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The Complexity of Consumer Trust in Sustainability Communication

by

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May 2018

Master's Programme in International Marketing and Brand Management

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to gain insights on what evokes consumer trust for (environmental) sustainability communication and shed light on how this trust impacts consumers' perception of sustainability. A literature review and qualitative data collection, combining four focus groups and nine interviews, were the basis for a discussion on this topic. This study found that what evokes trust in sustainability communication is a rather complex dynamic which previous research has failed to explore. Preexisting studies have instead focused on how a few attributes, such as the type of organization behind sustainability communication, affect trust. This study also concluded that consumers might provide one answer for what evokes their trust when asked in general, and another when given an example of sustainability communication to consider. Additionally, it was found that sustainability communication has a somewhat complex impact on consumer perception of sustainability. Although identifying high consumption levels in itself as a problem for environmental sustainability and expressing skepticism for environmental claims made by business, they were more focused on being sustainable by consuming sustainable products than decreasing their sustainability. This study concluded that this depended on the notion that changing what products to consume is easier than stopping to consume and the fact that business is trying to drive sales through sustainability communication and offers.

Keywords: Trust, Sustainability Communication, Sustainability, Green Marketing, CSR, Greenwashing, Skepticism, Consumption, Source of Communication

Acknowledgements

The process of writing a thesis can be exciting, developing and captivating. It can also be stressful, confusing and frustrating.

We want to thank all of you that have been with us, in good times and in bad.

Annette, we want to thank you for your patience and guidance when we were lost, not knowing what path to take.

Julienne, thank you for your words of wisdom when we were going bananas.

We want to thank the participants in the focus groups and interviews for offering their time and providing us with valuable insights.

Lastly, a huge thanks to our families and friends who were there for us, providing us with love and much needed mental support.

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1   Introduction

1.1   Background

In a world dominated by different varieties and degrees of capitalist economic systems, the view on the role of business is equally diverse. Dependent on this is also the implications for which role government and civil society will play. Traditionally, the ultimate goal and responsibility of companies were to maximize profit to their shareholders, contribute to society through financial growth, and produce products and goods demanded by consumers (Byerly, 2014; Porter & Kramer, 2011). Economic growth was seen as a product of increased consumption, and increased consumption has been considered a source of wellbeing (Holt, 2012). Economic growth, thus has been regarded as a positive outcome but, has not historically been proven to be the solution for many problems such as poverty, as exemplified by Varey (2010). Milton Friedman stated in his 1962 book, Capitalism and Freedom, that "there is one and only one social responsibility of business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud" (Friedman, 1962, p. 133). This traditional approach does not consider the external cost affecting society concerning environmental destruction.

Responsibility is an intensively discussed issue, but there has been no clear produced; both consumers and producers are frequently blamed for being responsible. Capitalism and companies acting in capitalist systems are increasingly blamed for adverse environmental impact, maximizing profit for shareholders and simultaneously negatively impacting the environment, which affects the earth's population at large (Porter & Kramer, 2011). With current environmental problems such as pollution, the emission of greenhouse gases, and overuse of natural resources, Friedman's ideas can be seen as destructive and that companies should be responsible to include sustainability at the core of their operations. Consumers are frequently accused of overconsumption and unsustainable consumption. However, these phenomena are commonly suggested to be imposed by companies' aggressive marketing communication and the supply of environmentally hazardous goods.

Questioning our role as humans in the world, rather than as consumers and producers in society can help us to gain perspective. Two contrasting views are the anthropocentric and ecocentric epistemologies explored by Borland and Lindgreen (2013). They explain that from an anthropocentric perspective, humans are above nature and that nature has no purpose of its own but is here to serve humans. Nature is therefore wasted if not utilized for economic purposes by corporations in an anthropocentric worldview (Borland & Lindgreen, 2013). In contrast to this, ecosystems have inherent value on its own in the ecocentric epistemology according to Borland and Lindgreen (2013). However, with an increasing interest in

environmental sustainability and market interests competing in present-day society, reality and practice are likely to exist somewhere in between these epistemologies. The anthropocentric epistemology can be linked to the traditional value of profit maximization for shareholders as the primary goal for corporations; companies should focus on utilizing available resources with the intent to reach financial success without considering the wellbeing of environment and ecosystems. That humans are exempted and have a unique right compared to other species is for many an underlying assumption. Perhaps it is time to reconsider this in our own best interest.

Where to focus concerning sustainability is a challenging question to address, and there are contrasting opinions. The quote "Almost everything being done in the name of sustainable development addresses and attempts to reduce unsustainability. But reducing unsustainability, although critical, does not and will not create sustainability" (Ehrenfeld, 2008, p. 7) provides some perspective. The idea of slowing, closing, and narrowing resource loops (Bocken et al. 2016) together with the idea of using renewable energy (Bakker et al. 2010) are some ideas of how to become sustainable. In this paper, we address consumer perception of environmental sustainability and environmental sustainability communication. Therefore, saying what is actually sustainable is not central and requires more extensive research than this paper allows.

As mentioned previously, business and consumers are not the only actors for sustainable initiatives; governments and NGOs are also important actors for sustainable initiatives and communication. The societal and environmental concerns have paved the path for a new form of competitiveness and point of sales, where business is using the solution of environmental problems as a Unique Selling Proposition (Byerly, 2014). Alves (2009), explains that governments have failed to address the harmful effects of market capitalism and that international agreements have proven not to be effective. Instead, Alves (2009), says that governments of the leading economies have focused more on foreign investment and liberal free trade than on the cost of sustainability globally. NGOs and social movements, on the other hand, he says, have stepped up in recent time to raise public awareness. Corporations are using environmental sustainability to sell more and drive consumption, which is somewhat contradictory. When the public feels that government fails to make business responsible for their environmental impact, civil society movements and NGOs are given extra fuel to address environmental issues.

To better understand where we are today, we will assess how we ended up here. The impact industries have on the environment has long increased, but it was not until the 1970s it was brought to widespread attention according to Chen and Chang (2012). They say that this has sparked an interest in environmental movements and concerns as people thought it could counter impact the negative effects of business on the environment. McDonagh and Prothero (2014) tried to assess available literature regarding sustainable marketing between the years of 1998 and 2013. They found a shift from sustainability considered as a small part of company strategy, being looked at from a managerial perspective to playing a central role of the overall business idea and being seen in the light of a macro, more critical, perspective. They, however, stress that the neo-liberal societies which are built on a neo-liberal economy have consumption at its core and marketing as we conventionally know it revolves around creating customer value.

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A large portion of the goods, and in part services, we consume can be connected to consumer culture and consumerism rather than actual needs; this type of consumption can be argued to have an unjustified impact on the environment. Marketing has been blamed as one of the primary tools that are advocating the current consumer culture that emphasizes buying and consuming products which is prohibiting sustainability (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014). Mont and Bleischwitz (2007) claim that 70-80% of all of greenhouse gas emissions, and energy used internationally come directly or indirectly from producing household goods or the need of managing the waste after these. Marketing is therefore strongly linked to the lack of sustainability because it promotes a destructive consumer culture responsible for a significant majority of greenhouse gas emissions and energy usage.

