrate how these theories are connected to the gap between attitude and behaviour.

3.1. Barriers

In order to try to close the attitude-behaviour gap in environmental consumerism, some researchers have focused on examining different barriers as reason for the gap and it has been clarified that only one barrier cannot alone close the gap, rather it is a combination of several (Hughner et al 2007). In a study by Young et al (2010) they make an attempt to explain the attitude-behaviour gap by listing previous research results and use them as guidelines when trying to explore consumers' actual purchasing behaviour of green products. Their results show that there are *barriers* which make consumers' green values decrease in their decision making process. Four barriers were found - time, price, information and non-green criteria (Young et al, 2010). *Time*, was often mentioned as a reducer for decreasing green values since consumers experienced it was time consuming to research about a company's corporate social responsibility, CSR, programme. According to Young et al (2010), *price* was described as a barrier in decision making process where a high price on a green product was not able to compete with a cheaper non-green product. When faced with these two choices, consumers tend to choose the cheaper over a more expensive green product despite their environmental concern. The *lack of available information* on environmental and social performance of products as well as manufacturers was seen as a major barrier (Young et al, 2010). Furthermore it was also concluded that *non-green criteria* such as habits and desires in consumers decision making will decrease green thinking in a decision making process. Habits and desires were represented by many different factors like brand recognition, reliability, size, model, design, colour et cetera (Young et al, 2010). According to these results Young et al (2010) concludes, that the consumers are not equipped enough to make purchase decisions accordingly to their values and attitudes because of the barriers, even if they declare themselves as green consumers.

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The findings about the lack of available information as a barrier (Young et al 2010) supports earlier results by Krarup and Russel (2005), who asserted that in order to voluntarily act in a way that is good for the environment, people need necessary information about the issues. According to Krarup and Russel (2005) consumers need to know if a change in their behaviour will help solve these issues and also if they have the possibility to act in a new way in order to solve the issues (Krarup & Russel, 2005). Furthermore, when it comes to environmental issues, consumers are not willing to make changes in their behaviour in favour of the environment, unless they receive information about it and/or instructions from others (Krarup & Russel, 2005). The reason for this is, assumed by Krarup and Russel (2005), to be because environmental issues often are very complex. Moreover, these results about lack of information by Krarup and Russel (2005) supports Soler, Gil and Sánchez (2002) findings that information can help overcoming the price.

The rejection of green products because of high prices has for some time been assumed to be a reason for people not to engage in green purchase behaviour. Therefore a lot of research has focused on the so called willingness to pay, *WTP*, as a reason for the attitude-behaviour gap (Hughner et al, 2007). However, there are only few researches which have examined which factors that influence the *WTP* (Hughner et al, 2007). One study that has examined *WTP*'s influences is the one conducted by Soler et al (2002) and they found that consumers are more willing to pay a higher price when presented with information, which helped them compare prices between organic products versus non-organic products. They also found that the *WTP* increased when information were given to consumers verbally, as opposed to in a written format (Soler et al, 2002). Hence, as declared by Young et al (2010), price is a barrier that plays a central part in consumers' green purchase behaviour. Moreover, high prices combined with unsatisfying information disfavour green products (Soler et al, 2002). It is therefore understood as there are more than one barrier to explain the inconsistency between consumers' attitude and behaviour in environmental consumerism (Hughner et al, 2007).

3.1.1. Trust

Another possible barrier for not purchasing environmental products despite environmental concerns is the lack of trust in companies and their brands and labels. For instance, as asserted by Singh et al when a company adopts Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR, as a marketing strategy trust was an important variable. Moreover, Hughner et al (2007) assert in their

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discussion in how to close the attitude-behaviour gap, that lack of trust and scepticism of certification boards of organic labels can be one reason for the gap's existence. However, very few studies within environmental consumerism have examined the consumers' confidence in labelling schemes (Sønderskov & Daugbjerg, 2011). Sønderskov and Daugbjerg (2011) have examined eco-labelling schemes in four different countries - Sweden, the United Kingdom, Denmark and the United States. Their findings indicate that there are variances between the levels of trust in eco-labelling schemes between the four countries (Sønderskov & Daugbjerg, 2011). The country with highest level of trust is Denmark, while the lowest level of trust is found in US. Furthermore, Sønderskov and Daugbjerg (2011) assert that when forming these labelling schemes, it is important to consider the consumers' trust for those who form them. For instance the reason why Denmark got the highest level of trust is according to the authors explained by the Danish people's trust for the government who form the eco-labelling schemes in Denmark. However in all countries the consumers do not always trust the government, therefore it is crucial to consider the consumers' trust for the creators of the schemes (Sønderskov & Daugbjerg, 2011). This indicates that trust is an issue to consider when labelling products as pro-environmental, especially for the growth of green products (Sønderskov & Daugbjerg, 2011).

3.1.2. Built environment

There is another fact to consider when discussing barriers, namely the built environment which the consumers live in. Williams and Dair (2007) suggest that in order for people to be engaged in more environmental friendly behaviour it is essential to examine the environment people live in. As an example they highlight the fact that people will not be motivated to choose the bicycle or to walk instead of the car if there are no cycle paths or pedestrian routes. Another example is that it is hard for people to take part in recycling if their neighbourhood does not invite to this kind of behaviour in form of recycling stations (Williams & Dair, 2007). Furthermore, Williams and Dair (2007) also emphasise that support for local businesses and services should be considered to be more important since these are both part of sustainable behaviour.

