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Reconfiguring sustainable grocery retailing - a study on consumers'
resonance to sustainable retail approach



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Abstract

To-date, sustainable consumption in grocery is gaining awareness. In response, different sustainable retailing approaches emerge. They entail different scale of changes to consumers' current shopping practices, as well as varying visions of a sustainable living. This paper aims to shed light on the congruity between consumers' notions of sustainability and retailers' sustainable practices, in hope to enable consumers' sustainable consumption towards a transition in society. Through the lens of practice theory, how different retailers' initiatives can resonate and impact upon consumers, facilitating sustainable consumption and in turn, forming pathways for societal change in consumption pattern were explored. Looking into three different retailing approaches: the conventional, the radial and the intermediary, an ethnographic study was carried out, including observation in-store, analysis of marketing material, and in-depth interviews with retailers and consumers. The study found that while varying sustainable retail approaches enable different group of consumers to enact sustainable consumption, an intermediary position appears to better engage consumers in translating their notion of sustainability into everyday life's practices, leading to a transition towards sustainable consumption.

Keywords: Sustainable retailing, sustainable consumption, grocery retailing

1. Introduction

1.1. Background: The growing awareness on sustainable consumption in grocery

Sustainability has gained relevance in political agendas in recent decades. While many scholars agreed that the concern on sustainability emerged in west Europe and the United States in the 1960s and 1970s in the form of 'environmental revolution' or 'contemporary environmentalism (Conolly & Prothero, 2008; Washington, 2015), the concept of 'sustainable development' was, for the first time, achieved world-wide attention in 'Our Common Future' —The Brundtland Report in 1987. 'Our Common Future' established three fundamental dimensions to sustainable development — economic, social and environmental sustainability. It also emphasised intergeneration equity which called for 'development that meets the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED, 1987). Following the Brundtland Report was another international conference known as the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro 1992, in which heads of government were gathered and the action plan 'Agenda 21' were formulated towards sustainable development. Unsustainable consumption was argued to be one of the main causes of the continued

deterioration of the global environment. Ever since Agenda 21 has established the causal links between wasteful consumption patterns and environmental degradation, sustainable consumption has become a fundamental concept in sustainable development paradigm (Hobson, 2002). Sustainable consumption is defined as ‘The used of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, whilst minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations’ (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 1999). This definition has, in turn, highlighted the importance of changing the resource-intensive consumption pattern in society. Sustainable consumption was again emphasised in the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. It was stated in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation that, ‘fundamental changes in the way societies produce and consume are indispensable for achieving global sustainable development. All countries should promote sustainable consumption and production patterns.’

With the aim of transitioning to a more sustainable future in mind, food consumption is a societal domain often discussed (Spaargaren, 2011; Shove, 2012; Seyfang, 2009; Geels et al, 2015). Food consumption represents 30% of negative environmental impacts of household (Tukker et al., 2006). Indeed, Goodall contends that ‘changing food purchase habits can dramatically alter the climate change impacts of our lifestyles. In its implications, it is comparable with the decision to abandon air travel’ (quoted in Seyfang, 2009, p.83). As such, the shopping of food is a crucial domain when looking into sustainable consumption. To some consumers, sustainability has become a consideration when making decisions in buying grocery in their everyday life. It is evident by a 9.3 percent organic food share in Sweden food market in 2017 (Ekoweb, 2018).

1.2. The many faces of sustainable consumers

With the growing awareness of the concept of sustainable consumption, consumers are increasingly called upon to consider the social and ecological implications of their choices (Seyfang, 2009; Akenji, 2014). The burden of managing those impacts falls onto the shoulders of individual consumers, on top of many other concerns, such as affordability, availability, access, convenience and taste. Shopping is a part of consumers’ everyday life, more so in terms of grocery shopping which is habitual and routinised. One could imagine the complexity when a consumer needs to consider all these criteria when buying necessities around twice a week.

Retail consumption is never a simple matter. Consumption practices are social and cultural in nature (Crewe, 2000; Fuentes and Hagberg, 2013). Through consumption, consumers produce and reproduce multiple meanings and identities (Jackson and Holbrook, 1995). Now, adding sustainability issue to the already complex consumption matter, the role of consumers are even more multifaceted. Sustainable consumers are highly complex (Lehner, 2015), driven by multiple reasons (Jackson and Holbrook, 1995), constantly facing dichotomy (Connolly & Prothero, 2008) and employing different strategies and techniques to enact sustainable consumption (Fuentes, 2014 a). In terms of food consumption, general motivations of sustainable food are health impact and safety of food, environmental and social impact of food provision as well as animal welfare. Different type of consumers with different lifestyles express diverse combinations of sustainability concerns (Spaargaren et al., 2011).

All of these point to the notion that sustainable consumption is not simple, nor straight-forward. As such, we can see that the enactment of sustainable consumption requires more than consumers' own will or personal preference; it also needs some support in the infrastructure of provision for behaviour change (Shove et al., 2015; Seyfang, 2009), in which retailers come into play. Moreover, as the understanding and meanings involved in sustainable consumption vary among consumers, so different enabling mechanisms are needed to address to different concerns and ways of living.

While it seems that sustainable consumers' control over consumption choices is constrained by social, economic system and infrastructure of provision, the role of consumers can be influential in some ways. They may express their concerns through choosing products with their particular concern and engage in specific buying practices such as buying from specialised sustainable retailers, actively develop direct supply chain to farmers and suppliers (Spaargaren et al., 2011). Interactions between consumers and retailers may contribute to transition pathways in which consumers can become the co-constructors of transition to sustainable provision system (Spaargaren et al., 2011; Vargo and Lusch, 2008).

1.3. Positioning the role of retailers in the enactment of sustainable consumption

It is argued that retailers play a crucial role in influencing consumers' sustainable consumption. It is believed that there are numerous reasons attributing to retailers' sustainability effort, such as media influence (Chkanikova et al., 2013), supply chain pressure (Ytterhus et al., 1999), consumers' shift of demand (Spaargaren et al., 2011). Regardless the reasons, retailers, scholars contend, can be

influential in facilitating sustainable consumption. Retailers could be the ‘ecological gate keepers’. They are the intermediaries between consumers and producers and they can influence both suppliers and consumers at either end of the supply chain (Jones et al., 2003; Ytterhus et al., 1999; Yang et al., 2017). In addition, retailers are in contact with consumer directly and they are affected by any potential product crisis so they have high interest in upholding sustainability in their supply chain (Wiese et al., 2012). Retailers can also promote sustainability through in-store retail service (Fuentes and Fredriksson, 2016). As such, retailers seem to have a great potential in facilitating sustainable consumption. This is particular true in the case of grocery retailers. In today’s modern society, retailers has taken up unprecedented powers in shaping food consumption practices (Spaargaren et al., 2011). Grocery retailers are part of a system of provision when consumers gain access to food and utilities in everyday’s life. It shows that grocery retailers could be influential in enabling sustainable consumption.

To-date, retailers have demonstrated a wide range of sustainable initiatives. It is evident that these initiatives are targeting different images of responsible consumers (Fuentes, 2015). Therefore, it is crucial to look at sustainable retailing and how they interact and influence both producers and consumers in the enactment of sustainable consumption. Moreover, it would be interesting to find out how different sustainable retail strategies can cater for consumers’ needs and drive consumers’ engagement for enacting sustainable consumption.

1.4. A landscape of varied sustainable retail approaches in grocery industry

In response to the growing awareness of the need for sustainable consumption, retailers have demonstrated a range of sustainability initiatives. Sustainable retailing entails various macro level approaches which frame retailers’ version of sustainability. Such vision then leads to micro level retail practices that strive to achieve retailers’ vision.

The conventional major grocery retailers have started to incorporate sustainability into the business. Major market players in Sweden, such as ICA, Coop, Axfood have launched their own sustainability programme which aim to ‘green’ its offerings. Some of the prominent practices include adding organic and ethical alternatives to existing product range, eco-labeling on products, improving the environmental performance of supply chain and eco-efficient in energy usage in-store. The sustainable retail approach of conventional grocery retailers shares the vision of helping

consumers to make sustainable choices, enabling them to enact sustainability without major changes in current way of living; in other words, an improvement to the status quo.

In addition to the large-scale sustainability programmes by major retailers, many small and niche retailers also put forward innovative and diversified sustainability initiatives, for example package-free shopping, local market, food cooperative and learning sessions on sustainable living. These retailers usually advocate a vision of sustainability through more radical practices which involve relatively larger scale changes to current ways of living, some even aim to challenge current economic and social structures.

1.5. Problematization: a research issue

As sustainability gains ever-growing interest in retail, academia has reflected the same interest through studies in sustainable retailing. Research in sustainability retail encompass critical appraisal of retail approaches (e.g. Geels et al., 2015; Akenji, 2014), plea of New Environmental Paradigm for retailers (e.g. Bansal and Kilbourne, 2001), reviews of major themes among retail practices such as supply chain (e.g. Wiese et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2017), guideline of firm-level sustainable practices (e.g. Lebel and Lorek, 2008) and discussion of specific in-store retail practices (e.g. Gunn and Mont, 2014; Fuentes and Fredriksson, 2016). While current literature provide insight for practitioner in putting sustainable retailing in action, insufficient emphasis was given on consumer perspective (Spaargaren et al., 2011).

Under Vargo and Lusch's (2008) conceptualisation of service, consumers is placed in the centre; value is realised when consumers interact with value propositions offered by retailers. The value of retail service can be co-created by consumers (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Similarly, Spaargaren et al., (2011) argue that consumers and retailers are constructing the social practice of consumption in multiple ways. Interactions between consumers and retailers may contribute to transition pathways to sustainable consumption. However, interactions between retailers and consumers are undermined in current literature (Geels et al., 2015). This provides little insight on how sustainable retail approaches could interact with consumers, gain consumers' support and engagement, leading to their enactment of sustainable consumption and eventually changing societal consumption patterns. In order to pave the way for a transition in a more sustainable society, the key actors, consumers, should be the main focus. However, the perspective of consumers is relatively undermined in research on sustainability transition. As Grin contends, several authors such as Shove (2003) and

Spaargaren (2003) “who share an interest in transitions have criticised much of transition literature for focusing too much on corporate, technology and policy actors, whereas other key actors, in particular consumers, are largely neglected” (Spaargaren et al., 2011, p.35). Similarly, this is also the case in retail studies. To-date, the studies on how consumers resonate and impact upon practically by retailers’ sustainability effort are scant (Wiese et al.,2012). To find out how sustainable consumption can be promoted and more importantly, enabled, the role of consumers should be positioned in the centre.

Geels et al. (2015) contend that an elaboration on the crossover between the dynamics of supply side (retailers) and the consumer practices would be fruitful for future sustainable consumption and production research. Similarly, Fuentes and Fredriksson (2016) point out that one of the keys to effective sustainable service in retail stores is the congruence between the retailers’ version of sustainability they enact and consumers’ image. As such, the role of consumers and their interactions with retailers is called upon to be brought to the focal point. Departing from there, the congruity between consumers’ and retailers’ vision of sustainability can be examined. As we have established that retailers have the potential to play a crucial role in enabling sustainable consumption, it would appear imperative to delineate how the different approaches and the retail practices entailed can relate to consumers, enable their sustainable consumption through interaction, and lead to a transition in consumption practices in society. As Spaargaren et al. (2011, p.133) content, ‘crucial for the effective progress towards a more sustainable food provision would be the creation of congruity between consumers’ notions and those prevailing within the systems of provision when translating the general notion of sustainability into everyday reality’. Hence, the author argues that the congruity of consumers’ and retailers’ sustainability notions should be examined in order to facilitate sustainable consumption in society.

Grocery retailers are chosen to be the target of this study as food consumption has large environmental impact which account for 30 per cent of household emission (Tukker et al., 2006). Grocery is a main part in retail sector and at the same time, it is vital in everyday’s lives. It would appear imperative to discuss food related product when look at sustainability in retail consumption. In addition, grocery retailing entails a wide spectrum of practices, ranging from eco-labeling in conventional big box retailers to local food cooperatives bypassing mainstream provision routes. It deems suitable for investigating consumers’ resonance to some of the varying retail practices.