As mentioned previously, Friedman (1962) stated that the only social responsibility of a business in a capitalist market is to increase its profits as long as it stays within the rules, which is to engage in free competition and stay within current legislation. There has however been a shift away from this point of view and companies are being considered a main cause for environmental and social issues such as global warming, child labor and inequalities (King & Pearce, 2010; Byerly, 2014). With the shift from a financial focus to a focus on sustainability came the importance of corporations taking responsibility for these matters (King & Pearce, 2010; Porter & Kramer, 2011). In contrast to the ideas by Friedman (1962), CSR, Corporate Social Responsibility, is a concept where actions are taken by companies to include societal and environmental concerns in the business activities and shareholder interactions (van Marrewijk, 2003). CSR has also been widely critiqued. The emergence of CSR was according to Porter and Kramer (2011) the reason why companies started being blamed for the societal failures. They also stated that CSR initiatives are driven by reputation rather than being part of the core of a business endeavor. There are of course nuances to this, but one might argue that CSR at its worst is a case of greenwashing and even when it is not, this is how consumers can perceive it. Greenwashing is when a company is trying to create an environmentally friendly image of its brand without actually complying with core values of the environmental movement and acting accordingly (Prasad & Mills, 2010). CSR is a broad concept that has both positive and negative aspects to it. When widely integrated into the core operations of a business, we believe that it can be very effective while it merely acts as a public relations activity when used as an add-on. However, it can be argued that it is still better than doing nothing to address environmental issues. An essential part of CSR is to communicate it to the public through reports and marketing promotion. Therefore, CSR is highly connected to the complexity of consumer trust for sustainability communication.

As an increasing number of people care about environmental issues, marketing frequently addresses the environmental sustainability aspect of a product. However, other actors also engage in sustainability communication such as civil society Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and governments. Trusting these different types of sustainability communication is however not a given to consumers. Companies making false or misleading environmental claims, also known as Greenwashing, has led to widespread consumer skepticism (Vlachos, Theotokis & Panagopoulos, 2009). In a previous study by Haley (1996), it was also concluded that consumers trust NGOs and governments more than they trust business. Therefore, this paper intends to investigate the complexity of consumer trust for communication regarding environmental issues, which will be referred to as sustainability communication. Additionally, attention will be given to how trust for sustainability

communication make consumers regard sustainability and consumption. Researching trust for sustainability communication is, as we see, important for two reasons primarily. Firstly, it is important for organizations to know what evokes consumer trust for sustainability communication as they want to be trusted; this is usually important for NGOs and governments to realize their agenda and for companies to compete. Secondly, it is important for practitioners and researchers within sustainability as trust for sustainability communication affects consumers' perception of sustainability which in turn can affect consumer behavior.

1.2   Aim and Objectives

The literature to date shows that marketing has been used to drive sales and with sustainability becoming an increasingly popular topic, it is essential to understand what evokes trust for sustainability communication. Especially as it is widely used to create a competitive advantage. Further, discussion regarding how trust affects consumer perception of sustainability is scant. Therefore, in order to understand the relationship between sustainability communication, trust, and consumer perception of sustainability, the following research questions will be addressed:

- RQ1: What evokes consumer trust in sustainability communication?
- RQ2: What impact does sustainable communication efforts have on consumer perception of sustainability?

1.3   Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore what evokes consumer trust in sustainability communication to gain insights into the impact sustainability communication has on consumer perception of sustainability. This qualitative study that will draw on theories about Green Marketing, CSR and Greenwashing, Trust and Skepticism, Source of Communication, and the idea of Consuming to Sustainability. Four (4) focus groups and nine (9) semi-structured interviews will be used. Findings from this study will contribute to the existing literature and shed light on the complexity of consumer trust in sustainability communication. This study will also benefit future marketers when gaining consumer trust through sustainable efforts.

1.4   Delimitations

This study addresses the above research questions; however, there are several delimitations due to time restraints. Firstly, the method used is qualitative and intends to show the

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complexity of sustainability communication and trust and individuals reasoning about this. Therefore, we will not discuss how age or other demographics affect trust for sustainability communication and perception of sustainability. Additionally, although the participants in the study have different nationalities, all of them currently lives in Sweden where the study took place, and the study will therefore not show how people in different countries reason. During the empirical data collection, the participants were shown examples of a few popular products and related issues: bananas, petroleum, and oat milk. Other examples might lead to additional findings and conclusions. As previously mentioned, focus was on the participants' perception and reasoning. This means that we had no intent to examine their actual behavior or state whether they are sustainable or not.

1.5   Outline of the Thesis

After the Introduction Chapter, Chapter 2 will present the relevant existing literature and the theoretical perspectives of Green Marketing, Trust and Skepticism, CSR and Greenwashing, Source of Communication, and finally Sustainability and Consumption. In Chapter 3, the methodology used will be explained by going through the Data Collection Method, Data Analysis, Validity and Reliability, and the Limitations. The findings will then be presented and analyzed in Chapter 4 followed by Chapter 5 where a discussion of the findings in relation to existing literature and theory will be presented. Chapter 6 contains the conclusions drawn from this study and the Practical and Theoretical Implications as well as suggestions for Future Research.

2 Literature and Theoretical Review

In this chapter, previous literature and theory crucial to understand the context of trust for sustainability communication, its complexity, and how it affects consumer perception of sustainability will be revisited. Firstly, sustainability, as appropriate and necessary for this study, will be explored in brief. Then, the areas of Green Marketing, Trust and Skepticism, CSR and Greenwashing, Source of Communication, and Consuming to Sustainability will be reviewed.

2.1 Sustainability Defined

When discussing sustainability and sustainable development, there is a need to identify what actually is meant by the term. Sustainability has been considered a megatrend (Lubin & Esty, 2010; Lewandowska, Witczak & Kurczewski, 2017) and as previously stated, it has been taken into consideration by companies to different degrees and in different ways. Leiserowitz, Kates, and Parris (2006) tried to identify international and global trends in sustainability and found that they can be split up into two categories: areas to sustain and areas that need development. Within areas to sustain they found life support, nature, and community as the most commonly prevailing themes and within areas to develop, the economy and social development were areas most commonly emphasized (Leiserowitz, Kates & Parris, 2006). Hurth and Whittlesea (2017) defined sustainability as a regenerative use of human and non-human resources. According to Sheth, Shetia and Srinivas (2010), sustainability can be divided into three connotations: environmental, economic, and social. In this paper, the focus will be on environmental sustainability and consumers perception and trust for environmental sustainability communication and its impact on their perception of environmental sustainability.

2.2 Green Marketing

Traditional marketing and green marketing can be seen as two different approaches to marketing. First, marketing can be seen as a pivotal part of product sales, as it drives the urge and needs for products (Hurth & Whittlesea, 2017). However, it can also be seen as one of the critical activities used when addressing sustainability (Hurth & Whittlesea, 2017). Second, green marketing can be seen as marketing operations used to create and maintain environmentally sustainable behavior and aspirations aiming at sustainability by consumers (Lewandowska, Witczak & Kurczewski, 2017). Another definition of marketing sustainable aspects, given by Peattie (2001), is marketing activities aiming to reduce the negative

environmental and social impact of consumption by promoting those products and services that have less impact on the environment. Therefore, within green marketing, two perspectives can be seen to both contrast and complement each other; the first being to address the basic idea of consumption and marketing as its primary driver and the second being marketing of the sustainable product options.