3.2. Values and beliefs

With consumers increase of interest in environmental concerns some research have tried to understand and predict purchase behaviour by examining consumers beliefs and values

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(Bucic, Harris & Arli, 2012; Freestone & McGoldrick, 2008; Shaw, Shiu, & Clark, 2000; Wheale & Hinton, 2007). For instance, in a study by Akerhurst et al (2012), it was found that altruism, the concern about the welfare of society and others, is the most significant factor for people's environmental behaviour. In turn this means that building consumer trust and taking on an ethical and/or pro-environmental oriented approach has become important for brands, especially when building brand loyalty (Singh, Iglesias & Batista-Foguet, 2012; Thøgersen, 2010; Wheale & Hinton, 2007). Furthermore, research has focused on trying to examine consumers' values and beliefs in order to explain the gap between behaviour and attitude (Chatzidakis, Hibbert & Smith, 2007).

3.2.1. Norms and theory of neutralisation

Values and beliefs that are shared by the society or a group and concern how to behave in order to obtain rewards and/or avoid sanctions are sometimes described as *social norms* (Thøgersen, 2010). A person will only be influenced by a norm if s(he) is aware of the norm as well as if s(he) believes that it is expected to adapt it. Thøgersen (2010) mentions that a person's beliefs about others holding certain expectations about how to behave are often called subjective norms. Further, he explains that those norms that are internalised by an individual are called personal norms or moral norms. Furthermore, the relationship between pro-environmental behaviour and social norms has been thoroughly studied and supported (Thøgersen, 2010). Hence, it has been suggested that this relationship should be considered when examining the attitude-behaviour gap (Chatzidakis et al, 2007).

To use social norms in order to explain the gap has been suggested by Chatzidakis et al (2007), who imply that the attitude-behaviour gap can be explained according to the theory of neutralisation. Chatzidakis et al (2007) state that social norms are crucial for consumers in their ethical behaviour. However when these social norms are not internalised strongly, the social norms will fail to guide ethical behaviour. According to Chatzidakis et al (2007) consumers will therefore create their own norms and justify their behaviour according to them, which is called *neutralisation*. Furthermore, Chatzidakis et al (2007) also assert that if consumers' personal norms and justifications are more selfish than altruistic, consumers will fail to behave altruistic in their purchases despite their environmental concern. Given the fact that people seem to internalise norms (Thøgersen, 2010) and when they are internalised strongly they will generate a pro-environmental behaviour (Chatzidakis, 2007); it therefore

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seems interesting to understand which factors that influence the norms a person chooses to internalise.

3.2.2. The influence of reference groups

In literature reference group theory is commonly used, not at least in consumer behaviour research, to explain behaviour in relation to a person's surrounding (Ekström, 2010). A reference group can be defined as "...a group of people that significantly influences an individual's behaviour" (Ekström, 2010, p. 381) and can for instance be family, friends or colleagues who can have an impact on individuals in different consumption situations (Ekström, 2010). Reference groups can therefore be described as a person's basis of evaluation when forming emotional and cognitive responses (Gupta & Ogden, 2009). However they can also be used to explain a person's certain held beliefs and values (Thøgersen, 2010). Moreover, individuals can choose to belong or not belong to, to three different types of reference groups (Ekström, 2010). As asserted by Ekström (2010), families are included in memberships groups, to which individuals belong. Groups that individuals want to belong to are called aspiration groups, while dissociative groups are groups that they do not aspire to belong to (Ekström, 2010). All humans belong to groups and the wish to be identified with a specific group motivates the human behaviour when it comes to for instance activities and purchases (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009). According to Ekström (2010) the reference group which is considered to be the most important as well as having the biggest impact on a person is the family since the interaction with this group starts from birth. Decisions concerning consumption are often made in families and the influence of the family is different during different stages of life – it is strong during the early years of life, but may weaken the older one becomes (Ekström, 2010).

The consumption behaviour of individuals can be affected in a positive or negative way by reference groups and consumers tend to behave in a way that they believe is expected by the reference group (Ekström, 2010). The assumption is that because of the role of influence, reference groups have a major impact on behaviour. Thus, reference group influences have been used in a lot of research when examining consumer context (Gupta & Ogden, 2009). Furthermore, reference groups have been considered to be a useful source of product information and brand selection for a long time. For instance in marketing, when using cultural icons like sports or entertainment celebrities to endorse products and/or services, this

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becomes evident for people who belong to a certain group to which other people wish to be included in and can affect values and attitudes which influences purchase behaviour (Gupta & Ogden, 2009). Gupta & Ogden (2009) conclude that different types of reference group influences can have an impact on one person's behaviour and attitudes, which in some cases can result in inconsistent behaviour. However they also assert that reference groups can influence green purchase behaviour if a group which a person belongs to, or wish to belong to, shows environmental friendly behaviour or expresses pro-environmental attitudes. Hence, reference group influences can be used to understand pro-environmental behaviour (Ekström, 2010; Gupta & Ogden, 2009).