1.6. Research aim and research questions

Departing from the backdrop, the aim of this paper is to shed light on the congruity between consumers' notions of sustainability and retailers' sustainable practices, in hope to enable consumers' sustainable consumption towards a transition in society. It entails exploring how different retailers' initiatives can resonate and impact upon consumers, facilitating sustainable consumption and in turn, paving the way for societal change in consumption pattern. Consumers' resonance to retailers' sustainable practices is the focal point. The aim of the research, the author argues, has societal relevance. As explained earlier, retailers take important role in promoting and enabling sustainable consumption through multiple ways. This study is hoped to shed light on how retailers can better engage consumers in enacting sustainable consumption in every day lives. As scholars (Spaargaren et al., 2011; Fuentes and Fredriksson, 2016) contend, the congruity between consumers' and retailers' notion of sustainability is crucial to facilitate sustainable consumption into consumers' everyday life, paving the way for a more sustainable society. Sustainability issue involved in food retailing is multidimensional, entailing not only environmental but also social and economical aspects (Spaargaren et al., 2011). Therefore, striving to facilitate sustainable consumption in food would be relevant to social, environmental and ethical issues.

In order to achieve the research aim, first, retailers' sustainable practices under different approaches will be delineated to provide context to consumers' resonance. Retailers' practices are important to look at, as it is how retailers translate perceived consumers' demand into 'concrete shape at the shopping floor where the actual practice of selling and buying food takes place' (Spaargaren et al., 2011).

Second, how consumers relate to each approach and its sustainability initiatives, as well as consumers' practices shaped by each retail approach will be examined. From this, we can find out how each approach address to consumers' concern, and how the initiatives can gain consumers' support and engagement, enabling sustainable consumption. As Connolly and Prothero (2008) contend, understanding the meaning of consumption for individuals is vital to encourage sustainable consumption. To achieve the aim, retailers' and consumers' practices are at the focal point. Practices should be the unit of analysis. As such, the lens of practice theory will be applied in this paper. Retailers' sustainability practices and consumers' consumption practices are viewed as social practices which encompass the nexus of doings and sayings, including material artefacts,

competences and meanings. At the same time, the practices' socio-material, heterogeneous and performative nature are acknowledged.

Departing from a practice theory perspective, our research questions are as following:

1. How do grocery retailers perform sustainable retailing and how do they shape consumer practices?
2. In what ways (if any), are the sustainable retailing practices in these approaches meaningful to consumers?

This paper studied the practices of three grocery retailers representing the three different sustainability approaches. These approaches will be explained in Chapter Two. The three grocery retailers are ICA, Ekolivs, and Matkooperative Helsingborg. Through studying three different types of retailers, it is hoped that how varying sustainable retail practices can resonate and shape consumers' practices will be illuminated.

This paper aims to contribute to the research field of sustainable retailing in two ways. First, in line with the work of Shove (2003), Seyfang (2009), Spaargaren et al. (2011) and Geels et al. (2015), this study contributes to the research stream of 'social practices approach to sustainable consumption' (Seyfang, 2009) by offering fresh empirical data through the lens of practice theory in the context of Swedish grocery retail industry. Second, this paper hopes to fill the research gap in consumers' perspective in sustainable retail studies by putting the interaction between consumers and retailers during service-encounter in the focal point.

1.7. Structure of the paper

The structure of the paper is as following. Chapter two first explains the theoretical background of different sustainable retailing approaches in literature relating to grocery retailing, then discusses the theoretical framework of retailing-as-practice and shopping-as-practice for the analysing sustainable retailing and consumption. Chapter three illustrates the ethnographical methods used in this study and reflection of used methodology. Chapter four presents the results and analysis. Chapter five conclude the study with a discussion of analysis, limitations and future research.

2. Theoretical background and framework

2.1. Literature reviews for the understanding of sustainable grocery retailing and consumption

This chapter acts to provide an understanding of the research field of sustainable retailing and what has been revealed up to this point of time. Then, this chapter will explain how practice theory is used in this study.

2.1.1. A literature review on different approaches in sustainable grocery retailing

The research field of sustainability in retail studies had not received much attention until recent years (Wiese, 2012; Fuentes and Fredriksson, 2016). Among the studies related to sustainability issues in retail practices, the discussion of sustainability seems to be scattered across different levels: the macro-level — the conceptual positions presenting retailers' version of sustainable consumption (e.g. Akenji, 2014) and the micro-level — the areas of sustainable practices (e.g. Wiese et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2017, Lebel and Lorek, 2008). As the aim of this paper is to investigate how consumers resonate and interact with retailers' sustainable practices, it is crucial to firstly understand the conceptualisation of sustainable retailing to help us delineate the versions of sustainability retailers enact. Such conceptualisation entails the visions that retailers strive to achieve. This paper will present the current sustainable retailing literatures categorised into three ideal-typical analytical positions prominent in academia — the conventional, the radical and the intermediary — to aid readers' conceptual understanding. Although this categorisation acknowledges that there is shades of grey in a sense that some literatures may entail ideas that resemble more than one positions, and it might involve simplification when grouping various approaches into three main groups, it is suggested that the categorisation is sufficient to provide conceptual clarity (Geels et al., 2015). The purpose of reviewing different sustainable retailing approaches is not to get into in-depth discussion of each of the approach per se, as they all encompass rich theoretical and policy implications which could form a separate research on its own. Rather, the purpose of the review is to shed light on distinct versions of sustainable provision and consumption on current literature involving different scale of change in consumption pattern. Such framing of retailing approaches is significant as a retailer's conceptual approach represents the version of sustainability it enacts and guides its micro-level sustainable practices. It would enable us to form an understanding of the various notions of sustainability. From that, we will then look at the micro-level retailers' practices driven by their particular version of sustainability. These will provide context for analysing consumers' resonance and the congruity between retailers and consumers.

On the macro-level, sustainable retailing is discussed on conceptual approaches. Sustainable retailing is often conceptualised as various approaches entailing versions of ‘sustainability’ with different scales and depths of change, views on production and consumption, and assumptions inherited from different academic disciplines. In the context of food consumption, Spaargaren et al. (2011, p.133) conceptualise sustainable food retail and consumption as ‘the selling and buying of products with “sustainability” claims, endorsing these claims with information on production, processing and trade methods, and expressing evolving sustainability concerns, thus contributing to the unfolding of sustainability narratives.’ Here, the unfolding of sustainability narratives is similar to the previous notion of ‘versions of sustainability’.

Since the early 2000s, many scholars have written about the two dichotomous approaches regarding sustainable production and consumption, with the mainstream approach being driven by economic logic, using individual consumers’ choice to drive market transformation; as opposed to the radical approach, which is calling for reduction in consumption and structural change in consuming pattern (Seyfang, 2006; Redclift, 2005; Akenji 2014). Despite not being the first to identify the dichotomy of conceptual approaches, Geels et al. (2015) group similar perspectives into three analytical positions and labelled as the reformist, the revolutionary and the reconfiguration in order to achieve conceptual clarity. Their work provide meaningful insight in grouping retail-specific literature into various approach.

The conventional approach represents mentioned as the mainstream approach in the dichotomy earlier. This approach is in line with the reformist of the work Geels et al. (2015). Such approach focuses on change in technical products and purchase behaviour as add-ons to the status quo in order to achieve sustainability. Under this position, the role of retailers is to provide ‘greener’ products through cleaner productions and eco-efficient supply chains. The role of consumers are viewed as individual who has a set of preference and could make sustainable purchase decision through awareness, knowledge, information or economic incentive. In the reformist approach, retailers’ practices at micro-level (firm level) can be represented by what Lebel and Lorek (2008) identified as a range of enabling mechanisms among practitioners which are characterised with economic logic. In the context of grocery retailing, these enabling mechanisms are prominent in conventional major retailers. Their sustainable practices include improved production processes, driving upstream environmental changes in supply chain (Chkanikova et al., 2013), offering greener products, in particular, private ecological brand (Chkanikova and Lehner, 2015), launching

marketing campaigns to educate consumers, and using eco-labeling with third party certificate to inform consumers (Chkanikova and Lehner, 2015).

What we can see from studies in this vein is that the versions of sustainability retailers enact are 'more resource-efficient version of contemporary forms of the status quo' (Geels et al., 2015, p.3). In addition, previous literature tends to be driven by corporate perspective such as a descriptive of strategies (Kennedy et al., 2016) and how to develop a green market (Chkanikova and Lehner, 2015). Regarding the role of consumers in this position, the change to consumers' current practices is small scale. Yet, consumers are expected to make the green choice once they have gained awareness on sustainability issue and obtained information on products. In this sense, the burden on sustainability falls upon consumers. However, studies in this vein have shown little about how consumers relate to such initiatives and how consumers' attitudinal change (if any) turns into actual practices and actions.

The radical position, or what Geels et al. termed 'the revolutionary' is not the orthodox in academia (Geels et al., 2015) but there are to-date a number of research on it. Contrast to reformist's individual perspective, the radical takes a systemic perspective. The radical attributes sustainability issues to capitalism which results in economic growth obsession, materialism and consumerism. As such, radical position calls for deep structural change in society in order to solve social and environmental problems we face today. Scholars on this position advocate reduced consumption, voluntary simplicity and downshifting, and focus on the value of locality and community in retailing (Seyfang, 2006). In grocery retail context, Seyfang (2004) has contended to challenge the existing capitalist economic system and to replace it with small-scale participative organisations. Empirical material in this position is collected through survey on decentralised, local level small retailers such as local organic food market (Seyfang, 2006). Spaargaren et al. (2011) also discuss alternative local food system such as farmers' market but the focus is on consumers' action in driving the transition, but not on the meanings they perceived in such alternative. On the other hand, another stream of research calls for a shift in social dominant paradigm from one emphasises free markets, self-interest to the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) which is ecologically oriented (Bansal and Kilbourne, 2001). In retail context, Bansal and Kilbourne (2001) advocate the application of New Environmental Paradigm to retail sector, suggesting a range of organisational implications such as a locally responsive globally coordinated organisational structure, which echoes with Seyfang (2004)'s notion of local community retailers. Again, what is missing is

qualitative data on how consumers relate to such version of sustainability (radical change to status quo; small local retailers) in terms of meanings, how it fits in their way of living, and what they do in respond to such retail practices.

The intermediary approach is a middle way approach between the reformist and the radical. It is in accordance with the reconfiguration position in the work of Geels et al., (2015). This position focus neither on marco-context nor on individual (Geels et al., 2015). This position suggests transition in socio-technical systems (technical and scientific knowledge, industry structures, markets, consumption patterns, infrastructure, policy, and cultural meaning) and daily life practices to enable sustainable consumption. Both socio-technical systems and daily life practices are viewed as a configuration of elements. A reconfiguration would mean to transition to a new configuration of elements that would lead to substantial sustainability gain. The role of retailers is viewed as part of the socio-technical system and infrastructure of provision that could shape consumers' shopping practices through reconfiguration. Consumption, on the other hand, is emphasised on habitual, routinised everyday practices that rely on socio-technical systems.

Retail studies in this vein focus on how sustainability can be promoted through reconfiguring elements of retailing, ranging from marketing to in-store retail service. Retailers are portrayed as providers/reconstructors of socio-material artefact to enable sustainability. For instance, Fuentes (2014) identifies trail making, attending and selling as in-store practices of green marketing. Fuentes and Fredriksson (2016) examines the role of in-store sustainability service in promoting sustainability. Spaargaren et al. (2011) investigated how supermarkets promote sustainable food through provider-led socio-technological innovation. The sustainability version constructed here is a gradual transition through the interaction between retailers and consumers. The reconfiguration approach is argued to have greater potential to promote sustainability in consumers' everyday life. However, this position is theoretical driven in a sense that part of its focus is calling for the use of practice theory to analysis sustainable consumption. On the other hand, how elements in real world can be reconfigured has not been fully discussed in this approach. Due to the fact that the reconfiguration approach has only gained attention in recent years, there is still a need for more empirically engaged studies that focus on the crossover of retailers and consumption domains regarding how they interact and co-evolve in reconfiguring new and existing elements (Geels et al., 2015).

From the above, we can see that the three prominent macro-level approaches in sustainable retailing are built upon different versions of sustainability, each approach entails a range of micro-level practices in the retail setting. Departing from the background of the absence of consumers' perspective, what could be fruitful is to find out how these approaches and their practices resonate with consumers and gain consumers' engagement, enabling them to enact sustainable consumption.