Marketing practices that put emphasis on sustainability have emerged and they take different stances on traditional marketing ideas such as "make and sell" and trying to put sustainability at the core. Amongst these marketing practices we find Social Marketing, Demarketing (Kotler, 2011), Societal Marketing, Ecological Marketing, Green Marketing and Sustainable Marketing (Varey, 2010 p. 9). Societal marketing has for aim to govern long-term welfare of the society by satisfying the wants and needs of consumers, shareholders and commercial stakeholders. It can also be seen as being strongly related to the concept of CSR. Societal marketing can be seen as being the spearheader for sustainable marketing, being the first practice to incorporate societal issues into commercial marketing (Varey, 2010). Ecological marketing aims at shedding light on activities that have a negative impact on the environment and on a proposed solution for the problem (Henion & Kinnear, 1976). Green marketing as coined by Peattie (2001) encourages consumers to buy more sustainable products by using marketing activities to promote these. It aims to serve the goals of a business by preserving and protecting the environment, but at the same time advocating consumption (Varey, 2010). Sustainable marketing aims at reducing consumption as well as transforming how we consume in order to change the linear consumption patterns into cyclical ones (Saren, 2000). It aims at advocating a re-evaluation of the acquisition of things that have a negative impact on the environment, the aim is to change the point of view from consuming things to creating value (Varey, 2010). Jocz and Quelch (2008) mean that marketing as an activity has continuously evolved since the 1950s and the models used are being transformed into suiting the 21st century. However, there are advocates that claim that this is not enough to ensure a sustainable future of our planet, the underlying assumptions of marketing and consumption need to be challenged (Varey, 2010; Hurth & Whittlesea, 2017; McDonagh & Prothero, 2014; Yang, Fitzpatrick & Varey 2015; Holt, 2012). Focusing solely on making products less harmful to the environment or transforming consumption might not independently be the best way to ensure sustainability. Instead, creating sustainable production and value chains at the same time as transforming the role of communication and promotion as creators of wants to drivers of responsible and informed consumption might give a more holistic view.

When discussing consumption as a result of marketing, attention is often given to consumers but considering that it can be seen that businesses influence them, a more in-depth understanding should be considered. According to Fuentes (2015), there has been an emphasis on making the consumers responsible making sustainable choices by advocating them to buy products and making decisions that can be seen as sustainable from the point of view of environmental sustainability. In line with this, Caruana and Crane (2008), demonstrate how business put the responsibility on consumers rather than on corporations by creating the image of a responsible consumer. To be sustainable, companies must admit to these actions and instead of just trying to drive wants, promote sustainable levels of consumption and the consumption of sustainable products and services. McDonagh and Prothero (2014) emphasize that the neo-liberal society is built upon consumption and the main aim of marketing is to create direct value for the customer. By doing this, Yang, Fitzpatrick & Varey

(2015) mean that marketing, driving the consumerist culture, has been unsuccessful in ensuring a sustainable future for the environment, people, and business. Kotler (2011) tried to redefine marketing and questioned his prior assumptions regarding the conventional way of looking at marketing, namely that wants are natural and infinite, and that it is good to encourage them, that the earth's carrying capacity for waste and pollution is infinite, that earth's resources are infinite, and that happiness and quality of life increase with consumption. He, however, stressed that these traditional assumptions were untrue and that wants are culturally shaped and influenced by marketing and similar forces, earth's resources and its carrying capacity is limited, and consumption does not mean increased happiness. Based on this idea, he suggested that companies will have to adapt the way they market their products and that the answer is not only to market reduced consumption but also responsible consumption. Therefore, companies can be seen as using their power to drive the wants of consumers and then often neglecting to take responsibility for this and instead blame consumers themselves.

Companies can take on different approaches to sustainability depending on how much they care, how ambitious they are, and to which degree they see sustainability as a possibility. Hurth and Whittlesea (2017) mean that there are three paradigms for how companies look at the question of sustainability and well being and these are also said to be at the core for why firms exist. The three paradigms identified are: make and sell, sense and respond, and guide and co-create (Hurth & Whittlesea, 2017). The first two paradigms can be seen as part of the traditional, neoliberal way of thinking of business whereas the guide and co-create can be seen as a part of postmodern thinking (Hurth & Whittlesea, 2017). Porter and Kramer (2011) advocate creating shared value, which aims at transforming social problems relevant to companies' business models into business opportunities. This is a strategic view on CSR integrates the aim to contribute to solving societal challenges while, at the same time driving greater profitability for the company (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Merely producing and selling or responding to environmental issues are traditional approaches that will not do much good in achieving sustainability but at its best decrease unsustainability as previously explained. Instead, sustainability might be increasingly achieved when proactively approached, for example in accordance with the guide and co-create paradigm as identified by Hurth and Whittlesea (2017).

2.2.1   Flaws with Green Marketing

Companies also have varying views on sustainability and therefore communicate their efforts in different ways. As a result, consumers might experience difficulties trusting and evaluating sustainability communication. There are three flaws found with green marketing according to Montague and Mukherjee (2010). They summarize these three with being poor credibility, consumers being cynical and consumers experiencing confusion. They also claim that consumers, as well as shareholders, can benefit from using environmentally friendly aspects in the business strategies, but also emphasize that the increased amount of companies trying to do so has led to consumers feeling confusion regarding what companies to actually trust (Montague & Mukherjee, 2010). According to Hosseinpour et al. (2016) a barrier for consumers to purchase green products is the lack of sufficient information about the

sustainability attributes. Another flaw, as identified by Yang, Fitzpatrick and Varey (2015) is that the power of green marketing can be seen as being diminished by consumers distrusting communication putting an emphasis on sustainability, the general notion of marketing being ineffective, as well as the, connotated higher pricing that sustainability evokes. Consumers having access to the Internet are more prone to scrutinize the information sent out by companies and verify the claims made by companies independently (Lewandowska, Witczak & Kurczewski, 2017). Jackson (2005) argues that even if we change the products and the value chains, there is no way that the consumer choices can be steered in one way or another. Montague and Mukherjee (2010) conclude that with the increased amount of companies focusing on green aspects of their products and marketing a confusion amongst consumers arises. Consumers do not know how to differ between the organizations that use sustainability communication solely for positioning themselves and create a competitive advantage on the market, and those who communicate things that really make a difference for sustainability. There is also a confusion felt by consumers caused by the plethora of choices regarding what product to choose and what the green information and marketing communication conveyed actually means (Montague & Mukherjee, 2010). Therefore, companies that want to benefit from a competitive advantage of communicating sustainability should be clear and specific in their information by communicating what is actually done rather than just stating sustainability. They should also display this information in close proximity to the product in order to convince the skeptic, already informed, consumer.

Sustainability marketing has been seen as focusing on factual information rather than emotional appeals (Villarino & Font, 2015). The failure of portraying the sustainability in a clear way where the benefit of buying the product has been focusing of society at large and not on the benefits for the individual has been shown to diminish the effectivity of the message (Villarino & Font, 2015). In line with this Ottman, Stafford, and Hartman (2006) emphasize that sustainable marketing needs to focus on the personal benefits for the customers in a tangible, yet emotionally appealing way. In their study, Villarino and Font (2015) find that there is a need for a balance between factual information and emotional appeals in sustainable marketing for it to be effective. They also show that the balance is more warped towards the factual side and the use of facts and information is seen as diminishing the risk of being perceived as greenwashing. Balancing facts and emotional appeals might, therefore, be the most effective option for corporations. This shows the need for considering how much, and what kind of information and emotional appeals that should be included when creating a sustainable communication effort.