3.3. Marketing communication

During the past decades marketing communication has been about the quest to attract consumers' attention to their products and/or services. The aim with marketing communication is to generate a good economic result, which for example includes increased awareness of products and brands, brand image, attitudes towards brands as well as purchase intentions (Uusitalo, 2010). This can be achieved through different marketing communication tools where promotion and product placement are just two of many. The importance of marketing communication is therefore considered to be crucial for brands that want to survive on the market (Uusitalo, 2010). Moreover, it has been argued in literature that one reason for consumers' low motivation in purchasing green products is their lack of attention. Consumers are, instead of focusing on environmental issues, more concerned about social or private issues like financial crises or what to eat for dinner. Hence, trying to get consumers attention has been one way to try to solve the attitude-behaviour gap (Thøgersen, 2010). Pickett-Baker and Ozaki (2008) suggest that increasing marketing communication to induce consumers to purchase green products will help closing the gap. For instance, they argue that one reason consumers do not purchase green products, despite their environmental concerns, is because of price and lack of trust in environmental-labelling. Then by using marketing communication to overcome these barriers, the attitude-behaviour gap will decrease (Pickett-Baker & Ozaki, 2008).

3.3.1. Green marketing and corporate communication

In order for an organization to obtain a good reputation and to be seen as a good corporate citizen, it is of significance to act in an ethical way and maintain ethical standards in the

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organization's marketing communication. In many countries, specific laws and regulations have been established as a way of improving ethical standards and in order for customers to not be exposed to negative consequences (De Pelsmacker et al., 2010). One way for companies to show that they do consider ethics as important is to engage in CSR programmes (De Pelsmacker et al, 2010). By showing interest in CSR, an organization's concern for more than the interests of the organization itself is confirmed. Green marketing is one example of a CSR area that can be used by organizations – this type of marketing includes the development of products that are safe for the environment and is also a good way of generating “positive publicity and word of mouth for a company” (De Pelsmacker et al, 2010, p. 632). However, Boulstridge and Carrigan (2000) questions whether consumers really care about corporate responsibility; they point out that companies are making a mistake if assuming that the use of CSR will generate positive purchase behaviour. The authors stress that it would probably not have any effect at all, but that it does not mean that companies should ignore corporate responsibility. According to them, they should in fact continue their work because of two reasons - one, no one will think negatively of a company using CSR and two, new generations might think differently than those who are consumers today (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000). Still, despite these results, CSR and the use of green marketing is considered to be a major trend in modern business today (Chen & Chai, 2010; Tan & Lau, 2011).

To become a successful green retailer, a retailer needs to sell green products. This, together with green promotion, has an impact on the behaviour of and consciousness among consumers (Lee et al, 2012). Nowadays the retailers' responsibility is not only to sell products, but also to listen to the demands of the consumers and to affect them in terms of their behaviour and preference. In a study by Lee et. Al. (2012) they stress that retailers have the possibility of influencing the behaviour of consumers regarding the purchase of green products and the avoidance of non-green products. As a way of favouring the consumption of eco-products, retailers can make sure that the distribution of some products is expanded while other products are rejected. It can also be done by giving consumers information about the culture of green consumption in order to educate them (Lee et al, 2012).

3.3.2. Media and social media

Media can be a useful marketing tool to inform consumers about environmental issues, however sometimes it can have a negative effect (Thøgersen, 2006). Thøgersen (2006) argues

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that when media reports about negative things that direct or indirect affects the environmental debate, it will most likely have negative effects on green products and green consumption. However, Minton, Lee, Orth, Kim & Kahle (2012) imply that social media like Twitter and Facebook are an ideal advertising medium for green marketing and thus a suitable platform for green marketing. A reason for this is that the consumers can select into preferable lifestyle groups by themselves. It can also be concluded that because sustainability is considered to be constructed through social activity, social media should defiantly be used when trying to increase this type of behaviour (Minton et al, 2012). Different types of social and digital media have an impact on the lives of consumers and have also given them more power. Brands have the possibility of creating a deeper connection with its consumers and in that way build loyalty, with the strategic use of social media (Powers, Advincula, Austin, Graiko & Snyder, 2012).

3.3.3. Point-of-Purchase communications

To reach consumers that are on their way of making a decision on whether to purchase a product or brand or not, Point-of-Purchase (POP) communications are useful. That is because the behaviour of consumers is affected by store environment and because many unplanned purchases are a result of new needs that consumers create in the store. In other words, it is usual for consumers to decide what to purchase at the actual point of purchase and studies have shown that 67,2 % of the brand purchase decisions among consumers in Europe are made in the store. Everything about a store and the store environment that show customers price, quality or the assortments of products is included in POP communications. This can for instance be interior displays, video screen demonstrations, the store design, the music in the store and the product placement on the shelves (De Pelsmacker et al, 2010).

The fact that the store environment affects the purchase behaviour among consumers is also pointed out by Zentes, Morschett and Schramm-Klein (2011), who presents two main objectives of instore marketing: the creation of a positive store atmosphere and a store design that simplifies internal orientation. Instore marketing can be described as “the use of information and communication-related retail marketing instruments within the outlets of a retailer” (Zentes et al, 2011, p. 273), where for instance store structure and layout is included together with the product presentation in the store. Furthermore, pleasure and arousal are two aspects that have an influence on the effects of store environment (Zentes et al, 2011).