2.1.2. A literature review on consumers' perspective toward sustainable retailing

Up till this point, there are insufficient studies on consumers' resonance toward sustainable retailing effort. While sustainability has become a major trend in academia, much of the research in retail studies focus on the role of green producers and green promoters. The role of consumers in retail context are largely absent (Kessous et al., 2016). Among the few number of empirical studies on consumers' perspective, the emphasis was placed on their perception to brands' image and their patronage. For instance, Kennedy et al. (2016) study firm's sustainable retail strategy and argue that an authentic retail brand image can gain consumers' trust, posing a positive impact on shopper patronage and loyalty. Kessous et al. (2016) investigate consumers perceptions on the adoption of sustainable transport practices of large retailers and discuss the potential rejection and suspicion of consumers. Spendrup et al. (2016) examine the effect of the use of nature sound in retail shop and proposed that it might be useful to promote willingness to buy sustainable food. We can see that research on this stream seems to be driven by managerial considerations and the effect on retailers.

Among the scant research which consider consumers perspective and how they interact with retailers, the focus is on certain specific retail practices such as in-store sustainability service (Fuentes & Fredriksson, 2016). What we can learn from this is that the congruence between retailers and consumer image is important. There is a call our for more research on the relationship between retailing and sustainable consumption (Fuentes & Fredriksson, 2016). It would be fruitful to examine how other sustainable practices of retailers relate to consumers' everyday life on the practical level for the enactment of sustainable consumption beyond merely perception.

2.2 Practice theory — a theoretical perspective on sustainable consumption

It is argued that sustainable consumption is a complex matter that cannot be understood as merely personal choice; instead, it should be analysed as a social practice which entails a range of elements such as competences, meanings and materials artefacts (Shove et al., 2016). In order to investigate how retailers practices can resonate and impact upon consumers, enabling sustainable consumption,

the paper will apply the lens of practice theory, which addresses retailing and consumption as social practices.

Practice theory is a body of literatures encompassing the concept of social practices. It has been used in a number of fields. Today there is no single unified practice theory. Rather, there are a range of approaches under this label (Schatzki, 2001). Under this school of thought, practice is the basic unit of analysis. Practice theory has been used to understand domestic practices (Røpke, 2009), unsustainable household consumption behaviour (Shove, 2003); energy demand (Shove et al, 2015), change in food consumption (Spaargaren et al., 2011), consumers' green shopping strategy (Fuentes, 2014), sustainable retail marketing (Fuentes, 2015) and sustainable in-store retail service (Fuentes and Fredriksson, 2016). This paper will build on the insights from previous knowledge on sustainable consumption, and apply practice theory to analyse shopping and retailing.

2.2.1. Retailing as a practice

This is an urge for an extension on the use of practice theory beyond the domain of consumption, as Spaargaren contends that 'next to the routine consumption practices of everyday life, there are practices implied in the reproduction of markets, politics and civil society as well' (Spaargaren, 2011, P.815). When look at sustainable consumption, Spaargaren et al. (2011, p. 159) assert that 'the engagement of retailers should be combined with the involvement of consumers and both should be considered as part of social practices'. The study will, therefore, analyse retailing as part of a social practice.

In this paper, retailing will be analysed with the aid of market-as-practice perspective. Marketing-as-practice (Skálén and Hackley, 2011) entails the application of practice theory in marketing studies. Here, marketing takes a broad definition involving activities and the process for delivering offerings to consumers. Against the critique of marketing as ideologically driven, marketing-as-practice is introduced as a 'practice turn' in marketing to re-energise empirical study with a focus on practices. Taking a marketing-as-practice approach involves analyses that 'treat the field of practices as the place to study the nature and transformation of their subject matter' (quoted in Fuentes, 2015, p.370). Departing from Reckwitz's (2002) synthesis of practice theory, practices are routinized ways of behaviours involving bodily activities, mental activities, things and their use, knowledge, discourse and process.

A practice – a way of cooking, of consuming, of working, of investigating, of taking care of oneself or of others, etc. – forms so to speak a “block” whose existence necessarily depends on the existence and specific interconnectedness of these elements, and which cannot be reduced to any one of these single elements (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 249-250).

Building on Fuentes (2015), this paper applies a marketing-as-practice approach to conceptualise sustainable retailing as a series of practices that are socio-material in nature and performative.

First, marketing-as-practice brings the practical marketing accomplishment to the focal point, instead of staying merely on strategy level. Marketing-as-practice would enable the purpose of this paper to be reached, to illuminate the practices in sustainable retailing and how they are made meaningful to consumers.

Second, marketing-as-practice approach entails a social-material perspective. In Reckwitz’s (2002) synthesis of practice theory, practices consist of several elements, body, mind, things and their use, understand, know-how and feelings. Objects are also part of the components. In practice theory, material artefacts play an equally important part in a practice and the objects ‘are the place of the social insofar as they are necessary components of social practices’ (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 253). In other words, the agency of materials is acknowledged. These elements form an interconnected socio-material assemblage in marketing practice. To analyse sustainability effort with this approach means looking at this socio-material assemblage instead of reducing to just a single element.

Third, the practice theory perspective conceptualises retailing as performative. A practice is a performance by a producer with a set of elements. A practice is formed and sustained through the assemblage of such elements. Individual can carry out different practices and make different enactment of the same practices (Skålén and Hackley, 2011). A practice is enacted by the doings and sayings of performers. Drawing on the theoretical perspective of marketing-as-practice, this paper will analysis the enactments and unfolding of retail practices: the activities and the devices involved.

2.2.2. Shopping as a social practice

To examine whether retailers' sustainability practices resonate consumers, consumers' shopping activities will be analysed using the theoretical perspective of practice theory. In this paper, shopping is conceptualised as a practice. Shopping-as-practice is used in Fuentes (2014) and Fuentes and Fredriksson (2016) as a theoretical approach to see shopping as a social practice in examining consumers' strategies and techniques for greener shopping. This paper will inherit the same approach.

First, the practicalities involved in shopping are emphasised. Shopping is a practical activity aiming at acquiring products, which includes not only the buying but also the browsing and looking. Second, like all practices in practice theory, shopping is conceptualised as a practice which entails bodily movement, mental activities, knowledge, know-how, feelings and material artefacts (Reckwitz, 2002). These elements form a socio-material assemblage which is performative and transformative in the practice of shopping.

Reckwitz (2002) asserts that the social is embedded in practices. Thus, shopping is socio-material in nature, in which meanings, identities and space are produced and reproduced (Fuentes, 2014). Shopping is heterogeneous, and always depends upon the performance of carriers. Third, practice theory implies shopping practices are spatially situated (Fuentes, 2014). The retail sites and the material artefacts are important elements in the socio-material assemblage produced by and productive of shopping practices. As such, retailers can arrange material artefact in store to form, sustain or break a practice, leading to consumers' different perceived meanings in such practice.

Moreover, practice theory is supported by the systems of provisions perspective (Akenji, 2014; Shove, 2012; Seyfang, 2009; Spaargaren, 2011). Akenji (2014, p.17) asserts, 'accordingly the extent to which everyday household consumption behaviour can change is not only dependent on consumer attitude but also on highly interdependent socio-technical networks or systems of provision — the systems through which services or resources are produced, delivered, distributed and used'. Grocery shopping, therefore, should be analysed in the context of its systems of provision — the retailers who have the influence in controlling source of products, their deliveries and distribution.

Departing from shopping-as-practice approach, this paper will bring shopping practice as the basic unit of analysis. How consumers resonate with the meanings of retailers' practices will be analysed with a focus on consumers' actual shopping practices including the doings and sayings, and more importantly, how they interact with the retailers' practices which form part of the systems of provision.

2.2.3. Applying practice theory to analyse consumers' interaction with retailers' practices

In line with the theoretical tradition in practice theory, this paper will put consumers' practices in the unit of analysis, and address how retailer practices (elements) interact with consumers and facilitate sustainable consumption, and further, how it fits in consumers' everyday living and leading to change of consumption pattern.

As contended by Shove et al. (2012), a practice emerge and persist when materials, competences, and meanings interact and connect. As such, retailers' practice is formed when retailer makes connection with the elements, conveying a certain message and meaning. At the same time, when consumers enter the shop, he/she connects the material artefact with his/her own competences and meanings perceived, and as a result, performs a practice through interacting and co-evolving with the setup by retailers. Here, how consumers resonate with, and are impacted upon by retailers' practices are revealed. In addition, with time, such practice persists when connections between elements are sustained. Potentially, the prevailing of sustainable retail approaches and practices can create a 'suffusing' phenomenon (Shove et al. 2016), providing a kind of atmosphere in which sustainable consumption practices are preformed and carried forward, leading to a change in consumption pattern in society. Departing from this perspective, how retailers can make sustainable consumption meaningful to consumers will be analysed with emphasis on the practical accomplishment of interactions between retailers and consumers.

2.3. Summary of theory chapter

Through the literature review, the study will start from three different sustainable retail approaches in current research: the conventional approach, the radical approach and the intermediary approach, as they deem to be representing the prominent sustainable retail practices in Swedish grocery market. Then, the theoretical framework of retailing-as-practice and shopping-as-practice were introduced as the lens of analysis for examining retailers' practices, as well as consumers' resonance

and interaction with retailers in practical accomplishment. In turn, the congruity between retailers and consumers is unfolded.

3. Method

In this chapter, the methods employed in the study will be discussed and reflected upon. In this paper, sustainable retailing and grocery shopping is explored through an ethnographic study.

3.1. An ethnographic study

The aim of the research is to delineate different sustainable retail approaches and investigate how consumers resonate to such retail practices. This paper takes an epistemological stance of interpretivism. The end goal of the study is not to establish a causal explanation of consumers' sustainable behaviours, but to gain an understanding of how consumers make sense of sustainable retail approaches and practices through an examination of the interpretation by them. The meanings perceived by consumers in relation to retailers' practices is emphasised. As such, this study takes an ontological position of constructionism which asserts that the phenomena of sustainable shopping and its meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors: the retailers and the consumers. Meanings are viewed as being socially constructed. Such ontological assumption guides the research design in this study. To achieve the aim of understanding how retail initiatives resonate and impact upon consumers, as well as the meaning of enacting sustainable consumption to individual consumers, qualitative research design is argued to be best-suited for the purpose (Bryman, 2012; May, 2011). Hence, the research questions were formulated in qualitative way of exploring consumers' perceived meanings.

3.2. Three grocery retailers and their consumers as the study targets

In this paper, an ethnographic study of three Swedish grocery retailers is used to explore the different sustainable retail approaches and practices they entail. Their consumers were interviewed subsequently in order to illuminate how such retail approaches and practices resonate and impact upon consumers. In doing so, it is hoped that the aim of understanding how consumers related to different retail approaches would be achieved.

To start with, grocery industry is chosen because food retailers is argued to have a significant role to play in the transition towards sustainable consumption. Grocery shopping is common for most

household. Most of the people have engaged in grocery shopping. It can be viewed as a routine practice in everyday life. At the same time it also accounts for a large proportion of household-related environmental impact, up to 29% of greenhouse gas emissions (Tukker et al. 2006, p. 92). Indeed, changing food consumption practices can alleviate climate change impacts to an extent comparable with the decision to abandon air travel (as cited in Seyfang, 2009). As such, grocery consumption should be addressed when discussing the promotion of sustainable consumption. Moreover, there seems to be a rising trend of sustainable grocery consumption, particularly in organic food and locally sourced food. For instance, organic food market share has increased to 9.3 percent in Sweden food market in 2017 (Ekoweb, 2018). It would be interesting to examine how Swedish retailers promote sustainable consumption and how they become relevant to consumers, leading to changes in grocery consumption practices.

Three retailers, ICA, Ekolivs and Matkooperativet Helsingborg are chosen to represent three different sustainable retailing approaches based on the following criteria: 1) the scale and depth of change it implies compared to the dominant consumption pattern in modern society; 2) the sustainability vision of the retail shops. After initial observations in the three retail shops (45 minutes each) and careful reading on the shops' materials including web pages, brochures and in-store text material, ICA, Ekolivs and Matkooperativet Helsingborg were identified as target retailers for the study.