2.2.2   How to Make Green Marketing Work

Marketing sustainability aspects has been defined as differing from conventional marketing and different aspects and measures that can be taken in order to create sustainable communication efforts that have been researched. Ottman (2011) arrived at five rules that green marketing should oblige by. First one being "Walk your talk" by which she means that whatever claims are made regarding green marketing must be lived by, nonetheless by the management. The second rule being that green marketing communications should be created in a comprehensible, effective way without any unnecessary information, this is according to

Ottman (2011) an important consideration as she claims that marketing communications tend to be hard to understand as the claimed sustainable effects of the product usually are invisible and intangible. The third aspect is that green products tend to be priced higher than "regular products", and due to this green marketing should focus on the justification of this elevated price. The fourth rule is regarding third parties that can evoke additional trust in the green marketing efforts. Here Ottman (2011) exemplifies this with independent organizations have awarded the company a certificate, label or verification of its sustainability efforts. She however also emphasizes that the third-party organization needs to be neutral, independent and has to be perceived as honest. The fifth golden rule emphasizes the eco-design of the product, which in itself can serve as a means for market communication, which companies tend to forget according to Ottman (2011). She means that the product itself and how it has been designed is a crucial channel not to forget and that there is much emphasis on the promotional aspect of green marketing (Ottman, 2011). Consumers were also found as being more prone to purchasing a green product if they saw the personal benefit of doing so; Montague and Mukherjee (2010) explain this finding further by saying that "consumers need to understand what is in it for them" (Montague & Mukherjee, 2010 p. 7). Consumers were shown to be more favorable towards green marketing regarding high involvement products rather than low- involvement ones, this because they are more susceptible to information when it comes to high-involvement products in general (Montague & Mukherjee, 2010). In relation to where consumers would like to find environmental information regarding a product it has been shown that the place seen as the most important by consumers is on the packaging itself and the second most important placement being on the shelf nearby the product (Lewandowska, Witczak & Kurczewski, 2017). So, in order for sustainability communication efforts to be able to be perceived as credible and resulting in a desired outcome the creation of them should consider the message being clear, comprehensible, the sustainability aspect being integrated into the business idea, it should justify the elevated price connoted with sustainable products, independent third-party certifications should be used to elevate the credibility, they should consider the design of the product and packaging as it can be seen as one of the most important places to disclose sustainability aspects and show the personal benefit of the sustainability aspect.

Green marketing can also be seen through the lens of creating so-called win-win situations for companies and the environment by connecting a cause with the business idea leading to a company profit as well as a social or environmental profit, as explained by for example Porter and Kramer (2011). This win-win strategy of merging a cause related to the business idea, however, has been shown to have its flaws. The flaws could be seen as the competitiveness of the proposition in the market, where a hard competition for appearing to be the "greenest" by companies has been identified. The point of view on being ''green" depends on what aspect you regard which can create confusion regarding what actually is meant by the claim (Peattie, 2001). The green attributes of products were also shown not always be in line with the corporate culture and other business strategies resulting in a conflict of interest (Peattie, 2001) And lastly, an attitude-behavior gap experienced by consumers was found, where some of the consumer over reported their environmental concerns and in the end did not really act upon it (Peattie, 2001). On a brighter note, Lewandowska, Witczak and Kurczewski (2017) writes that companies who show commitment to environmental factors show higher profitability and better financial results than companies that do not care. People asked in the Hosseinpour et al.

(2016) study showed that most of the respondents had a positive attitude towards sustainable behavior and they also concluded that attitudes were one of the primary determinants of behavior. Organizations should thus consider what the underlying reasons for using sustainability in their marketing as studies are showing both positive as well as negative aspects of it such as a competitiveness on the market, the danger of communicating sustainability that isn't is in line with the corporate culture and business idea and also regarding that consumers might over-report their concern for sustainability (Peattie, 2001) but also having in mind that if done well, if could create profitability (Lewandowska, Witczak & Kurczewski, 2017).

The use of different appeals in marketing has been presented above. These different appeals have been shown as generating different outcomes. When people feel that their freedom is being threatened a feeling of reactance can be instilled (Aronson, 2012). This feeling of reactance as explained by Aronson (2012) can show itself if you, for example, get approached on the street by someone asking you to sign a petition and a passerby yells that you shouldn't do it, if this happens there is a higher likelihood of you actually signing the petition due to a want to maintain your freedom. Wang, Krishna and McFerran (2017) explain reactance as a resistance to altering one's actions and beliefs, as doing so is seen as diminishing the experienced freedom. In the light of marketing communications, reactance can be felt when consumers are being met with messages from corporations advocating them to act or think in a certain way, or corporations trying to change consumers perception of them by using CSR initiatives resulting in poor perception (Wang, Krishna & McFerran, 2017). With regards to the appeals used in market communications and advertising, assertive messages evoking a feeling of diminished freedom have been shown as having a diminished persuasive power (Kim et al. 2017). In line with this Wang and Zuo (2017) show that the sender of a message can evoke reactance, in their study they examined the effect of displaying an American flag on products and the study showed that the recipients of the message perceived the placement of the flag as an attempt of persuasion and as a consequence the recipients reacted negatively to the message. With this, it can be shown that advocating messages in a way that is too assertive can have a counterproductive outcome if the message is perceived as intruding on the recipients' experienced freedom, as this has sometimes been shown to produce the opposite reaction than the desired one.

2.3   Trust and Skepticism

Trust and skepticism can be seen as two intertwined concepts. Greenberg (2014) defined trust as believing that a person or a company can be trusted to achieve goals based on that they have the competence, values, and intentions to do so. According to Hosseinpour et al. (2016), the most important factors to look at when assessing why consumers buy products of a sustainable character are "belief, knowledge, attitude, the company's sustainable responsibility /.../, trust and perceived quality " (Hosseinpur et al. 2016 p.40). Chen, Lin & Weng (2015) also explain green trust as a will to depend on a product, service or brand based on a notion or a strong belief stemming from the credibility the corporation evokes. It connoted to benevolence, knowledge, and action it takes to be environmentally friendly in its business

performance. If the opposite happens, that consumers start to question how environmentally friendly the corporation actually is and will consequently start to question the reliability, whether it is effective and as a consequence also lose trust in the corporation. Trust can be defined as a belief that a party is reliable and that you can depend on it, it does not manipulate and keeps its promises. It can be seen as being based on "integrity, benevolence and competence" (Chen, Lin & Weng, 2015, p.10141). Therefore, trust can be seen as the belief that an actor in sustainability communication will live up to their promises because they have the ability and the intent to do so.

Trust is a multifaceted concept, and can according to Chen, Lin & Weng (2015) be divided into four dimensions: 1. the affect-based one, where the impact lies on third-party influence on how consumers perceive the company. 2. the experience-based one which talks about the overall evaluation of the total interaction the customer has had with a company. 3. the cognition-based one, which bases on the direct interaction that the customer has with the company. 4. the personality-oriented one, which talks about how the personal characteristics and shopping patterns of a consumer impact the perceived trust (Chen, Lin & Weng, 2015).This shows that more than one aspect of trust needs to be taken into consideration when assessing whether a message is trusted or not, and if it is trusted, what dimension of trust does it correlate to.