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According to Zentes et al, (2011), pleasure “refers to the level of positive emotions” (p. 274), while the latter “refers to the feelings of excitement and stimulation” (p. 274). These two aspects affect the approach behaviour and avoidance behavior of customers – a lack of interest can be due to a low degree of arousal, while a high degree of pleasure can cause longer store visits and increased unplanned purchases. It is of significance for a store to be planned in a way that makes customers visit specific areas in the store. This increases the importance of the store layout, since it creates mental maps of a store in the minds of the consumers' and a well-arranged mental map of a store is stated to have a positive impact on the perceived shopping influence. There are two ways of designing the layout of a store; the retailer can either choose to use a grid store layout or a free-form layout. The first is common in supermarkets and features long parallel aisles with opposing shelves that makes the customers walk through the whole store. The latter is frequently used in clothing stores and is characterised by an irregular pattern that gives the customers the chance to move freely through the store (Zentes et al, 2011)

Zentes et al (2011) also assert that the “store atmosphere refers to the emotional responses of customers to the store interior” (p. 277). In turn, this has an impact on the purchase enjoyment and behaviour of the customers. Five types of elements affect consumers when it comes to the store atmosphere – visual, aural, olfactory, tactile and gustatory elements. Visual elements can be colour, brightness or the look of salespeople and these have a particular influence on consumers. Aural elements can for instance be the background music in the store, while olfactory elements can be the scent in the store. The two latter elements have an impact on the behaviour and the mood of the consumers, which in turn has an impact on the purchase behaviour – slow music can for instance increase the time spent in the store (Zentes et al, 2011).

The importance of store layout is also asserted by Wong and Chan (2012), who for instance emphasize that the layout in stores that sell eco-fashion, a green product, needs to be designed in a way that simplifies the process of finding eco-fashion for the consumers and thus gives them an easier access to those types of products. Wong and Chan (2012) indicate that fashion consumers are not aware of the availability of eco-fashion and that the availability can be increased by the use of signs to show the placement of eco-fashion in the store, which would give the consumers the possibility of finding what they need faster. At the same time, the

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significance of satisfying the emotional needs of fashion consumers is also stressed (Wong & Chan, 2012). This can be done by certain music, colours and store layout, but also by providing services like promotion of what benefits comes with the consumption of eco-fashion and giving consumers information about this product-type. As consumers assert that their emotional needs involve the need to feel good and stimulated, soft music, a spacious store layout and walls with warm colours can have a positive effect on this need (Wong & Chan, 2012).

3.4. Summary

The conceptual framework has presented different theories that have suggested explanations for how to understand the attitude-behaviour gap in order to be able to close it. As shown, three topics, *barriers*, *value and beliefs* and *marketing communication* can be distinguished in the conceptual framework. The barriers provide support for price, time and lack of available information as an explanation for the attitude-behaviour gap. Moreover, trust and built environment are also considered to be barriers, which can be used to explain the gap. Further, value and beliefs focusing on social norms and influence of reference groups are presented as another way to do this. Marketing communication contains reviews about green marketing with CSR as an example and POP communication, such as store layout, as a way to be able to close the gap between attitude and behaviour. It also contains media and social media as sources for information.

Hence, the topics represent different explanations as well as suggestions for how to close the attitude-behaviour gap. This is illustrated below, in figure 1, where the gap is placed in the middle and the three topics striving to enter the circle to close the gap, as illustrated in figure 2. The three topics should therefore be understood as explanations that may be used in order to close the gap between attitude and behaviour.

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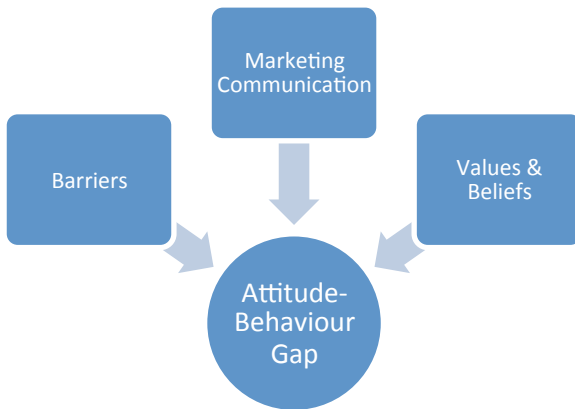


Figure 1



Figure 2

Furthermore the conceptual framework has, as discussed in the method, guided the selection of which topics to discuss in the focus groups and also the interpretation of the empirical material. Additionally, the framework has been used to support the discussion of the analysis' implications.

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4. Analysis of Empirical Material

This chapter contains an analysis of the empirical material that was conducted through the discussions with two focus groups. The conceptual framework, presented in chapter 3, was used as a guideline in order to identify and chart the respondent's explanations and understanding of the attitude-behaviour gap within environmental consumerism.

Furthermore, four themes have been identified from the interpretations of the empirical material; values and beliefs, price, lack of information and marketing communication. These themes contain the respondents' perceptions and explanations for the gap between attitude and behaviour.

4.1. Values and beliefs

During the discussions with the focus groups it was prominent that family, friends and non-altruism values and beliefs were stated as possible reasons for the existence of the attitude-behaviour gap. According to the respondents, these factors have an impact on consumers in purchase-decisions. The impact of the family and friends can be exemplified through these statements:

M: *What do you think influence a person's purchase decisions?*

X1: *Commercials have an impact on us as well as the society...*

X3: *But basically isn't it our childhood?*

X2: *Yes and one's surrounding, what type of people you socialize with.*

X3: *If my parents had been more environmental friendly, then so would I hopefully, or most certainly I would, have been. For instance, one often buys the same detergent as one's mum used.*

X2: *I agree, but I also think it depends on who you socialize with. If you are in a group where everyone is very environmentally concerned and pro-environmental, then you also become like that. One adjusts to the group in order to fit in and also starts to shop in an environmentally friendly way just to be able to have the same values and to be part of the group.*

"I would say the family has a big impact on green purchases. If you go with your mother for groceries and see what she buys, then you often choose the same products as her when you shop on your own. "

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These statements confirm that family and friends are considered to influence a consumers' behaviour and therefore it is possible to explain why failing to act upon environmental concern seem to be addressed to a consumers reference group.