The conventional sustainable retailing approach — ICA: ICA is a largest grocery chain stores in Sweden, accounting for 50.8% of grocery market share, based on sales (Delfi, 2017). It serves the public of Sweden since 1938. ICA offers ecological and fair trade alternatives on top of regular products for consumers to choose from, based on their personal preference. The mission of ICA in sustainability is to help consumers to make 'environmentally smart' choices in food. In other words, it implies a greener version of status quo. Sustainability is set to be enacted through consumers' cognitive information processing and personal preference with the use of market mechanisms.

The radical sustainable retailing approach — Ekolivs: Ekolivs is a member-owned grocery and book shop. It is run by a food cooperative. As states on its web page, Ekolivs's vision on sustainability is changes in economic and social structure. It states that fair trade or ecological products are not the remedies for sustainability problems, instead, extensive changes in economic and social structure are required. On top of providing sustainable food, it also wants to spread

information and knowledge in areas that would make the world better through publications available in the shop. It is regarded as radical based on its vision and discourse in social changes.

The intermediary sustainable retailing approach — Matkooperativet Helsingborg: Matkooperativet Helsingborg is a member-owned grocery shop which aims to provide sustainable, locally produced and fair food products for every one. It is also run by a food cooperative. The retail layout is quite similar to regular grocery shop. It has a large range of assortment, from food to personal care products. It also provides a package-free section if consumers want to buy products per weight without any packaging. The vision of the shop is to make sustainable food available to its community, with a full range of assortment. It is regarded as an intermediary approach due to its similar retail service setting to one-stop major retailer, and its relatively milder standpoint in social changes.

After identifying the three retailers as the target for this study, their consumers were approached for in-depth interviews in order to find out how they find these retail approaches meaningful, and how they fit into their lifestyle. The respondents were identified through snow ball sampling. The selection criteria of informants and the process will be discussed in detail in the next section.

3.3. Methods

Ethnographic methods were used to get an in-depth picture of how sustainable consumption was enacted in the selected retail shops, and how they are made meaningful to consumers' everyday life. The ethnographic approach was used here in hope to gain a first hand and detailed understanding of retail practices in the shops as consumers experience in their everyday life. (Crang and Cook, 1995). As common in the ethnographic tradition, a combination of data-gathering techniques were used. They are ethnographic observation in-store, marketing material and semi-structure in-depth interviews with retailers and consumers.

As Crang and Cook (1995) contend, observation is the mean to understand the world view and ways of line in the context of their everyday life. Therefore, it is argued to be a suitable method for collecting data on retailers' initiatives, consumers' practices and their perceived meanings. Nine observation session were conducted for the three selected retail shops during April, each session lasted between 45 minutes to 90 minutes. In each session, the observation were carried out based on a guideline (see appendix), with focus on retail material artefacts, and the bodily actions of retail

sales and consumers. Field notes were generated after each observation session. The observation produced descriptions of retailers' effort in promoting and facilitating sustainable consumption in the stores, as well as descriptions of how consumers interact with the retail setting, their movements, the material involved, what and how they shop.

	Date	Time	Venue
Observation 1	12 April 2017 (Thursday)	17:15 - 18:30	Matkooperativet Helsingborg
Observation 2	14 April 2017 (Saturday)	13:00 - 14:00	Matkooperativet Helsingborg
Observation 3	14 April 2017 (Saturday)	15:15 - 16:00	Ekolivs
Observation 4	19 April 2017 (Thursday)	16:15 - 17: 45	Ekolivs
Observation 5	20 April 2017 (Friday)	17:00 - 18:30	Matkooperativet Helsingborg
Observation 6	21 April 2017 (Saturday)	12:00 - 13:30	ICA Kvantum Malmborgs Clemenstorget
Observation 7	21 April 2017 (Saturday)	14:30 - 15:30	Ekolivs
Observation 8	26 April 2017 (Thursday)	16:30 - 18:00	ICA Kvantum Malmborgs Clemenstorget
Observation 9	27 April 2017 (Friday)	16:30 - 17:30	ICA Kvantum Malmborgs Clemenstorget

Table 1. List of observation session

Document analysis was conducted on the marketing materials of the three retailers, including their web page, social media page, in-store marketing material, posters and brochures. In total, approximately 30 pages of documents were examined and analysed.

Interviewing is often used as part of the ethnographic study to unfold context of people's everyday social, cultural, economic and political lives (Crang and Cook, 1995; Bryman, 2012). In this study, thirteen interviews were conducted with retailers and consumers. Two in-depth interviews were conducted with two out of three retailers of the chosen shops. The purpose of conducting interviews with retailers was to collect additional data on the vision behind the shops' sustainability approaches and practices. The original plan was to interview representatives of all three retailers. After approaching the retailers by email, only representatives from Ekolivs and Matkooperativet Helsingborg agreed for interviews. ICA Kvantum Malmborgs in Lund did not respond. As a result, only two interviews with retailers were conducted. Each interview lasted for approximately 45

minutes. The interviews were semi-structured. Interview guides to retailers were prepared in advance (see appendix) to set some parameters to the conversation (Crang and Cook, 1995) but there was flexibility for informants to give narratives on their vision for the shops and their view on sustainability.

Eleven semi-structure in-depth interviews were conducted with consumers who has shopped in the at least one of the chosen retail shops. The interviewees were selected based on theoretical sampling regardless gender or age, as the relationship between demographic and consumers' perceived meanings of sustainable grocery shopping is not within the scope of the study. The research design on interviewing was to conduct three to five consumer interviews of each shop. For the respondents of ICA, they have all shopped in ICA Kvantum, the medium size store of ICA group, which resemblances similar sustainable retail practices. It is well noting that many of the respondents has been to more than one of the chosen retail shops. Each interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes to 60 minutes. Three versions of interview guides were generated to address different sustainable retailing approaches of the three shops. They entail a list of questions about specific topics to be covered, including their habits in grocery shopping in general, their practices in sustainable grocery shopping, and how they relate to various sustainable retailing service (see appendix). However, the questions asking during the actual interviews were also adjusted based on how respondents' answers and framed the issues discussed. Open-ended questions were used in the interviews to elicit respondents' own interpretations, the meanings and their discourse in the narratives (Bryman, 2012). The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

	ICA	Ekolivs	Matkooperativet
Retailers	—	Emelie (28)	Hanna (24)
Consumers	Alicia (25)	Arjang (73)	Etienne (24)
	Nelli (24)	Sofia (27)	Sara (32)
	Magnus (35)	Maria (36)	Malin (25)
	Carlos (28)		
	Tanya (33)		

Table 2. List of retailers and consumers as interviewees

3.4. Analysis

Through close readings of the material including interview transcripts, field notes, brochures, and web and the use of common coding technique, the analytical categories were developed. Coding is the starting point of the analysis of this study, as for most forms of qualitative data analysis (Bryman, 2012). The coding technique used in this study is one rooted in grounded theory (Bryman, 2012). Categories were constructed by closely reading the material in order to identify themes and particularities. The questions guided the analysis were: What are the characteristics of the retail practices under the three sustainable retail approaches? How are they leading to various consumer practices and how are they interact and relate to consumers? How does consumers find the retail practices meaningful to their ways of living? In what ways (if any) does sustainable retail practices enable sustainable consumption in consumers' everyday life?

3.5. Use of previous knowledge

This study inherit the ethnographic tradition of social research to get a first-hand picture of how sustainable consumption was enacted in the selected retail shops, and how they are made meaningful to consumers' everyday life. Prior research on sustainable food consumption which reflect on the attitude-behaviour gap (Lehner, 2015; Spaargaren et al., 2011) has shown that when being asked about sustainability, consumers indicate high level on awareness but such attitude does not translate into behavioural change in choosing over sustainable food. The attitude-behaviour gap has important implication to the methods used in this study. In order to go beyond the merely attitude level on sustainable consumption, first, qualitative method is chosen over quantitative method in hope to produce data on consumers' meanings and emotional resonance; second, observation was employed to produce data of observable in-store behaviour of consumers. As such, it is hoped that the study could be drawn on actual consumer behaviours.

3.6. Critical reflection of used method

The chosen methods of this study: in-store observations, document analysis and in-depth interviews with retailers as well as consumers appear to be appropriate for answering the research questions and leading toward the aim of the study. In addressing the first research question of how retailers perform sustainable retailing, in-store observation and document analysis of marketing material unfolded how retailers frame their sustainable retail practices especially through the material artefacts in stores, and their visions stated on their web pages. As the author is not native speaker in Swedish, the analysis of documents in Swedish was aid by dictionary and translation tools, which

might lead to misinterpretation. Therefore, interviews with retailers were conducted to gain a better understanding on retailers' sustainability initiatives. The two interviews with representatives of the retail shops also produced important data on the motivation behind the approaches of the shops and what do they want to achieve in terms of sustainability.

Moreover, in-store observation enables the close examination of material artefacts in the retail stores which form one of the elements of consumer practices. In-store observation was also crucial in regard to identifying consumer practices. In general, the challenge of sustainable research is the attitude-behavioural gap (Seyfang, 2009; Lehner, 2015; Spaargaren et al., 2011). Respondents tend to show high level of consciousness on environmental issue when asked about their attitude. But the attitude does not necessarily translate into actions. In-store observation allowed the author to gain first hand data on what consumers actually do through interacting with the sustainable initiatives of retailers.

In-depth interviews not only shed light on how consumers relate to the specific retailers' sustainable initiatives, but also provided insight on what they consider important when buying grocery in general. However, there are a few limitations in the methods. First, the author could not get a chance to interview a representative of ICA Kvantum. The data is made up by document analysis on ICA's publication about their sustainable programme. Second, the number of respondents on ICA's retailing is higher than that of Ekolivs and Matkooperativet. Due to time constrain and limit in access, the author could not conduct more interviews with consumers of these two shops for the study. Despite only three interviews conducted for Ekolivs and Matkooperativet respectively, the data collection process produced rich amount of data which appear sufficient to fulfil the aim of the study.

Through out the fieldwork and data analysis, the intersubjective nature of ethnography is acknowledged. As Crang and Cook (1995) assert, ethnography produces 'intersubjective truths', which reflect the ways people make sense of the events around them, constructing these 'truth' in their terms. The data produced by ethnography is also heavily influenced by the social and cultural context of respondents (Crang and Cook, 1995). As such, the results cannot be applied without caution to regions with a different social and cultural context.

4. Results and Analysis

In this chapter, the results and analysis will be presented. The aim of this paper is to illuminate how different retailers' initiatives can resonate and impact upon consumers, facilitating sustainable consumption and in turn, paving the way for societal change in consumption pattern. Through the lens of practice theory, three sustainable grocery retailers — ICA, Ekolivs and MatKooperativet, representing three distinct retail approaches, were examined. The objective was not to evaluate whether their initiatives lead to substantial sustainability gain or not, but rather to show a diverse range of practices that are communicated by retailers as their sustainability effort, and to unfold how consumers resonate to such approaches. Next, how consumers relate to each approach and its sustainability initiatives, as well as consumers' practices shaped by each retail approach will be explained. As such, the congruity between retailers and consumers in enabling sustainable consumption is unfolded.

4.1.1 ICA - the conventional sustainable retailing approach

ICA is one of the largest grocery retailers in Sweden (Ekoweb, 2018). The franchise model is used for the operation of ICA stores in Sweden, so retail stores are owned by individual store owners with agreement of ICA Group. All stores of ICA take a company-wide approach to promote sustainability in grocery consumption so their initiatives are largely similar across stores in the same store format. ICA Kvantum, the medium-size store format is examined in this study. In the following, we will first discuss ICA's sustainability approach, and then go into the retailer's practices.

ICA promotes itself as a firm that 'takes responsibility for the environment and the society'. The approach of ICA's sustainability initiatives resembles what scholars term as the mainstream (Seyfang, 2009) or the reformist approach (Geels et al., 2015). It is conventional as it shares similarities in many other prominent sustainable retailing. The main characteristic of ICA Kvantum's sustainability approach is its focus on greening the products and greening the operations as add-ons to the status quo in order to achieve sustainability. As a retailer, ICA takes the role of provider of sustainable alternatives on top of regular products. In turn, ICA frames their consumers as individual who makes purchase decision based on inherent preferences. Sustainability is enacted when consumers purchase green products. Market mechanic is the driving force, aligning with the current economic arrangement. The depth and scale of changes required on society is relatively

small, as ICA expresses that they make such changes easy for consumers. ICA seems to convey the message that with the help of ICA, consumers do not have to change their consumption pattern drastically or do a lot of extra work in order to be sustainable. Ironically, just like any other practitioners in the conventional approach, one might argue that the burden to alleviate sustainability issue is shifted upon consumers' shoulders for making the 'right' choice out of thousands of options in-store.