Trust can be invoked in many ways, the perceived quality and satisfaction of a product is said to affect the customer loyalty and trust (Chen & Chang, 2012). Brusseau, Chiagouris, and Brusseau (2013) claim that consumers do not trust companies having the underlying reason for using green appeals in their communication and brand building as making a profit. Vlachcos et al. (2013) claim that the perception that a service is of high quality can have a great impact on the perception of a CSR initiative, if it is linked with good service quality it evokes trust and is perceived in a more positive light, in contrast to this if there is a perception of bad service quality the trust is diminished and the effectivity of the CSR communication also is diminished. Brusseau, Chiagouris and Brusseau (2013) say that the only way to respond to skepticism felt by consumers as a result of greenwashing is by using authenticity. By authenticity, they mean authenticity to yourself as a company and sincere, by being true to others. When using authenticity, the business values are the core of the appeals used. They also exemplify this by saying that CSR efforts should not be performed due to conformity by which they mean to follow what others are doing. Chen, Lin and Weng (2015) explain that trust and perceived quality was shown to have a positive correlation. In accordance to this Lewandowska, Witczak and Kurczewski (2017) showed that consumers feel distrust to green communication due to the lack of knowledge, they exemplified this by saying that consumers feel that the information conveyed about a product tends to be to vague or incomplete. All short-term gains that have been made by companies claiming sustainability has been the cause of the long-term mistrust that consumers feel towards sustainability appeals in marketing (Montague & Mukherjee, 2010). Vlachos, Theotokis and Panagopoulos (2009) explain that motives driven by the profitability of companies affect loyalty felt by customers negatively and in contrast; if a company has a benevolent pro-bono aim the loyalty felt by customers will be affected positively. Communication regarded as truthful was found as stemming from companies which had the environmental cause at the core of their business idea, the marketing strategies were internally developed and based upon important core-values of the company (Lewandowska, Witczak & Kurczewski, 2017). The emergence of greenwashing

has been seen as one of the causes for consumers mistrusting green appeals in marketing communications (Brusseau, Chiagouris & Brusseau, 2013). By using extreme forms of sustainability as appeals in marketing there is a risk of people turning against what is being communicated by dismissing the information as too intrusive and by this antagonizing sustainability with what is considered as "normal" (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014). Prior research this shows that trust can be affected by the perceived authenticity of a communication, the perceived quality of it, whether the CSR related claims are seen to be a part of the organization or can be interpreted as an add-on, whether the information conveyed is concise, and stringent enough.

Many studies made on the question of green marketing and trust has been of a quantitative kind (Chen & Chang, 2012; Chen, Lin & Weng, 2015; Hassan & Valenzuela, 2016; Hosseinpour et al. 2016; Montague & Mukherjee, 2010; Vlachos, Theotokis & Panagopoulos, 2009) where the underlying question of why people do not feel trust towards green advertising has been explored, this study can add to this field with a qualitative, more in-depth approach to this question.

2.4   CSR and Greenwashing

CSR, or Corporate Social Responsibility, refers to a company's efforts not to only strive towards maximizing profits, but also having a positive impact on society and the environment; however, this is often met with skepticism. According to Vlachos, Theotokis and Panagopoulos (2009), companies have been using CSR initiatives to the degree where they have not longer been used to create a social or environmental impact but also to communicate that they are doing so. He also says that this has resulted in skepticism towards CSR initiatives as consumers are feeling a fear that companies are engaged in greenwashing. Consumers might not always care what companies are doing in terms of sustainable efforts, but about the underlying reasons for them doing so (Vlachos et al. 2009). A company participating in CSR without fully understanding why they are doing so is, therefore, risking its relations with the public.

Over the years, perspectives have shifted and the role and responsibility of companies in regards of social and environmental responsibility has changed and it is therefore important to consider what CSR actually is. As previously mentioned, Friedman (1962) stated that the only social responsibility of business is to make the most profit possible as long as the company acts in accordance with legislation. Of course, there are contrasting views; such as CSR. CSR can be defined in many ways, for example: "In general, corporate sustainability and, CSR refers to company activities - voluntary by definition - demonstrating the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in business operations and in interactions with stakeholders." (van Marrewijk, 2003, p. 102). This definition of CSR will be used in this paper because of its simplicity and as it yet covers important aspects as voluntariness, and environmental concerns in business operations. Carroll (1991) created a pyramid-shaped model of the different parts of CSR where the two base layers are economic and legal responsibilities and required by society. These layers are also acknowledged by Friedman (1962) even though he puts more

weight on economic responsibilities. Carroll's (1991) following layers are ethical responsibilities, expected by society, and philanthropic which is preferred by sustainability. These last two levels go beyond what Friedman (1962) considered the social responsibility of corporations. However, it can be questioned whether the first two layers are actually part of CSR since they are hardly voluntarily. The economic responsibilities are not only required by society but by the owners and the legal responsibilities are enforced by government institutions. Therefore, it can be seen as that only ethical responsibility and philanthropic efforts are to be considered as CSR as these are, although expected and preferred, voluntary.

The return of engaging in CSR is a widely discussed topic. Bhattacharya, Smith and Vogel (2004) argue that CSR initiatives when communicated can increase customer equity and improve corporate image. CSR and corporate sustainability reports are examples of green marketing according to Alves (2009) who also states that communicating to be green is profitable but that the profitability of actually being green is questionable. Being green can, of course, be seen as a cost because of increasing limitations and a stricter view on process and material or argued as a competitive advantage and business opportunity. Profitability also depends on the assumption that consumers desire CSR, but according to Pope and Wæraas (2016), this assumption is questioned because of research showing that consumers will not pay extra for products promoted with CSR activities. However, there might not be one single answer to this but that it may vary depending on the industry, the managerial approach of these issues, and other circumstances.

One way to see it is that companies engaging in CSR want to do good and have a positive impact, but it can also be seen as an effort to improve the image. According to Porter and Kramer (2011), CSR initiatives are generally driven by reputation as a way to manage public relations and create a positive image of a company or brand and not embedded in the core of a business. Bhattacharya, Smith, and Vogel (2004) state that values, beliefs and brand preference of consumers are all important drivers of corporate social initiatives and Alves (2009) states that CSR is putting the value of public relations in focus as an increasing number of consumers make their values and beliefs criteria for consumption. This statement supports Porter and Kramer's (2011) claim that businesses engage in CSR to please consumers rather than to do good. Bhattacharya, Smith, and Vogel (2004) did not mention having a positive impact as a driver for CSR initiatives at all. Alves (2009), claims that "CSR argues that market interest is aligned with social and environmental interests[...]" (Alves, 2009, p. 10) and that according to CSR, capitalism is the best practice to achieve sustainability. Determining whether CSR is merely a PR smoke screen or actually aligns business and environmental interests might be a question for individual cases. Some companies engaging in CSR and social responsibility reporting might do so only to gain public support while others might intend to have a positive impact to accompany their claims. Additionally, CSR is a popular term among companies and widely recognized by the public which is why companies might use it for very different things even when a different term would be more appropriate and representative.