Furthermore, statements that highlight that the respondents' hold non-altruistic belief and values were clearly distinguished in the focus groups' discussions. They stated that they did not believe that their actions had any positive effect on the environment unless they acted environmentally friendly in every aspect:

“I don't think so much when I am in a grocery store. If I find myself at the counter for milk and there is an alternative to ordinary milk [conventional] and ecological milk, I always purchase the ordinary. But when shopping clothes, I consider if the clothes have been dyed in substance that will induce my risk for cancer. It is very selfish, but that is the way I think.”

“I think more like, what difference will it make to buy one blouse made of organic cotton if my whole wardrobe is not? I mean, what difference will it make with one blouse in relation to all the clothes I own? It won't make a difference!”

These two statements exemplify how consumers seem to centralize their thoughts around themselves instead of thinking about the environment when purchasing products. This can be understood as a non-altruistic behaviour among the consumers, as the welfare of society or others does not seem to be of significance for the purchase decision.

4.2. Price as a barrier

The respondents stated that the economic aspect has a crucial impact on the purchase of pro-environmental products among consumers. Their perception of green products was that they are more expensive than non-green products. Further, the respondents stated that they believed the economic aspect to be the main reason for continuing to buy non-green products instead of green products, despite the claim to have environmental concern. For instance, the respondents stated that if they had two options, one non-green product and one green product, and both these products were sold to the same price; the obvious choice would be the green product. If this was not the fact then the choice would be the non-green product that has a lower price. According to the respondents the reason for this was that if it would be products

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from the category of *fast moving consumer goods, FMCG*, which are often bought, it would be too expensive to buy the products with a higher price. This was clearly expressed during the discussion below:

X4: *The economical. The pro-environmental products are often a bit more expensive than the ordinary. So if two things did cost the same, then I would have chosen the environmental friendly. But if it is a product that I buy often and I have to pay a bit more, then by the end of the week it will be a large sum. That is something not everyone can afford.*

X2: *Yes I agree.*

X4: *Yeah, I mean, who wouldn't like to be pro-environmental?*

The discussion not only emphasises the fact that price can be understood as a barrier for consumers when purchasing green products. It also shows an implication of consumers having a willingness to act pro-environmental, but being hindered due to high prices. Moreover, it was significant in both focus groups that the pricing on green products need to decrease in order for consumers to purchase such products. Hence the findings suggest that economic aspects have an important impact on consumers when purchasing green products.

During the discussions about pricing as an explanation for the attitude-behaviour gap, it emerged that the respondents questioned whether the price in fact could be the real explanation for the gap. For instance one respondent mentioned that she had always assumed that organic bananas were more expensive than non-organic bananas, but after taking a look at the pricing of both products she realized that there was no difference. This implies that the pricing of green products not always is the reason for the non-purchase of such products. The respondents also explained this indication by stating as follows:

"...// I often choose the cheapest [alternative of product] because I am a student. Because that is often what it's like, one chooses after category of price. But I also think about when it comes to environmental friendly products or KRAV-labelled products, that now it will be the price that will decide what to buy because I don't have a high income. But the question is, what will it be like when I start to work? How will I reason then? Because then I will have a higher rent and maybe a car. I will have other expenditures. So it is easy to say that I

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am a poor student, but will I later in the future blame my non-purchase of green products on the fact that I have a family or that I have loans to pay back?

The respondent's statement shows that she is not certain on whether pricing is really the reason for her not purchasing green products. This can be interpreted as such since the respondent herself used the word "blame" in order to explain why her environmental concern did not correspond with her purchase behaviour. Another explanation for why pricing not always is the reason for the non-purchase of green products is that behaving pro-environmental does not necessary need to include a purchase. The respondents asserted that they could act according to their environmental concern through such as recycling, which in addition is done without any financial cost for the consumer. At the same time the respondents asserted that it is not always possible to engage in for instance recycling, because of a poor built environment. However, they also admitted that even if the built environment would offer them the possibility to recycle, they did not always do it due to a lack of motivation. This is clearly shown by the statement below:

" I definitely think I could behave in a different way, but then there is the laziness. I am too lazy to recycle, even though I have the possibility to do so "

This interpretation indicates that since consumers do not always recycle even though they have the possibility to do it, it can be questioned whether their environmental concern would be reflected in their purchase of environmentally friendly products even if the pricing of such products was different.

4.3. Lack of information

The amount of information that the respondents have about the products that are available as alternatives to the ordinary products they use was asserted to have an influence on their purchase of products. Hence, the respondents claimed this to be an explanation for why consumers cannot purchase green products, despite their willingness to do so and their environmental concern. According to them, they cannot change their habits if they do not have information about what kind of range is available in store.

"One needs to be informed about what alternatives are existing. If you don't know the alternatives, then it will be harder for you to change your habits."

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The respondents stated the spread of knowledge about pro-environmental behaviour as important and they believed that if a person shared his or her buying habits, this would have an influence on other people and lead them to buy the same things. They also believed that it is of significance to encourage other people to buy environmentally friendly products.

As a way of changing people's consumption and increase their environmental concern, the respondents suggested that they should be more exposed to information in media and in stores. They did not believe that lectures would help; instead people need to be exposed to this type of information in their daily lives. One respondent stated that more information would cause people to make better decisions:

"I think that people need to be more informed about what type of consumption is good or bad, so they can make better choices."