The first sustainable retail practice of ICA is striving to provide ecological alternatives in all product ranges, accompanied by systems of eco-labeling and third parties certification. The notion of ecological food is equivalent to the concept of organic food. Making use of the illustration of Seyfang (2006, p.385), organic production is 'agriculture which does not use artificial chemical fertilisers and pesticides, and animals reared in more natural conditions, without the routine use of drugs, antibiotics and wormers common in intensive livestock farming'. According to ICA's web page (<https://www.ica.se/ica-tar-ansvar/miljo/ekologisk-mat/>, 30 April 2018), there are more than 1100 ecological products in ICA's assortment.

Based on in-store observation, the assortment of ecological products are indeed quite wide. Almost all regular products are accompanied by their sustainable alternatives, placed side by side in the same section. The sustainable products are marked with eco-labels on package. ICA further assists consumers by explaining the most commonly used labels on its web page (<https://www.ica.se/ica-tar-ansvar/markningar/>, 30 April 2018). The eco-labels and knowledge on reading them can be seen as elements of a practice. The eco-labels can be viewed as a socio-material artefact while knowledge on understanding the label is a competency. When combined with a consumers' perceived meaning in his/her own context, a performative social practice of sustainable consumption can be produced and reproduced.

Among the ecological options, some of them are under ICA's private brand, I love eco. I love eco accounts for over 20% of the ecological products in the retailer's assortment. It has a uniform design and a simple message, making it easy for even the less engaged consumers to identify a sustainable option. It leverages consumers' loyal and trust of the brand ICA to its private ecological brand I love eco. Since the launch of I love eco, ICA has become the market leader in ecological food, contributing to 29% of Swedish ecological food sales in 2017 (Ekoweb, 2018). It is worth noting that while offering ecological alternatives, ICA maintains its supply of regular, potentially

unsustainable products. As stated on ICA web page, 'by offering more and more organic, eco-labeled products, ICA facilitates customers to make environmentally smart choices'. (translated from Swedish, ICA web page, 30 April 2018). This discourse confirms that ICA is taking a conventional sustainable retailing approach by framing itself as a provider of sustainable option while it is on the consumers who choose to enact sustainability or not.

Second, similar to conventional sustainable retailers, ICA put effort in greener production and environmental supply chain management. ICA states that 'we will also do all we can to reduce environmental impacts of our suppliers through all stages of production' (translated from Swedish, ICA web page, 30 April 2018). ICA's initiatives include greening in-store activities, which currently accounts for to the largest portion of carbon footprint. There are projects to reduce energy consumption in stores through energy efficient design. The operation of stores are certified by The Nordic Swan Ecolabel.

Third, in line with sustainable retailers in the mainstream approach, ICA engages in social marketing in promoting sustainable products to a broader lifestyle concept. One of the example is ICA's marketing material, a monthly magazine called Buffé, which features green lifestyle, sustainable products, environmental friendly diets and recipes and so on.

4.1.2. Consumer practices

In this section, how consumer practices are shaped by ICA and how consumers resonate with conventional sustainable retail practices will be explained with the perspective of shopping-as-practice.

4.1.2.1. Seeking sustainable products in affordable price

Acquiring sustainable products in affordable price is the most common practice among ICA consumers. All except one informants stated that they choose to buy sustainable products in ICA instead of other sustainable grocery shops due to affordability. While all respondents show very positive attitude to specialised sustainable food stores, most of them point out that they do not shop there as they think products in these shops are 'so expensive' and 'unaffordable' to them. On the other hand, according to them, ICA offers sustainable alternatives in most product ranges, and they are 'more affordable' and that the prices of ICA's sustainable private brand, I love eco, are not much higher than the regular products. In general, they think that ICA's sustainable options are wide and

good, marked with eco-labeling schemes that they trust. It was found that when sustainable alternative is available right next to regular product, it triggers consumers to compare and consider switching to greener options. Such notion is supported by in-store observation data. At the sauce section, a few consumers were observed picking up a pack of regular tomato pasta sauce, then looked at the I love eco alternative which cost only one krona more, then took the ecological alternative instead.

While expressing concerns about environmental problems the world is facing right now, consumers feel that their actions to support sustainability are restricted by their financial condition. Therefore, they want to spend money smartly. Almost all respondents said they usually make a comparison on price, quality, health risk, potential environmental impact between a product and its sustainable alternative to decide if it is important to get the sustainable one. In addition, due to financial reason, they can only switch to sustainable alternatives of some products, but not all, which is why they need to think about the priority among product range.

“ICA’s private brand I Love Eco is useful to me as it is available in many products and they are not overly expensive. It allows me to consume ecological products without having to spend double or three times more the price.” (Carlos)

It was also revealed that, when the retailer could offer sustainable alternatives within a price premium that they perceived reasonable and affordable, switching to sustainable one become a very easy decision. As such, retailers has the potential to facilitate sustainable consumption by narrowing the difference in price between conventional products and sustainable alternatives. This finding implies that it could be beneficial if sustainable productions are subsidised by the government.

4.1.2.2. Buying conveniently in one stop at accessible location

Secondly, the results show that ICA fits very well in consumers’ grocery shopping routine for it enables consumers to buy almost everything they need in one go at a convenient location. As a major grocery retailer, ICA has extensive network of stores within Sweden. It is not surprising that the convenience of grocery shopping trip is crucial to many consumers. Departing from the perspective of practice theory, grocery shopping is a habitual, routinised activity entailing the practical achievement of acquiring products. Convenience is particularly important to consumers who do grocery shopping more often. ICA stores are usually not too far away from their home, and

at the same time, the stores offer some conventional products which they still buy, and the sustainable alternatives of other things they need. Therefore, ICA becomes an option for them to patronise. One respondent, Tanya, shows higher level of concern in sustainability and she tries to only buy ecological products.

“Back when I lived in the city, I probably shopped 60% of ecological shops and markets and 40% of big grocery shops. But now I live outside, it is more complicated to get to those ecological shops so I probably buy 70% in ICA now. I buy grocery too often, I am not that organised, I have to do grocery shopping three times a week.” (Tanya)

Due to location, she switched from shopping in ecological shops to ICA as she thinks ICA is more convenient and has wide enough selection of sustainable alternatives so it can provide her with what she needs. Also, she recalled when buying in small ecological shops, very often she needs to go to many shops to get all she needs as each shop has small range of products. Similarly, two informants who became vegetarians for environmental reason and animal welfare, commented that ICA offers fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as wide range of vegetarian products like soya bites to substitute meat in cooking, so that they can get most of they need in one stop. As such, big grocery retailers seem to be able to cater for the need of sustainable consumers who also value convenience and one-stop grocery shopping.

4.1.3. Consumers resonance with sustainable retail effort

Social practices entails meanings. A practice is sustained when materialities, competences and meanings are connected. In turn, meanings are produced and reproduced through the practice (Shove, 2012; Fuentes, 2016). In this section, with regard to conventional sustainable retailing approach, how consumers resonate with and how they see retailers' effort as meaningful are illustrated.

4.1.3.1. Taking one step closer toward sustainable living

It was revealed that consumers see sustainable shopping in ICA as taking one step closer toward the sustainable living they aspire. They feel like they are only getting closer, but still not getting there yet as their finance restrains them from consuming only sustainable products. In addition, they expressed they would prefer small-scale ecological food store or market, but they 'cannot afford it

right now', so they choose to buy those things in ICA instead. As such, ICA's sustainable initiatives, particularly its affordable private brand, enable them to enact sustainable consumption to some extent. It is clear that they feel like they have not reached the sustainable living that they aspire yet; shopping sustainably in ICA only means one step closer. They are not entirely happy with conventional retailers' sustainability effort and they hope to see improvements of them.

“ICA allows me to consume sustainably without having to spend double amount of money so somehow I feel a little bit better of myself and more closer to the sustainable lifestyle that I want to pursue.” (Carlos)

4.1.4. Congruity between retailers and consumers

While patronising the ICA stores, respondents expressed a discourse that ICA is their 'second choice', which mean if they have better finance and easier access to specialised sustainable food shops, they will choose to shop in those shops instead. Informants criticised some of ICA's practices. First, they do not support ICA for offering what they perceived as unsustainable products. Based on the analysis, ICA positions itself as providing both regular and sustainable alternatives for consumers to make 'environmentally smart' choices. Consumers do not respond positively to this stance.

“They are cancelling out whatever good they are doing, as they are also selling unsustainable food like canned tuna fish. It is like everything around sustainability as well. Some people are doing some things and that's maybe better than nothing, but you know, some of the small things people do, could make you think that then you can be less sustainable in other ways because you have been sustainable with this product.” (Magnus)

“I think in general supermarkets should not sell a whole fresh chicken for 25 kronor, that's what I saw in ICA yesterday on a big advertising board. I was like, in no way you can sustainably produce anything that cheap, especially for a chicken that has a life! I wonder what kind of living condition it was like for the chickens!” (Tanya)

“It is a bit like you get fooled by i think, a little bit. Some companies are probably quite true about it and their intensions of being sustainable, some I would say are less so. It all comes down to you to figure out what is a real sustainable product.” (Magnus)

Based on the above quotes, consumers feel negative that ICA still sells what they perceived as ‘unsustainable’ products. As such, it is implied that as a retailer, positioning itself as merely ‘a provider of both sustainable and unsustainable products for consumers to make their own decision’ may not resonate well with consumers. Any actions to promote ‘unsustainable’ products might lead to negative perception toward the shop. It might even lead to consumers’ questioning on retailers’ sustainable effort in general.

In addition, informants also criticised ICA’s practice of using too much package, sometime unnecessary. The overuse of packaging is, in a way, hindering them to enact sustainable shopping in the way they want.

“I don’t like that I cannot buy organic package-free vegetable in ICA. I know that because ICA sells both organic and not organic food in-store, the organic one are required to be wrapped in plastic so that they don’t touch each other. But this is a bit stupid. Can they handle it better? I want to buy organic and package-free at the same time!” (Tanya)

From the above, we have reviewed ICA as an example of conventional sustainable retailer in supermarket format, taking a reformist position to encourage consumers to buy green through offering alternatives. Based on the analysis, we have found that one-stop shopping in convenient location is appealing to some sustainable consumers. It fits in well in their way of living. In terms of symbolic meaning, consumers may see the sustainable practices of conventional retailers as enabling them to get closer to a sustainable living they aspire given their constraints in accessibility and economics. On the other hand, the result shows that consumers’ notion of sustainability involves multiple dimensions and is evolving over time. Further congruity between conventional retailers and sustainable consumers requires continuous improvement on retailers’ current practices and increased amount of sustainability effort.

4.2.1. Ekolivs - the radical sustainable retailer challenging the status quo



(Source: Ekolivs's instagram)

‘Fair trade and organic food is not in itself solutions to the problems we see around us and in the rest of the world. Extensive and comprehensive changes in economic and social structures are required in order to remedy the problems’ (Ekolivs, translation from Swedish)

Ekolivs is a small grocery shop operated as a food cooperative in Malmö. Ekolivs is chosen as a representative of retailers which hold a more radical standpoint towards sustainability. Ekolivs represents our notion of radical approach which shows resemblance of alternative retailing in the form of local food initiative bypassing mainstream provisioning routes (Seyfang, 2009); New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) (Bansal and Kilbourne, 2001), and revolutionary position in sustainable consumption and production (Geels et al., 2015). Retailers of this vein call for structural change in society and change in infrastructure of provision. First, Ekolivs is operated as a food cooperative, which means it is run by members of the association voluntarily. No one gets paid for operating the shop. Making profit is not the goal of the association. Rather, the goal is to enable everyone to buy affordable sustainable and ecological products, as well as a dissemination of sustainability ideas. It is achieved by forming a cooperative which gives members better purchase price and influence over selection and quality of products. As such, Ekolivs is very different from



conventional sustainable retailers which consumers has no concrete power in the assortment offerings. Second, the shop is operated with a vision: ‘Fair trade and organic food is not in itself solutions to the problems we see around us and in the rest of the world. Extensive and comprehensive changes in economic and social structures are required in order to remedy the problems’. (<http://www.ekolivs.se/om-ekolivs/>, 30 April 2018, translation from Swedish). This aligns with scholars of the radical vein mentioned above as they both advocate structural changes in systems in society.