CSR activities used to boost the image of a company without actually doing good or intended to do so are cases of greenwashing just as falsely communicated CSR activities. Prasad and Mills (2010) explain the concept of greenwashing as a company benefiting from creating a "green" symbolism around its brand without actually complying with "green" core values of

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the environmentalists' movement. This suggests that companies might enter into participating in CSR simply to enhance their image, bordering greenwashing, instead of doing so to actually do good. According to Alves (2009), a majority of environmental claims were subject to something he refers to as the sin of hidden trade-off, meaning that a product is portrayed as "green" because of one single attribute without mentioning the impact of other attributes. He also explains that it is common for companies to make an environmental claim without presenting supporting proof or having it endorsed by a credible third-party. Another issue presented by Alves (2009) is the use of vagueness in language, making irrelevant claims, appealing to the consumer with the lesser of two evils, and presenting false claims. Mulch (2009) argues that there is yet another essential example of greenwashing, namely the use of misleading labels by implying a third-party endorsement. Therefore, companies engaging in CSR solely driven by reputation are likely to engage in greenwashing as a result of taking shortcuts.

Skepticism of communicated CSR and green efforts by companies is widespread and it can be argued that skepticism is positive due to the increased requirements put on companies by the public but it can also be hard to tell the true performers from the frauds. According to Vanhamme and Grobben (2008), CSR as a tool has been used to react to crises and the effectivity of the CSR related claims have been shown to depend on how long the sender of the message has been promoting sustainability. They explain that a short-term reactive strategy is often less effective and can be seen as causing skepticism whereas a long-term integrated use of CSR related claims can be effective when reacting to crises. Bebbington and Gray (2007) as cited in Alves (2009) say that CSR puts hope among consumers for companies to be green when they can merely disclose their unsustainability. Skepticism can however also work as an excuse for people to not care, using the argument that companies are just trying to fool them. Brusseau, Chiagouris and Brusseau (2013) argue that skepticism negatively impact trust and brand image when a company engages in CSR activities that do not align with their culture and operations. A similar idea is presented by Porter and Kramer (2011) who state that CSR is too weak and presents a perhaps new concept, CSV, Creating Shared Value where social and environmental problems are seen as possibilities for business opportunities. As previously mentioned, they state that CSR initiatives are driven by reputation in contrast to CSV that is integrated with a company's value creation to increase competitive advantage and profit maximization. They explain how CSR oftentimes is in response to external pressure, seen as a cost, and oftentimes difficult to justify long-term due to their separation from the business itself. Porter and Kramer (2011) however state that CSV, driven by economic and societal gains compared to costs as an integrated part of the business itself is more likely to exist long term. Crane et al. (2014) on the other hand raise several critiques of CSV. They claim that CSV is unoriginal, being too similar to CSR with just minor modifications and that the concept of creating shared value ignores the tension between business and society and their goals. It can be discussed how different CSV and CSR actually are; CSR is a more popular term among companies and more well known by the public and can sometimes be used when CSV or other stricter concepts are more precise. However, skepticism remains a problem when environmental initiatives are not aligned, appropriate and perhaps integrated into the core activities of a company. This can also be related to Alves' (2009) reasoning about hidden trade-offs and making irrelevant claims. Porter and Kramer say that a fundamental in CSV is to go beyond trade-offs and this means to adopt a holistic view and

work on all attributes of a product offering. Without doing so, skepticism is a natural effect when it is discovered that only one out of multiple attributes actually is green for a product that is marketed as being green. Making irrelevant claims and not integrating and aligning environmental efforts with a business idea can cause consumers to believe that something is being covered up behind smoke screens, and skepticism is a fact again. With this in mind, true CSR initiatives that are integrated in the operations of a company are perhaps more likely to actually do good and might also make CSR communication more credible.

Skepticism about CSR communication being widespread, it is also important to consider how justified it is. Pope and Wæraas (2016) claim that greenwashing, or CSR-washing as they refer to it, is less widespread than scholars and the public believe and even go as far as calling it rare. Their logic is that succeeding with using CSR for greenwashing purposes is difficult and requires the fulfillment of several independent conditions, such as the CSR advertisement being seen by consumers, actual behavior not being exposed so that consumers do not dismiss the ad, not being revealed by competitors, and that their customers actually value CSR initiatives. Although there might be something to Pope and Wæraas' (2016) reasoning that skepticism is too widespread because greenwashing is expected, it can be seen as if their arguments are slightly weak. They argue that all conditions must be fulfilled for greenwashing to be successful, but a counterargument to this is that greenwashing does not have to be successful to be intended. Partially fulfilling the conditions might also make the greenwashing partially successful.

2.5   Source of Communication

A communicated message of sustainability can have multiple origins and this section will look into how companies, NGOs, or Non-Governmental Organizations, and governments (agencies) are perceived as sources. Haley (1996) explains that the consumer's perception of self, issue, and organization impacts how a communicated message is received. He argues that an organization is assessed by if the consumer knows them, likes them, and believes their values are congruent with one's own values at the same time as their logical association with the issue, their expertise, intent, and personal investment is assessed. According to Wootliff and Deri (2001), the definition of an NGO is rather broad and these organizations have varying interests. Reid, Soley and Vanden Bergh (1981), found in a quantitative study that people perceive a communicated message more positive if from a non-commercial source or even no source at all compared to a commercial source. Haley (1996) confirms this by stating that consumers find nonprofit and government sources more credible than company sources. Wootliff and Deri (2001) explain that NGOs are trusted more than both government and business. The term NGO and non-profits are usually used interchangeably which mostly works; however, nothing is saying that an NGO has to be non-profit. Wootliff and Deri (2001) however argue that NGOs are perceived as investigators of change, watchdogs, and are often very skilled at communication. They also reason that NGOs are trusted both because of their superior communication skills and because they are seen as selfless while companies are seen as greedy. To sum up, NGOs are the most trustworthy followed by governments and lastly businesses according to previous studies.

Environmental labeling of products is a way for businesses, NGOs and governments to interact and communicate together. Them having a relationship to each other adds a new perspective to whom consumers trust. Wootliff and Deri (2001) argue that companies and NGOs can join forces to both get what they want. Companies then get the goodwill from being endorsed by the NGO and the NGO can impact the company to work against social goals. Labels can be split into three different categories: third-party independent labels awarded by a national state or international union such as the EU, third-party labels awarded by a financially dependent organization, and finally first-party labels invented by corporations themselves (Pedersen & Neergaard, 2006). WWF for example, lets companies use their symbol just for paying a fee according to Pedersen and Neergaard (2006). Logically, this means that government labels are most trustworthy because they have no direct financial incitement to permit the use of their labels whereas NGOs are likely to be funded by the users of their labels and first party labels do not necessarily impose any meaning at all. This is the way a rational consumer will think, but consumers are not always rational and might also include other aspects such as the perceived heroic status of NGOs. Therefore, government and NGO labels with an excellent reputation can be regarded as equally trustworthy or are subject to individual preference.

2.6   Consuming to Sustainability

Ideas of consumption's relationship to sustainability will now be reviewed. Sustainable consumption is defined as the consumption of goods and services that do not have an impact on the environment for future generations (OECD, 2008). Holt (2012) however stresses that no relationship between environmental concerns and pro-environmental behaviors have been found (Holt, 2012). Holt (2012) means that the notion of sustainability is built upon the idea of consumerism and he describes the way it has been seen conventionally as the ethical values paradigm which will be further explored later. Jackson (2005) means that the only solution for sustainability is a complete abandonment of consumerism as we know it. Holt (2012) implies that no such thing as ethical consumerism can exist when looking at it from the ethical values paradigm because it relies on consumption. These researchers can, therefore, be said to blame unsustainability on consumption.