Documentaries, the Government and education in school were also mentioned as possible sources of information, in order to make people more aware about for example the environmental issues and the bad working environment for many people around the world. As a way of changing people's consumption and making them more environmentally concerned, the respondents suggested that they should be more exposed to information in media, as media was explained to have a big impact on consumers. For instance they emphasized that people need to be exposed to this type of information in their daily lives so that they unconsciously become conscious, in order to change their purchase behaviour. Further, they mentioned different sorts of social media like blogs, Facebook and Instagram as forums that inform and inspire people. This indicates that this type of media forum is possible to use for enhancing pro-environmental behaviour as well as for green marketing. However this was a discussion where the respondents were not unanimous – one respondent asserted that there has been too much exposure of the environmental issues in recent years, as for instance debates concerning the environmental issues in media.

As a way of reaching more people, it was also suggested that companies should try to reach out more to parents, as they care more about their children than themselves and therefore have a higher possibility of buying a product that is stated as environmentally friendly and also good for their child. This can be interpreted as a way for the respondents to request more

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information in educational purposes, as they believe that it would increase their green purchases.

The fact that the trust in companies is not very high among consumers was discussed by the respondents – they stated that if the revenues for environmentally friendly products were going somewhere and the respondents were informed about where their money were going, they would be more willing to pay a little extra for that product. Hence, if they had more information their trust in companies and willingness to pay a higher price for a pro-environmental product would increase. The respondents in the first focus group also stated that there are too many pro-environmental labels existing, which does not give them any helpful information and makes them lose trust in them. This is exemplified in the conversation below:

X1: There are so many labels and it is hard to keep track of them. So to make it easier for the customer...there should...

M: Should there only be one label?

X1: Yes! There are so many and I cannot remember what they all mean. It becomes impossible. [The group agrees with X1]

X3: One completely loses the trust in them [the labels].

X1: Yes exactly. They don't say much [The group agrees with X1]. One doesn't know how good they really are. It might just be a little good and then you just don't care that much.

X2: Yes I agree.

Further, the respondents asserted that companies' need to do more to show what type of environmentally friendly work they perform, so that consumers will be more willing to buy their products. One respondent believed that many companies often delude consumers:

“If I for instance would see a McDonalds commercial, with the chain using meat from Swedish farms, I would not trust them and not believe that it is true.”

According to the respondents, consumers have been exposed to a lot of scaremongering in the media over the years and therefore a good way of informing them could be to show them the positive effects that their purchase of certain goods leads to – as, for instance, how many new

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trees can be planted thanks to the consumer. The respondents considered this as a better way than to only expose consumers to negative effects.

4.5. Marketing communication

During the discussions there were indications from the respondents that marketing communication could be used in order for consumers to increase their purchase of green products. One respondent, for instance, claimed that the everyday stress was a reason for her low consumption of green products and that she goes to a store, buys what she needs and then leaves the stores. According to her, the purchase of pro-environmental products depends on whether the retailer has made those types of products visible for her:

“If a store does not make it clear to me that the pro-environmental products exist, I will not be looking for them.”

The respondent also said that in order to make the range of environmentally friendly products visible for consumers, retailers' need to use signs in stores that show that, for instance, the price is not different from the prices on the non-green products. In order to reach many consumers, she suggested that the retailer also could use advertisement where a lot of people can see it, for instance on high traffic roads. As another respondent pointed out, there needs to be an increased exposure of pro-environmental information:

“I don't know who said it before, but more like... one should come across it [information about pro-environmental choices] in the everyday life. When you enter a store you will be exposed for it and then you can digest it.”

Furthermore, the respondents were careful to point out that consumers do not always perceive green marketing as positive. As one respondent stated, a lot about stores and commercials seem to be based on selling rather than helping the consumer:

“When you are in a store and employees help you, you think that they only want to sell something and not actually help you”

The respondent continued by saying that green marketing in stores and commercials not always seem to be trustworthy, which can be understood as the message behind green marketing is not always received by the consumer in a way that was desired by the sender.

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5. Discussion

In this chapter the results from the analysis, containing the empirical material from the discussions with the two focus groups in chapter 4, is discussed in relation to the conceptual framework that has been presented earlier. Additionally, the implications from the analysis will be discussed further.

From the analysis it can be comprehended that consumers understand and explain the attitude-behaviour gap through the use of four different themes; values and beliefs, lack of information, price and marketing communication. Marketing communication was interpreted as a way of overcoming the barrier that a lack of information and economic aspects can create. As Pickett-Baker and Ozaki (2008) suggest, a way to help closing the gap between attitude and behaviour is an increase of market communication, which can encourage consumers to choose green products over non-green products. Further, Young et al (2010) assert, price can be a barrier for the purchase of pro-environmental products, since consumers often choose the less expensive product when having to choose between that and a more expensive green product. It is also stated that consumers seem to prefer buying the less expensive alternative despite their environmental concern (Young et al, 2010). However information, as well as green marketing, can help to overcome price as a barrier (Krarup & Russel, 2005; Soler et al, 2002). As comprehended from the analysis, price as a barrier was shown to have a significant impact on the purchase of pro-environmental products among consumers. From the analysis it can be suggested that a decrease of the price on green products, as well as a higher income, would increase consumers' purchase of green products. Hence, it was interpreted that the price as a barrier can be understood as consumers' argument for the existence of the attitude-behaviour gap. That is because the high prices on green products will force the consumers to choose a non-green product that is less expensive, despite their willingness to purchase green products. Moreover, the respondents were also careful to point out that it might be possible that there is a general assumption among consumers that green products always are more expensive than non-green products. They also questioned whether a higher income would stimulate consumers' green purchases. As Young et al (2010) argues that price is a barrier for green purchases; these statements by the respondents indicate that this might not be the case.