Ekolivs is located in the residential area of Malmö. The size of the shop is small, approximately 20 square meter. The range of products is quite small, including seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products, grains, beans, egg, herbs, beverage and snacks. Apart from food, Ekolivs offers personal hygiene and cleaning products. There are four board members and about twenty-five members in the cooperative.

Ekolivs’s first sustainable retail practice is choice editing. Choice editing is the eliminating of option of buying products with negative social and environmental impact (Gunn and Mont, 2013). It is often used as a tool to promote sustainable consumption. Positioning as an ecological food shop, Ekolivs offers organic and sustainable products, thus, eliminating consumers’ option to buy unsustainable products.

Second, the shop offers local products. The shop sells local, seasonal and organic fruits and vegetables from Mossagården, 37 km away from the shop. There are also other food supplied by small local producers. The shop hopes to connect consumers with local farmers and producers to encourage local food consumption, which entails less emission from transportation.

Moreover, as the shop is run as a cooperative of members, most of them live in the same community nearby. Therefore, the shop aim to focus on the value of locality and community which is advocated by Seyfang (2006) as a form of New Economic sustainable consumption. Members can influence the selection and quality of products through various channel such as member meetings. Based on the interview with board member Emelie, the cooperative has different groups responsible for sourcing and purchasing, retail operation and so on. Each group leads different sub groups for running all aspects of the cooperative. Communication channels are established. It is ensured that the assortment of the shop can address to consumers' need. Such retail practice is very responsive to the local community. Additional, as stated in the shop's vision and mission, Ekolivs wants to enable consumers to buy sustainably with affordable price. This is achieved by bringing consumers together as a cooperative to enlarge the scale of the purchasing of wholesale products, so that members can enjoy a better deal while suppliers also benefit.

The most interesting retail practice of Ekolivs is that the shop promotes radical social and political ideas through the shop. On its web page, Ekolivs put 'Matbutik och boklåda' under its logo. It is a food store and a book store. The shop 'provides a small selection of newspapers and literature that members find interesting and related to the association's activities and purposes' (<http://www.ekolivs.se/om-ekolivs/>, 30 April 2018, translation from Swedish). It shows that the shop is trying to convey certain messages to consumers. Through in-store observation, it is found that the shop is promoting a number of social and political activities relating to sustainability, such as climate change movement and switching to ethical banks. There are some publication displayed in the shop, and posters on the walls about those activities. The publication and the posters are material artefacts used by the retailers to trigger a symbolic meaning to consumers for patronising the shop. The combination of social and political standpoints into retailing can be regarded as radical and revolutionary (Geels et al., 2015). It appears to be standing at the other end of the spectrum against conventional sustainable retailing approach. In the next section, we will discuss how consumers practices are shaped by it.

4.2.2. Consumer practices

In this section, how consumer practices are shaped by Ekolivs and how consumers resonate with radical sustainable retail practices will be explained with the perspective of shopping-as-practice.

4.2.2.1. Buying in accordance with seasonality

As illustrated above, one of the main retail practice of Ekolivs is to offer local and seasonal produce. In turn, consumers can learn about seasonality of fruits and vegetables and they can buy accordingly. The retail practice of displaying seasonal produce is helpful to consumers as some of them do not have a clear idea of which produce grow in a particular season.

“People nowadays are spoiled. People can buy every fruit in big supermarkets. They don’t know about seasonality. When you see strawberries available, you think of eating them; you rarely think of whether it is in season or not. I grew up in Ukraine and back then we only ate seasonal produce. I remember when I first moved to Denmark years ago, I saw a cucumber in my friend’s fridge in winter! I was surprised!” (Tanya)

Like many social practice, grocery shopping is a habitual, routinised activity. It implies that consumers might rely heavily on institutions and shortcut in cognitive process. They may not put in much thought during the shopping practice. Respondents comment that major grocery retailers like ICA have constant supply of produces imported from other parts of the world, and it may prevent consumers from questioning about seasonality of agriculture. On the contrary, the focus of seasonal produce in Ekolivs would enable consumers to buy accordingly without having to check on the growing season of food themselves. The selection of produce in Ekolivs indeed provide knowledge on seasonality to consumer, forming a competency as an element in sustainable shopping practice. Such competency intertwines with the produce as materials and the personal and social meaning of avoiding food miles, sustaining the consumer practice of buying in accordance with seasonality. In this sense, retailers can shape consumers’ practice by guiding them to buy seasonal produce as well as offering seasonal produce as material artefact, facilitating a practice of sustainable consumption.

4.2.2.2. Staying away from industrialised food production

As a choice editor, Ekolivs enables consumers to stay away from industrialised food production by offering only organic food. It was revealed to be important to consumers.

“Nowadays when we talk about food, or as you say, agricultural system, it has become under influence of industrialisation. And they are getting much food from the nature, and put in industrial situation to take more and more and they want to sell it. But how is the quality? They don’t think about that [...] So in that case, I don’t know what will happen to my health! I want to have food without industrial influence, without artificial things to add on, because they are not good for you. This is a big problem in the world today. In that way, people has become alienated with nature. I came across the concept of ecological and organic, it is something good for the nature, for the climate, and good for human being also.” (Arjang)

As mentioned in the previous point, grocery shopping is a habit. Some consumers want it to be fast and easy. Shopping in a store with organic products only would allow them to easily acquire products that they believe are both good for their health and the environment. Consumers appear to have a high level of trust to Ekolivs’s product selection. It is because members can influence the selection of products. Consumers believe that the food in the shop is produced by farmers they know, so they feel confident in the products. As such, retailers’ practice of choice editing and partnering with local farmers could build trust among consumers, facilitating them to enact in sustainable consumption.

4.2.3. Consumers resonant with sustainable retail effort

In this section, with regard to radical sustainable retailing approach, how consumers resonate with retailers and their perceived meanings are explained.

4.2.3.1. Standing up against powerful conventional retailers

Through interviews with consumers of Ekolivs, it was revealed that they share the same belief in standing up against powerful grocery retailers in some ways. To them, support Ekolivs means shifting away from the conventional major retailers. To start with, these consumers do not trust the major retailers, as they think major retailers are too powerful and mainly driven by economic interest. They are afraid that it might lead to exploitation of farmers.

“The big firms are usually powerful and could get products from farmer at lower cost.” (Sofia)

“They have really big impact on the food market, both by being like the store, the producer and everything. I think they have a lot power of what we should eat. This is not the way I would like it.” (Maria)

When asked about what they think of the sustainability effort of conventional grocery retailers, they responded that they are not optimistic. They feel that there is a lack of transparency in the handling of sustainable products in these retailers especially for their private ecological brands.

“Under the influence of industrialisation, those who are working with food, are with material interest. [...] I don’t know how they work with that, from where they are getting the food. But they want to sell. They are working to get more money. And that is why sometimes they will go in another way to get more money.” (Arjang)

“For the big firms, I don’t really know where their products come from, and how they get them. I don’t know about what the big firms do, how they handle sustainability.” (Sofia)

In addition, they feel that major retailers are not responsive to the need of local community. It is caused by major retailers’ strategy of launching bigger stores at the city outskirts instead of considering the needs of the community in the city.

“I used to work in one of those grocery retailers when I was younger, and when you purchase for the small shop, it is very expensive because you can only get a cheap price when purchasing in bulk. When they can’t do it, you will have to pay more to them so it is even harder for them to run a small one, they want to have these large one outside of the city, instead of having small shops near where the people live.” (Maria)

Because of the above reasons, this type of consumers feel resonate with radical sustainable retailers who take up the role of challenging the status quo. Supporting small retailers like Ekolivs and shifting away from major retailers is their way to stand up against the economic dominance of big corporations. In general, the consumers are quite engaged with Ekolivs. All respondents are

members of the shop, and they help out voluntarily in attending the shop sometimes. All of them expressed that when they first came into the shop, they think that it is a good idea to have such ecological shop in their community and they feel it is important to support small-scale shops by shopping and helping out there.

4.2.3.2. Supporting the value of locality and collective action

In addition to attempting to repress the influence of major food retailers, consumers also find it meaningful to support local food cooperatives. Consumers became members of the shop as they welcome the idea of having a food cooperative which they can influence the selection of products and the price. In this sense, they are no longer being ‘controlled by major retailers in what they should eat’. On the contrary, they can gain access into dealing with farmers and producers directly and decide on what they want to buy for themselves, as well as what they want to provide, as a retailer, to their local community. Supporting a food cooperative that serves the local community and the environment is meaningful to these consumers, particularly through the provision of ecological food. For instance, Arjang, who has been shopping and helping out in Ekolivs for five years believe that industrialised food production makes human to be ‘alienating with nature’ while working in a food cooperative could make human to be ‘in harmony with nature’. Also, he believes that cooperative is the way to prevent economic and social exploitation of farmers by big cooperations.

“ We are working with two main concepts here: ecological and cooperative.

Cooperative is the relation of the people with each other; and relation of the people to material, to money, so for example, many rich people they are working with farmers, and they want to exploit the farmers, buying the cheap things and put them to have mass production of something with chemical. But when it comes to cooperative, working together, that is not the question. So people are working together in a collective way. And in that way, they are not going after to exploit the people, farmers or the nature. That is why I have more trust with the people working in cooperative.” (Arjang)

When talking about how they feel about the vision of the shop, consumers agreed that economic and social restructuring are needed to some extent. The first change they would like to see is to bypass the mainstream provisioning route of major grocery retailers through supporting local food cooperatives. It is hoped that the structure of economic power could be rearranged. Moreover, in

doing so, they want to change the relation between people and the environment. They aspire for a world in which human are no longer alienated with the nature, but rather, be in harmony with nature. This reflects an aspiration of strong sustainability (Washington, 2015). As such, they find Ekolivs' sustainability retailing approach meaningful to them.

4.2.4. Congruity between retailers and consumers

From the above, it is revealed that a radical sustainable retailing approach may appeal to sustainable consumers who have strong belief to change the status quo; whose notion of sustainability involves a change in social and economic structures. The collective citizen action forms a cooperative which replaces the conventional retailer and established a network of provision bypassing the mainstream one. A radical sustainable approach is often described as serving a niche target group (Geels et al, 2015), this is no exception in this case, supporting by the relatively small base of members. From observation, the amount of consumer visiting the shop is quite low. While it shows strong congruity between retailers and consumers who share the radical idea, such retail approach might drive away less engaged consumers. It might be a challenge to up-scale a radical retailers and this topic would benefit from further research.

4.3.1 Matkooperativet Helsingborg - the intermediary of sustainable retailing approach

“The food cooperative Helsingborg is a member-owned food store focusing on sustainable and locally produced goods. We strive to have a complete range that is available to all Helsingborgers.” (Matkooperative, translation from Swedish)

Matkooperativet Helsingborg is run as a member-owned food cooperative for sustainable and local products. It opens since May 2017 and it is located in the centre of Helsingborg, within 5 minutes walking distance from Helsingborg Central station. To-date, they have about 300 members.

Matkooperativet Helsingborg is chosen as a representative of the intermediary sustainable retailing approach between the conventional and the radical one. On one hand, it is unlike the conventional players as it operates as a cooperative and no one gains monetary reward. On the other hand, it is not as radical as retailers in the revolutionary approach as it doesn't position itself as a strong advocate in deep changes in social and economic structures. Based on empirical data, it is revealed

that Matkooperativet Helsingborg is aiming to transition conventional grocery consumption to a more sustainable one. This is reflected in the following retail practices.



Matkooperativet Helsingborg is a sustainable grocery shop with approximately 100 square metre. It is located in a very accessible location, right next to Helsingborg Central station. At the entrance of the shop, there is a sign board that states: ‘All are welcome’. The atmospheric of the shop is warm and calm.

One of the sustainable retail practices of Matkooperativet Helsingborg is choice editing for not only sustainable but also ‘the best choices’ in term of sustainability. According to the co-founder, Hanna, the shop aims to make it easier for consumers to shop sustainably by keeping fewer but better options, knowing that whatever being sold here are among the best.