The ethical values paradigm will now be reviewed. It is described by Holt (2012) as having four underlying assumptions. The first one being: that unsustainable consumption has been caused by the plethora of choices we have as consumers and that sustainable has the consumer choosing a sustainable option as its core premise. The second assumption is that the choices we make as consumers have been influenced by consumerism, which means that consumption is an integral part of our lives and has an impact on many aspects. The third assumption is that people have internalized the values of consumerism which makes consumption a natural part of our everyday lives, we want to possess things, and sometimes this can be seen as relating to narcissism which is causing us to consume irresponsibly, and thus unsustainable. The fourth assumption revolves around what can be made to solve the problem of unsustainable consumption in the ethical values paradigm being a need for importing value systems from other parts of the capitalist market. And he means that people

need to reflectively think about the choices they are making with regards sustainability and choose the sustainable option (called ethical calculus) over the rational, monetary choice (called the consumerist calculus) (Holt, 2012). Jackson (2005) further argues that it is not enough to refine, reuse, recycle products from a sustainable perspective in order to become more sustainable, the way we view consumption needs to be re-evaluated as a whole, which can be seen as what Holt (2012) argues, that it is hard to consume to sustainability. According to the ideas above, consumerism can be seen as the primary cause of unsustainability and to be controlling humans' lives to a large extent. Additionally, it can be difficult to move away from consumerism even when desiring to live sustainably.

Consumers are often blamed to be responsible for unsustainable consumption, but corporations' role might also be substantial. Caruana and Crane (2008) discuss how companies can shape the image of what a responsible consumer is. By exemplifying good and bad consumption, they claim that companies make us think that a certain type of consumption is actually doing good. Holt (2012) argues that we cannot consume ourselves to sustainability; instead we have to change the fundamental assumptions of consumption. Caruana and Crane (2008) take a critical stance to communication intended to create the image of a sustainable consumer as companies are trying to use it to create a competitive advantage and because what appears as doing good at a first glance, is not always as perfect as it seems. They use the example of tourism where a company is using communication to convince the consumer that staying at a resort when visiting a country leads to exploitation and is not an authentic experience. Instead, travelling with them in a way that integrates with local culture and people is the key to authenticity, contributing and being a responsible consumer. This is more problematic than it seems. Many of us have for example seen pictures of peers travel to countries in Africa to volunteer at orphanages and posing in pictures surrounded by children. It can be questioned how good this actually is. The children create bonds to adults that then will abandon them after a short period of time, the volunteers are often times not trained for their tasks, and finally, often black children are portrayed as victims and white people as their saviors. A similar reasoning can be made for environmental communication. By communicating that a product has a low environmental impact in some aspect, consumers might think that they are doing good when buying said product. In reality, this product might be harmful in other aspects and additionally, the consumer who now believes that purchasing this product leads to sustainability forgets that not buying the product at all would have been better for the environment. What companies try to do with this type of communication, is to say that they have created a sustainable value chain so that consumption is a good and not a bad thing.

2.7   Chapter Summary

To summarize, the theory outlined was selected in order to be able to analyze the empirical material and answer the research questions. Initially, different forms of sustainability were discussed to delimit the perspective of environmental sustainability studied in this paper. This was followed by a review of existing literature on Green Marketing, Trust and Skepticism, CSR and Greenwashing, Source of Communication, and Consuming to Sustainability. Within green marketing the central themes outlined were the different aspects of how messages promoting sustainability should be created as described by Lewandowska, Witczak and Kurczewski (2017) and Villarino and Font (2015), the flaws of green marketing such as described by Montague and Mukherjee (2010), the golden rules of green marketing as outlined by Ottman (2011) and theory regarding reactance as explained by Aronson (2012) and Wang, Krishna and McFerran (2017) were raised. With regards to trust and skepticism different factors outlined affecting the perceived trust or skepticism was the perceived quality (Vlachos, Theotokis & Panagopoulos, 2009) the feeling of authenticity by using appeals in the marketing stemming from the core of the business rather than a strategic add-on (Brusseau, Chiagouris & Brusseau, 2013; Lewandowska, Witczak & Kurczewski. 2017) and that distrust can be evoked due to a lack of knowledge, and unclear information (Lewandowska, Witczak & Kurczewski, 2017) to name a few. The concept of CSR can in practice and theory have different meanings, however, in general, it is to move beyond solely focusing on maximizing financial profit and taking on social responsibility and do something for the greater good to some extent. It is often driven by public relations and therefore risks lacking substance (Porter & Kramer, 2011) which may result in greenwashing (Prasad & Mills, 2010). In regards of source of communication, previous studies concluded that NGOs and government are trusted more than business (Reid, Soley & Vanden Bergh, 1981; Haley, 1996) for sustainability communication with NGOs being the most trusted according to Wootliff and Deri (2001). Lastly, the idea of consuming to sustainability relates to the notion that most attempts to become sustainable are merely attempts to reduce unsustainability. Holt (2012) argues that consumption needs to be transformed and Jackson (2005) states that consuming products with sustainable attributes is not enough; additionally, consumption needs to be reduced.

3 Methodology

This chapter describes how the research was conducted. It explains the qualitative standpoint with an abductive approach and the collection of empirical material through focus groups and interviews. The analysis method will also be covered which can be seen as being loosely tied to Grounded Analysis as employed by Corbin and Strauss (2015) where line-by-line coding was used in order to thematize codes into themes loosely operationalized from prior theory and literature on the topic of trust in green marketing and sustainability. The question trustworthiness split up into credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability is also discussed as well as the presentation of findings.

3.1 Research Design

This research is done from a qualitative standpoint aiming at deepening the understanding of the phenomenon of trust and what it is that evokes consumer trust and how this perceived trust impacts the participant perception of sustainability. The aim is not to generalize the findings, the aim is to gain an understanding of the complexity of the topic, seen from a consumer perspective, why four (4) focus groups with five (5) participants in each and nine (9) semi-structured individual interviews were employed as the method of empirical data collection. We are aware that some argue that there is critique towards qualitative interviews as a method of data collection saying that it is not scientific, not objective, biased, being based on leading questions, not intersubjective and not generating generalizable findings to name a few (Kvale, 1994). These issues were addressed in this research in interviews as well as focus groups whereas the aspects of subjectivity and bias were seen as assets of the study and an attempt to ensure intersubjectivity was done by both researchers doing the coding of the material separately to see that it was carried out with dependability. The dependability was also addressed by employing pilot studies for both interviews as well as focus groups to ensure that the right subject was being studied. In addition to the critique, the defense presented by Kvale (1994) was also taken into consideration. Because of this, measures to be able to address the issues by Kvale (1994) were considered and implemented.

The approach of systematic combining, also called abduction was applied in this research; a movement between theory and empirical material in order to find new phenomena, relationships and variables (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). The approach was employed to be able to develop the theory further when coming across unexpected findings in the empirical material. Abduction is usually employed in three steps; 1. The application of theoretical frameworks 2. Exploration of the field with the use of theories 3. Formulation of analysis that is able to explain the new findings (Alvesson & Kärremann, 2011). Abduction was employed by first defining the relevant theory for answering the research questions with theories

regarding Green Marketing, Trust and Skepticism, CSR and Greenwashing, Source of Communication and Consuming to Sustainability. Then collecting the empirical material and coding it with sensitization of the theory, in this step findings were made that needed theoretical explanation regarding reactance, the role of emotional appeals and history which called for a theoretical revision in order for the research to be able to answer the research questions.