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The findings indicate that consumers believe that they do not have enough information about products in order to make pro-environmental purchasing decisions. As Krarup and Russel (2005) assert, people need necessary information about environmental issues in order to voluntarily act in a pro-environmental way. Further, it is stated that consumers will not be willing to change their behaviour for the environment unless they are given information about it (Krarup & Russel, 2005). The respondents stressed that more information would increase their trust in companies and thus the willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly products. For this to happen, the respondents suggested that companies' need to be clear with what pro-environmental work they perform. It was also pointed out that an increase of the exposure to pro-environmental information is needed among consumers. According to Thøgersen (2006), media can be used in order to inform consumers about environmental issues. This was also suggested by the respondents, who claimed media to be a source for information and stressed that it could change people's consumption and make them more environmentally friendly. Powers et al (2012) assert that different types of social and digital media can influence the lives of consumers and Minton et al (2012) stress that social media is an ideal advertising medium for green marketing. As mentioned by the respondents, different types of social media like Facebook, Instagram and blogs inform and inspire people, which in the analysis was found to be a possible tool for green marketing.

The respondents claimed that they did not engage enough in order to find pro-environmental products and one of them blamed it on the everyday stress. According to her, retailers have to increase the visibility of such products since she otherwise would not be looking for them. As mentioned earlier in this discussion, consumers need to be encouraged to make pro-environmental choices through marketing communication. A way to do this can, as Wong and Chan (2012) emphasize, be through a design of a store-layout that simplifies the process of finding green products for the consumers and thus gives them an easier access to that type of products. In order to increase the visibility of pro-environmental products, one respondent suggested the use of signs among retailers and it was also asserted that she would not purchase a pro-environmental product unless the retailers makes her aware of those products in the store, because she did not want to walk around in a store to find a product. As Wong and Chan (2012) state, consumers are not aware of the availability of eco-fashion and the availability can be increased by the use of signs to show the placement of such products in the store, which would give the consumers the possibility of finding what they need faster.

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Further, Zentes et al (2011) also stress that it is of significance for a store to be planned in a way that makes customers visit specific areas in the stores. As a well-arranged mental map of a store is stated to have a positive impact on the perceived shopping influence, the importance of the store layout therefore increases since it creates mental maps of a store in the minds of the consumers' (Zentes et al, 2011). However, as found in the analysis, a lack of trust seems to be a problem within green marketing. That is because consumers were found to not always receive the message sent in green marketing the way the sender had aimed for, which indicates that it can be questioned whether green marketing is considered to be a trustworthy source of help or not. Also, it can be found in the analysis that pro-environmental labels were not considered helpful or trustworthy among the respondents. Research about the attitude-behaviour gap within environmental consumerism, has shown that there is an issue of trust and scepticism of labels of green products (Hugner et al, 2007; Sønderkov & Daugbjerg, 2011). Additionally, Singh et al (2012) has stated the importance of trust as a variable for a company when aiming to use CSR.

Family and friends, as well as non-altruistic reasoning, were brought up by the respondents in order to explain why consumers choose to not purchase according to their environmental concern. According to Ekström (2010) family and friends are examples of reference groups, which are groups of people that have an impact on the behaviour of an individual in a purchase situation. One respondent pointed out that being part of a group where all the members are engaged in pro-environmental behaviour would influence a person to act the way the group members do. This finding is supported by Gupta and Ogden's (2009) assertion that reference groups can influence green purchase behaviour if a group which a person belongs to or wish to belong to acts pro-environmental. Furthermore the analysis revealed that consumers are not concerned about the welfare of society and others or about the environment when in purchase situations. A reason for this can, as asserted by Chatzidiks et al (2007), be that the consumers do not have internalised norms, which in turn makes them act in a more selfish way.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, marketing communication can be interpreted as a way to overcome the barriers that are created through pricing and a lack of information in environmental consumerism. The reason for this is the respondents' assertion that pricing of pro-environmental products, together with placement and visibility of such products, has an

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impact on the way consumers purchase green products. It was suggested that a clarification regarding the pricing of green products and an increase of exposure of and information about environmentally friendly products would lead them to increase their purchase of those types of products. Hence, their behaviour would correspond more with their alleged environmental concern, with improved marketing communication. However, when interpreting the respondents' statements marketing communication does not seem to be the only usable explanation in order to solve the problems with the existence of the attitude-behaviour gap. This is clearly prominent in the discussions regarding values and beliefs, where the respondents' purchase behaviour was found to be influenced by reference groups and non-altruistic reasoning. If values and beliefs are one reason for why consumers do not purchase pro-environmental products, it can be seen as difficult for marketing communication to completely conquer the problem with the attitude-behaviour gap. This indicates that more explanations are needed in order to terminate the issues with the gap.