“In a regular grocery shop, you have so many choices but most of them are just bad, to be honest. In a co-op, you can have much fewer choices but they are all good. As a consumer, whatever is in the shop, I don’t have to think, I can just know that it is good food.” (Hanna)

According to the retailer, the selections in the shop are all environmental, social and economic sustainable and most of them are locally produced in order to minimise transportation. Most of them are also sourced from smaller producers to support local agriculture and keeping the region

prosperous. Originally, the notion of choice editing is to eliminate the option of buying food with negative environmental and social impacts. But Matkooperativet Helsingborg want to take it further to only offer what they think are the best in terms of sustainability in the market. The retailer understands that consumers face difficulty when evaluating which option is the best in term of sustainability among multiple choices (Lehner 2015), for example how to choose between organic versus locally produced vegetable. Therefore, the shop aims to offer what they have evaluated as the best food to enable consumers buy sustainably and easily.

“We want to make it easy to make the right choice because we don’t have 40 kinds of cereal, we have 3 and they are really good. These are among the best you can find in the market from a sustainability perspective. Because with all the choices we have in a regular supermarket, you have to be so informed as a consumers. It becomes so hard to make a good decision. So we want to say like, we have found the best that we can find at least and you can trust us. We want to make it easier to find all the good food. Also, putting them all in one place. Otherwise you have to go around all the different farmers and all the specialty stores, we want to have it all together.” (Hanna)

The second sustainable retail practice is to offer package-free section. Inside the shop, there is a large area of loose weight section for a wide range of food, such as rice, oats, beans, spices and dried fruits. The idea is simple, consumers can come with their own containers, or buy the ones available in the shop, and then get as much as they want and pay them by weight. Throughout the period of observation, the shop actually expanded their package-free section. According to the retailer, they are trying to sell as package-free as possible. By reducing package, the shop wants to reduce consumption in resources and material waste.

Third, similar to Ekolivs, Matkooperativet Helsingborg has a membership system but it is more complex. There are two types of membership, support member and active member. Both memberships cost 100 kronor per year, both entitle to the voting rights in determining how the shop works, but active member can enjoy a higher discount given he or she works voluntarily 6 hours per month for the shop. Such practice is welcomed by consumers as some of them cannot commit to work voluntarily in the shop while still hoping to be somehow supporting the cooperative. Given

that the cooperative have recruited about 300 members within one year, such two-tier membership arrangement seems to be well-received.

Moreover, Matkppperativet Helsingborg has a transparent price philosophy which is well-communicated on the web page and social media. It is stated that while the shop pays fairly to suppliers, they also want to make sustainable food accessible and affordable to everyone. Therefore, they do not get a high margin. They try to lower the retail price as much as possible by enlarging the size of membership and by working voluntarily. As such, the retail price of the food is relative to how much it actually cost.

“We want to lower our price not by pressing the farmers, but by being so many (referring to members) and working voluntarily, so that we don’t have to earn half of that margin. We can sell food as a price as low as possible. We want to having a store that isn’t controlled by money or by making profit, but run by values, and just bring people goods.” (Hanna)



Image 1. Post on April 16, 2018 (Source: <http://matkooperativet.se/var-butik/nu-sanker-vi-priset-pa-frukt-gronsaker-med-10/>)

The retail pricing will also adjusted to be lowered when the shop makes profit. For instance, according to the shop’s web page, starting mid April 2018, the shop has lowered the price of fruits

and vegetables by 10% due to the fact that the shop has made profit and the profit would be given back to consumers. Which category to be further discounted was decided by voting from members.

Lastly, Matkooperativet Helsingborg hopes to build a community around food and sustainability. It is achieved by holding events and workshops regularly to raise awareness and communicate the concept of sustainable living. The shop also organises discussions to offer a platform for people to share their ideas and connect with like-minded. Through this, the cooperative also hopes to reach out to more people and invite people to collaborate on running the shop.

“We have to build a community about good food. We want to teach people. We want to help people learn because it will through learning that we would understand why it is important and that we will start making those changes in our everyday life. It is also about helping people to get to know other like-minded people ” (Hanna)

4.3.2. Consumer practices

In this section, how consumer practices are shaped by Matkooperativet and how consumers resonate with intermediary sustainable retail practices will be explained with the perspective of shopping-as-practice.

4.3.2.1. Reducing material waste in food consumption

Based on in-store observation, the package-free section of the shop is quite popular. The respondents also show support toward such offering. According to them, one of the reason why they shop there is that it enables them to reduce waste in food consumption. They mentioned, when they started to buy their grocery there, they become more well-planned for the shopping trip. They would usually think of what they need to buy, and then prepare containers such as glass jars for holding package-free products, as well as shopping bags for taking them home. They said that it is a bit inconvenient as it is not possible for them to shop there spontaneously without preparation. However, it is what they are willing to bear for sustainability. As such, Matkooperativet shapes consumers' practice in enabling them to reduce material waste in grocery shopping.

“Now I plan when I go to the grocery. I think, depends on the person, you are in the evolving of being more ecological. I would say, one year before, i would say:

“No! I will never do that”. But step by step...yeah, it is just a habit to take (own bags for package free shopping). With time people can adapt to anything. It may take two, three months. Then when you are in the shop, you would start thinking, oh i should have take my empty egg carton to buy eggs as package is not provided there. Then you will realise it is something not very painful.” (Etienne)

More importantly, informants suggested that the shop actually helps them to build up a habit of bringing their own containers and bags when they shop, when package is not provided. As such, we can see that, when an element of a practice (in this case, package) is cut off, a new practice may emerge and sustain.

4.3.2.2. Buying in accordance with seasonality

Similar to the consumers of Ekolivs, consumers of Matkooperativet commented that the shop allows them to learn about seasonality of agricultural produce through observing which produce is available in the shop and which month is it in the year.

4.3.2.3. Learning about food and sustainability

It was revealed that consumers visit and shop in Matkooperativet to learn about food and sustainability. All respondents commented that they first came into the shop out of an interest in learning more about sustainable food and environmental issues. They are curious and eager to know what their options are for sustainable products. When they visit the shop, they like to look around and learn about different products. Such consumer practice is aided by material artefact such as booklets and brochures available in the shop in regard to some products, local farmers and suppliers.

4.3.3. Consumers resonant with sustainable retail effort

In this section, with regard to intermediary sustainable retailing approach, how consumers resonate with and find retailers' effort meaningful are explained.

4.3.3.1. Supporting choice editing by trusted retailers

In general, consumers find the choice editing of Matkooperativet very relevant. They show high level of trust to the shop as they agree with their selection criteria which are communicated clearly on the web page. In addition, they can be involved in making the selection once they have become a

member. As such, they feel that they can trust the selection of sustainable retailers. Moreover, choice editing is perceived as positive. Having too many options available in conventional grocery retailers make them feel difficult to enact sustainable consumption as they do not have time to read product information or compare between multiple choices. They feel that sustainable retailers that they trust can make it easier for them to buy sustainably without having to spend too much time. As such, having fewer but better sustainable options is favourable to this type of consumers.

“I want a place where I can buy products that I know where they come from, and that they are sustainably produced. It is really hard when you go to shops, like ICA. It is so big and there are like hundreds of brands. If you really want to be conscious consumers, you basically have to read on all the packaging at the time. It is really difficult and it takes so much time. So I want a place like Matkooperativet where you can go and buy products that you can trust without having to spend too much time.” (Malin)

4.3.3.2. Striving for a zero-waste living

Almost all respondents feel very strongly about reducing material waste, in particular food packaging in grocery shopping. They are very positive about the wide range of products available in loose weight format in Matkooperativet as this is not available in major grocery stores. As consumers, they are keen on reducing their use of resources as well as ecological footprint, as sustainability is important to them. Many of them expressed their concern on the use of plastic nowadays and they believe that the level of usage is unnecessary and harmful to the environment. They would like to ensure the sustainability for the future generations and humanity as a whole. In addition, they feel that striving for a zero-waste lifestyle in a transition. They believe that the package free format of Matkooperativet is meaningful as it can help consumers to build up a habit gradually in bring their own bags and containers, eventually reducing the use of packaging in food.

“I am in the ‘zero-waste strategy’ and I try to buy zero-waste as much as possible. Matkooperativet enables me to do that as I can buy package-free. All vegetables are not packaged. This is a shop closest to my way of thinking.” (Etienne)

4.3.3.3. Raising awareness to problems in current grocery shopping behaviour

Through supporting Matkooperativet, consumers want to raise awareness towards issue in current grocery shopping behaviour in society.

“We want people to question the grocery purchase that they usually make. It is very easy not to question it, which is understandable, especially when you are not very interested in this kind of issue. It is not easy to automatically make good choices in the big store.” (Malin)

“Cheap products are produced usually intensive agricultural system that is not sustainable. When you are used to food and vegetables that are really cheap, you don’t want to spend more. I would like people to think about there are two prices to every product that you buy, the money that you pay and the whole supply chain behind it and everything. It is really important to consider, as in the long term it is not sustainable.” (Malin)

Consumers of Matkooperativet share a vision that society would become more sustainable in food consumption. Through supporting sustainable retailers, they hope to convey a message to society about rethinking the priority in making purchase decision. They believe that sustainability should be put before price. Driven by an ambition to changing current grocery consumption pattern, consumers are well-resonate with sustainable retailers’ effort in raising awareness of society towards sustainability issue, such as organising events and workshops.

4.3.4. Congruity between consumers and retailers

Matkooperativet Helsingborg represents intermediary sustainable retailing approach which acts as a middle way between the conventional and the radical. It is not conventional as it acts as alternative network of food provision. At the same time, retailers in this approach strive to up-scale by meeting the value of wider group of consumers. In this case of Matkooperativet, it is high quality sustainable selections, package-free loose weight shopping, accessibility, one-stop convenience, and incentive in price though membership. The congruity between consumers and retailers could be facilitated through a democracy of cooperative, contributing to a form a retailing which could translate consumers’ notion of sustainability into everyday practices. This is evident in the recruitment of three hundred members within a year since opening.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, the results and analysis of the study will be summarised and discussed, following by a critical reflection on methodology used, as well as a discussion on the results linking to societal context and opportunity for further research.

5.1. Summary of the findings

This study set out to delineate different sustainable retailing approaches in grocery, how retail approaches shape consumers' practices, and in what ways consumers resonate to sustainable retailers, in order to shed light on congruity between retailers and consumers. This was achieved through studying three retailers representing three sustainable retailing approaches — the conventional retailers represented by ICA, the radical represented by Ekolivs and the intermediary represented by Matkooperativet Helsingborg. In line with ethnographic tradition, observations were taken place for empirical data collection of retailers' sustainable initiatives and consumers' in-store practices, both with focus on the doings, the sayings and material artefacts. In addition, document analysis on retailers' marketing material was carried out. The study was further complemented by in-depth interviews with retailers and consumers who shopped in the selected grocery shops. The findings show that retailers can enact sustainable retailing through very different approaches and practices. The goal of the study is not to evaluate different retailing approaches in terms of sustainability gain per se, but to examine how consumers are influenced by these retail approaches in terms of consumer practices and what do they find relevant and meaningful about these retail approaches. The results show that these retail approach and practices fit into different type of consumers and lead to distinct level of engagement.

Conventional sustainable retailing approach entails offering sustainable alternatives on top of existing, regular products, allowing consumers to make their own decisions. Sustainability is enacted when consumers choose sustainable alternative over unsustainable products. Consumers in this vein prefer buying part of their grocery sustainably in lower price in convenient locations. In terms of contextual meaning, they see such offerings as enabling them to take one step closer towards sustainable living that they aspire.

Radical sustainable retailing approach advocate changes in social and economical structures. While not necessarily operated as cooperatives in the chosen example of Ekolivs, they aim to bypass

mainstream provisioning route by connecting consumers to local small-scale organic farmers and producers. Social and political ideas are communicated in the shops. Sustainability is enacted when consumers turn away from power major retailers to buy sustainably in these shops. Consumers in this vein hope to limit or stop purchasing from major retailers. In terms of contextual meaning, they aspire to change the economic order in the society.

Intermediary sustainable retailing approach aim to facilitate the transitioning to a sustainable food consumption by helping consumers shop sustainably easier. It is achieved by first, building trust and second, choice editing for a few options with the best evaluation on sustainability. They also put a lot of effort in events to promote sustainability in food in society. Sustainability is enacted when consumers buy in these shops. Consumers in this vein value sustainability and the commitment in raising awareness in society. In terms of contextual meaning, they aspire to spread the idea of sustainable living for a transition in consumption pattern.

5.2. The significance of infrastructure of provision

The cases of Ekolivs and Matkooperativet Helsingborg show how sustainable retailing can be carried out in the form of food cooperatives. It brings to our attention that local initiative in bypassing mainstream food provisioning routes is growing. Scholars like Spaargaren (2011), Geels et al. (2015), Seyfang (2009) and Shove (2012) has advocated the importance of a socio-technical system that enable consumers to enact sustainable consumption, for it is never merely a personal choice but it requires the support of socio-technical infrastructure for a change in practice in everyday life. This study can contribute to scholars in this vein by offering fresh empirical data on how collective action shapes socio-technical infrastructures of provision in food consumption.

5.3. Paving way in societal change in consumption pattern

The aim of the study is to shed light on how retailers' initiatives can resonate and impact upon consumers, facilitating sustainable consumption and in turn, paving the way for societal change in consumption pattern. Grocery shopping is understood as a social practice, a routinised activity with practical goal in acquiring goods for everyday life. It implies that consumers' decision on what to buy might be largely based on institution and cognitive short cut. The level of cognitive process involved might be relatively low. As such, it would appear imperative to facilitate a routine for consumers to shop sustainably in a easy manner, in order to achieve societal change in consumption pattern. Based on a review on literature, consumers' awareness on sustainability is getting higher

and higher. Yet, the attitude-behaviour gap could still not be bridged. It is acknowledge that attitude change does not necessarily lead to behaviour change. This further shows that helping consumers to buy sustainably in easier ways may be the key. In this sense, an intermediary retail approach might be a good option, as it aims at transitioning consumers to sustainable consumption by making sustainable food accessible and easy to shop, enabling consumers to translate their notion of sustainability into everyday life practices. As such, intermediary sustainable retailing approach has the potential to lead to change in consumption pattern in the society.

5.4. Limitations

This study has a few limitations. First, the study is conducted in Sweden, which is known for being advanced in consciousness of sustainability issue, as shown by a 9.3 per cent market share of organic food sale (Ekoweb, 2018). The results are tied to its specific social context. It is believed that consumers might be more supportive and resonant to any sustainable retailing approach than some other countries. The results cannot be applied to other countries without reflecting on the social context. Moreover, the study is intersubjective. The study set out to explore how consumers construct their version of sustainability in relation to specific retail approach. As such, it is embedded with consumers' very own socio-cultural context. However, the author argues this study could contribute to an understanding of sustainability retailing and grocery consumption in a similar social context, for instance, Nordic and West European cities. Specific socio-cultural narrative on sustainability aside, the learning from the use of practice theory perspective in analysing everyday consumption practices might also be fruitful to be applied in international context for further research.

Second, the focus of the study is how consumers resonate with sustainable retail initiatives of the shops they visit. The target group is already buying sustainably in their lives. They are interested in sustainability issue. Therefore, they are likely to resonate more with retailers' sustainable effort than consumers who are not interested in sustainability. It might be suggested that the sample of respondents should be chosen within anyone instead of those who have already patronised the three retailers. However, the author argues that the focus of this study is to examine how consumers are influenced by particular sustainable retail approaches and how they interact with the retailers' practices. Therefore, it would not be possible to select consumers who have never been to those shops as respondents.

Third, the study cannot show whether some retail initiatives had actually lead consumers to transform from unsustainable to sustainable consumers. While how to turn the public from engaging in unsustainable grocery shopping to sustainable one is not within the scope of this study, it would be meaningful for future research to investigate on that.

5.5. Further research

First, this study encountered the retail practice of choice editing. While Gunn and Mont (2014) asserts that choice editing may encounter issue of consumer sovereignty, this study shows that when employed with transparency in selection criteria by trusted retailers, choice editing would be appealing to consumers as a tool to cut down cognitive engagement in habitual, routinised shopping practice of everyday life. It would be interesting to further explore the potential of the use of choice editing in inconspicuous consumption practices.

Second, this study set out to delineate different sustainable retail approaches during which bottom-up citizen collective initiatives were brought to our attention. Such initiatives are argued to contribute to substantial sustainability gain as a force of reconfiguration to current socio-technical system. A longitudinal research design on how these initiatives up-scale and gain wider support and engagement may offer insight in potential pathways for transition to sustainable consumption pattern.

5.6. Conclusion

To date, there are a wide variety of sustainable retailing approaches and practices. The aim of the study is to shed light on how retailers' initiatives can resonate and impact upon consumers, reaching a congruity, facilitating sustainable consumption and in turn, paving the way for societal change in consumption pattern. The findings show that retailers can resonate consumers in different ways, addressing their aspirations, and enable them to enact sustainable consumption. As Connolly and Prothero (2008) contend, understanding the meaning of consumption for individuals is vital to encourage sustainable consumption. As such, this paper contributes to the field of sustainable retailing by illuminating consumers' meanings in buying sustainably. As Spaargaren et al. (2011. p. 133) contend, 'crucial for the effective progress towards a more sustainable food provision would be the creation of congruity between consumers' notions and those prevailing within the systems of provision when translating the general notion of sustainability into everyday reality'.

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Appendix

Observation guide:

1. In-store observation:

- Study the retailers’ practices, how they make use of artefact in the shop, the retail layout and setting, the signages, the languages used in the text in store

Study how consumers shop there and what they do

- How much time do they spend in the shop?
- What do they do in the shop?
- How do they shop?
- What do they buy?
- (If any) How do they interact with other consumers and the staff?
- Do they come alone, or with company?
- Do they interact with any artefacts in the shops other than products?
- What are their bodily movements in the shop?
- (If any) What kinds of questions do they ask the staff?
- How are they prepared for shopping? (Do they bring their own containers/bags/grocery list?)
- How much time do they spend in reading the product information?

2. Marketing material:

- Study the marketing materials, website, books in the shops, the discourse, and more interesting, the events they hold in shop (Ekolivs and Matkooperativet both hold a lot of event, talk, meetings etc)

Questions to guide the document analysis:

- What are the sustainable retail practices?
- Who are the target?
- What is the purpose of that practice?
- How is sustainability framed?
- What is the retailer’s version of sustainability?
- How is it achieved?
- What kind of activities do they hold? Who are the target? What is the purpose?

3.1 Interview Questions to consumers - ICA

Personal information

- Can you tell me about yourself? (age, occupation, educational level, family, where do they live)

Practices in this shop

- Can you tell me about the last trip you made to this retail shop?
 - What were you buying?
 - Were you doing anything specific?
 - How long did you stay at the store?
 - Were you alone or with company?
 - What did you do there?
- Can you tell about how you first got to know about this shop?

Practices in buying grocery in general

- Can you tell me about the last time you did grocery shopping (can be any retailer)?
 - What were you buying?
 - How long did you stay at the store?
 - What did you do there?
- Can you tell about what you consider important when buying grocery? What matters to you?
 - How often do you do grocery shopping?
 - When do you do your grocery shopping?
 - Do it do it alone or with company?
 - Do you prepare for the grocery trip?
 - Why do you choose to shop here instead of other grocery shops?
 - Why is that important to you?

How consumers relate to this shop's sustainability effort

- Are you aware of the shop's sustainability effort? What do they do?
 - What do you think of the shop's sustainability effort?
 - What do you think of eco labeling in this shop?
 - Do you find it easy/difficult to buy sustainably in this shop?
 - What more do you think they can do to help you buy sustainably?
 - Do you think the eco products in this shop are expensive?
 - Do you think this shop provides sufficient information for you to shop?
 - Do you think you have enough support to buy sustainably in that shop?

Enacting sustainability in other areas

- Do you buy sustainably in other areas of your life? Can you tell me about that?
 - Why does that issue matter to you?
 - How do you achieve that?
 - Do you find it difficult to do so?

3.2 Interview Questions to consumers - Matkooperativet Helsingborg

Personal information

- Can you tell me about yourself? (age, occupation, educational level, family, where do they live)

Practices in this shop

- Can you tell me about the last trip you made to this retail shop?
 - What were you buying?
 - Were you doing anything specific?
 - How long did you stay at the store?
 - Were you alone or with company?
 - What did you do there?
- Can you tell about how you first got to know about this shop?

Practices in buying grocery in general

- Can you tell me about the last time you did grocery shopping (can be any retailer)?
 - What were you buying?
 - How long did you stay at the store?
 - What did you do there?
- Can you tell about what you consider important when buying grocery? What matters to you?
 - How often do you do grocery shopping?
 - When do you do your grocery shopping?
 - Do it do it alone or with company?
 - Do you prepare for the grocery trip?
 - Why do you choose to shop here instead of other grocery shops?
 - Why is that important to you?

How consumers relate to this shop's sustainability effort

- Are you aware of the shop's sustainability effort? What do they do?
 - What do you think of the shop's sustainability effort? Is buying from local farm/ small-scale producers matter to you?
 - What do you think of local products in this shop?
 - Do you find it easy/difficult to buy sustainably in this shop?
 - What more do you think they can do to help you buy sustainably?
 - Do you think the eco/local products in this shop are expensive?
 - Do you think this shop provides sufficient information for you to shop?
 - Do you think you have enough support to buy sustainably in that shop?
- Are you a member of this shop?
 - Why do you become a member?
 - How do you participate? What do you do?
 - Have you attended any event? What was that? What did you do?
 - Do you think events are helpful in any ways?

Enacting sustainability in other areas

- Do you buy sustainably in other areas of your life? Can you tell me about that?
 - Why does that issue matter to you?
 - How do you achieve that?
 - Do you find it difficult to do so?

3.3 Interview Questions to consumers - Ekolivs

Personal information

- Can you tell me about yourself? (age, occupation, educational level, family, where do they live)

Practices in this shop

- Can you tell me about the last trip you made to this retail shop?
 - What were you buying?
 - Were you doing anything specific?
 - How long did you stay at the store?
 - Were you alone or with company?
 - What did you do there?
- Can you tell about how you first got to know about this shop?

Practices in buying grocery in general

- Can you tell me about the last time you did grocery shopping (can be any retailer)?
 - What were you buying?
 - How long did you stay at the store?
 - What did you do there?
- Can you tell about what you consider important when buying grocery? What matters to you?
 - How often do you do grocery shopping?
 - When do you do your grocery shopping?
 - Do it do it alone or with company?
 - Do you prepare for the grocery trip?
 - Why do you choose to shop here instead of other grocery shops?
 - Why is that important to you?

How consumers relate to this shop's sustainability effort

- Are you aware of the shop's sustainability effort? What do they do?
 - What do you think of the shop's sustainability effort? Is buying from local farm/ small-scale producers matter to you?
 - What do you think of local products in this shop?
 - Do you find it easy/difficult to buy sustainably in this shop?
 - What more do you think they can do to help you buy sustainably?
 - Do you think the eco/local products in this shop are expensive?
 - Do you think this shop provides sufficient information for you to shop?
 - Do you think you have enough support to buy sustainably in that shop?

- Are you a member of this shop?
 - Why do you become a member?
 - How do you participate? What do you do?
 - Have you attended any event? What was that? What did you do?
 - Do you think events are helpful in any ways?
- Are you aware of the philosophy/vision of the shop?
- (“Rättvis och ekologisk handel är inte i sig lösningen på de många problem vi ser runt omkring oss och i resten av världen. För det behövs omfattande, övergripande förändringar av ekonomiska och sociala strukturer.”)
- What do you think about that? Do you agree or disagree? Do you think it is important?
- Do you buy sustainably in other areas of your life? Can you tell me about that?
 - Why does that issue matter to you?
 - How do you achieve that?
 - Do you find it difficult to do so?

4. Interview Questions to in-store staff:

- Can you tell me about yourself? (age, occupation, educational level, family, where do they live)
- How long have you worked here? How did you get this job? Why were you interested?
- What do you do during a normal working day?
- What are the peak hours / days of the shop?
- Can you describe your interactions with customers?
- Are there different types of shoppers, would you say?
- Do shoppers seem interested in sustainability issues?
- What kind of questions do consumers ask? Are you able to answer them?
- How much do they usually spend in the shop?
- Are there loyal customers?
- Can you please tell me more about the shop's vision / philosophy?
- What are the sustainability initiatives?
- What does the shop want to achieve with these initiatives?
- Why is the shop designed in this way?
 - What is there a package free section?
 - Why do you put booklets / books here?
- About events, what kinds of events do you have? Why?