As previously discussed, improved marketing communication does not seem to be the solitary way to decrease or close the attitude-behaviour gap. The explanations from the respondents indicate that they themselves are not clear on how to explain the attitude-behaviour gap. This can be interpreted since the respondents seemed to be unsure whether the lack of information and pricing of products are the only barriers for them when it comes to consuming green products. Instead, the explanations in the analysis imply that an underlying reason for their environmental concern to not be reflected in their behaviour can be a lack of motivation. This in turn indicates that focus on the attitude of the consumers in research about green purchase behaviour, such as surveys, appears to be irrelevant, as the main focus instead needs to be on the consumers' behaviour. A lack of motivation was in the analysis found among the respondents when discussing whether a purchase of one single green product made a difference or not, despite one's alleged environmental concern. It was believed by one respondent that it would not make a difference, which lead her to not buy any products at all. This is an implication that shows that the motivation to buy green products can be low, in spite of the fact that the person is environmentally concerned. In the analysis it was also indicated that the motivation for people to buy green products might be higher when it comes to products for someone they consider important, as the respondents for instance mentioned that chances might be higher for parents to purchase a green product if it was stated to be good for their child. Thus, if increasing the motivation among consumers, it might lead them

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to not only buy green products for others, but for themselves as well. The problem with lack of motivation could further be seen in the respondents' discussion of the impact of built environment on their engagement in recycling. The respondents stated, just like Williams and Dair (2007), that the environment people live in has an impact on whether they will engage in more pro-environmental behaviour like recycling or not. However they also stated that if, when having the possibility to recycle, a lack of motivation caused them not to. The implications regarding a lack of motivation that were found in the analysis questions whether consumers will act in a pro-environmental way even when they are given the possibilities to do so – will for instance improved marketing communication in stores, with more visible products as a result, lead consumers to buy green products or will they still have reasons not to buy them? The analysis indicate that without an increased motivation among consumers, it will not help companies to only try to decrease the gap between attitude and behaviour through changes such as pricing and improved marketing communication.

In the conceptual framework two figures were presented in order to demonstrate how *barriers*, *marketing communication* and *values and beliefs* aim to close the attitude-behaviour gap that exists in environmental consumerism. However, from our analysis in the previous chapter and the discussion above it can be interpreted that two more topics need to be added in order for the attitude-behaviour gap to be decreased; *motivation* and *behaviour of consumers* which is illustrated in figure 3. These two topics can be added as a response to the interpretations from the respondents' explanations in the analysis, where a lack of motivation could be understood as an underlying reason for consumers' environmental concern to not be shown in their behaviour. Further this indicated that focus should be on the behaviour of consumers when conducting research about green purchase behaviour by for instance the use of surveys.

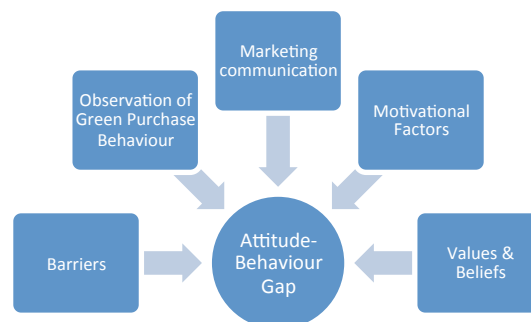


Figure 3

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6. Conclusions

The final chapter consists of the conclusions for the study conducted and contains the consumers' explanations for the gap between attitude and behaviour in the field of environmental consumerism. Additionally, conclusions are drawn from the analysis and discussions. Finally, implications for further research are presented.

From this study it can be concluded that the consumers explanations for the existence of the attitude-behaviour gap in environmental consumerism can be divided into four different themes: *price, lack of information, values and beliefs* and *marketing communication*. The study shows that consumers consider the price on products, as well the available information about them, as barriers for them when making environmentally friendly purchases. More information about pro-environmental products was said to have a positive impact on green purchases and also to increase the consumers' trust in companies. As a source for information, media and different types of social media were suggested. The study further shows that consumers claim to not engage enough when it comes to finding environmentally friendly products, which tends to be blamed on everyday stress. Marketing communication can in this study be seen as a tool that, if used in the right way, might increase consumers' awareness of green products. Hence, by improving marketing communication through for instance such as higher visibility and a clearer pricing of products, consumers would gain more information about them and increase their green purchases.

The barriers of pricing and lack of information were not solely asserted as explanations for the attitude-behaviour gap – values and beliefs were also stated to explain the gap. In this theme family, friends and non-altruistic reasoning were mentioned as having an impact on one's green purchase behaviour. However, the explanation about values and beliefs cannot be remedied through an improvement of marketing communication and hence, more explanations for the attitude-behaviour gap are desirable. This can be concluded not only by the fact that values and beliefs were used to explain the gap, but also by the fact that the analysis implicated for an uncertainty among the consumers on how to explain the attitude-behaviour gap in a clear way.

From the analysis and discussion of this study, it can be concluded that the reason behind the consumers' difficulties to reflect their environmental concern in their behaviour is a lack of motivation. That is because the consumers did not act environmentally friendly even in

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situations where they had all the possibilities to do so, as for instance when not recycling even though the built environment made that a simple task for them. Hence, motivation can be concluded to play an important part in situations where nothing else seems to increase the pro-environmental behaviour.

6.1 Implications for further research

The analysis implicates that the different explanations for the attitude-behaviour gap shows an inconsistency among the consumers of the perception of the gap. From this study, where consumers have been specifically asked to try to explain the attitude-behaviour gap, it has been concluded that lack of motivation is an underlying explanation for the gap. From the respondents' explanations about the gap, lack of motivation can be inferred to be the common denominator for all the explanations. We therefore suggest that future research should focus on motivational factors for consumers regarding environmental consumption. In present literature, observations of green purchase behaviour as a method in order to examine the attitude-behaviour gap within environmental consumerism is, as far as we know, almost non-existent. Thus, the suggested research should be done through observations of green purchase behaviour since the consumers' attitude, as seen in this study, is not always reflected in their actions and hence, they are unable to explain the attitude-behaviour gap by words.

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