The analysis was done in a method, loosely tied to Grounded Theory as employed by Corbin and Strauss (2015). The analysis of empirical material was done with a theoretical framework in mind, which sets it apart from the conventional way of employing grounded theory (Bryman, 2008). The connections between the themes were also not considered in this research, which can be seen as being deviant from the conventional way of grounded theory. The relationships between the themes were omitted as the aim of the research was not to understand how the elements were affecting each other but to explore what it is that evokes consumer trust. The connections within the themes were however analyzed to understand what in the field it is that affects consumer trust in sustainability communication efforts.

3.2   Data Collection Method

3.2.1   Focus Groups

Focus groups were used to gather information regarding the first research question, as the nature of it is to capture what it is that evokes consumer trust in communication efforts. The group dynamics in the focus group was an informative way of gaining this knowledge as the participants had the opportunity to play off each other in the conversations and discuss the different communication materials shown. Focus groups are used when the research aim is to investigate how participants react and interact in discussions regarding topics (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015), which suited what we were aiming to investigate, namely, what is it that evokes consumer trust in sustainable communication efforts. We noticed that as the focus group was going along the participants came up with new points of view based on what others were saying, which gave us a deeper understanding of the appeals and symbols that evoked trust. The quality of focus groups is highly dependent on how the group dynamics will work, which puts emphasis on the role of the moderator (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015), as moderator there was an emphasis on letting the participants express their opinions in an open, equally distributed way why the role of the moderator was to ensure that this was possible. The focus group were semi-structured and built upon three main questions: "What do you think when you see this picture?", "How do you perceive the sustainability of this product/ company?" and "What is your perception of the communicated message based on the sender?" (see appendix A). These three questions were asked to the participants when a picture was shown. The structure of the pictures was operationalized based on the sender of the message, with a division between a company, an NGO and a government (see appendix B). Three different companies/products/ topics were discussed, the first set of three pictures showed Chiquita banana, the second one the oil industry and the third oat milk. Follow-up questions to the three main questions were asked based on what the participants were

discussing, the follow-up questions were of an open kind, aiming at getting the participants to describe their reasoning more thoroughly by answering the questions of "why" and "how". The focus groups were held in a private room at the student library, a place that was easy-accessible to all of the participants.

Morgan (1988) explains the difference between focus groups and interviews being that the focus group gains a more in-depth, more apparent information regarding similarities and differences in opinions regarding a topic discussed. This was very important for the study as it allowed us to see the contrasting views on what participants found evoked trust for them in the communication materials shown. Morgan (1988) also explains that focus groups give to opportunity to collect more opinions and data in terms of time, but he also puts emphasis on the limitations of focus groups, stating that they provide information of less detail and depth than interviews, which also explains why this data collection method was complemented with one-to-one interviews. The four focus groups held consisted of five (5) people and lasted for approximately one hour each. They were held in enclosed rooms that ensured the participants' privacy when discussing the topics as well as a neutral environment.

In this study, a pilot was held prior to the focus groups where the three pictures used for Chiquita Banana were shown to a participant, and trial questions were asked in order to examine whether the answers would be in line with what information we were looking for and whether it would aid us in answering our first research question. The pilot showed us that the questions asked would give us the information needed to be able to answer the first research question why the questions were kept in their original form.

3.2.2   Interviews

In addition to the focus groups data was gathered through nine (9) semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 10-30 minutes each. They were held in rooms where the researchers and participants were alone so the conversation would flow in a private manner. The interviews were held in order to answer the second of our research questions, namely: What impact does sustainable communication efforts have on consumer perception of sustainability? the interviews aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of what impact the evoked trust (mentioned in RQ1), had on the perception of sustainability. The participants were chosen from the focus groups, and the criterion was that the participant previously had mentioned trust in the focus groups. The question was treated in one-to-one semi-structured interviews, as the nature of the data collection was more of a private kind aiming at gaining an even deeper understanding of the consumer reasoning. We chose to keep the interviews semi-structured due to the explorative nature of our study where the possibility to ask follow-up questions and ask the respondents to elaborate on their answers (Bryman & Bell, 2013) was of high importance to be able to get the deeper understanding behind their statements and reasoning. The topic guide for the questions was operationalized in a similar manner to the questions in the focus groups, revolving around three main questions/ topics. These were followed by follow-up questions aiming at getting the participant to elaborate on "why" and "how" the participant was interpreting the evoked trust and if and how it was impacting their perception of sustainability. In the interviews the techniques of laddering up and laddering down were used, where the first one was used by asking "why?" questions to get the

participant to move away from statements and descriptions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) and elaborate more on how trust actually affected the perception of the sustainable communication efforts. Laddering down was used in order to get the participant to describe or describe a statement more thoroughly for the research to gain a better understanding of the reasoning (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) by asking questions such as "can you give an example of that?". The interview guide included three questions which can be found in appendix C.

3.2.3   Sampling

The aim of this study is not to provide generalizable results showing definite opinions and answers to what it is that evokes consumer trust and how the messages affect the perception of sustainability. Instead, it is to shed light on the multitude of different opinions and perceptions that people might have and show on the complexity of the issue as an initial insight to the complexity of the problem (Bryman, 2008). The sampling was thus done with three requirements in mind: the participants were to live in Sweden, be able to openly and elaborately talk about their opinions regarding the communication materials shown to them and be accessible. The choice for our sampling, having these requirements in mind was, therefore, convenience sampling. The participants, all students at Lund University, Sweden, which we had prior knowledge about being outspoken and opinionated, were asked whether they would be willing to participate in a focus group and the sampling was made based on their availability.

The sampling method for the interviews was more randomized, as the intention was to have participants who already had been a part of the focus group in the interview due to the nature of the second research question. The reason for choosing the same people in the interviews as in the focus groups was that the first research question was designed to be complemented by the second one, by which a different method of empirical data was needed. The focus groups were used to gain an understanding behind what impacted trust felt by recipients of sustainability marketing and the interviews to achieve an even more in-depth understanding of what effects trust had on the perception of the sustainability marketing. The sample for the interviews was made by setting up requirements for what the participants had talked about in the focus group. The criteria set up for this was that the participant had discussed the question of trust in the focus group and based on this, nine (9) people were asked whether they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview.

3.3   Data Analysis

The data analysis was made in a manner that loosely is based on Grounded Theory, but with a theoretical framework in mind used when coding the empirical material. This makes the data analysis method more similar Corbin and Strauss' (2015) view on Grounded Theory as one of the premises of the analysis method was to approach the empirical material with a theoretical framework in mind, in contrast to conventional grounded theory where extensive

preconceptions should be avoided (Bryman, 2008). The theoretical themes were used to explore whether the participants would express opinions in line with these or if the empirical material would show entirely new insights. The empirical material collected in the focus groups and the interviews was transcribed and initially, a process of familiarization with the content was done to do an initial sorting of the data collected with the theoretical framework in mind which can be seen as a tool to sensitize initial concepts, based on the theory. The analysis made was initially a cutting and sorting line-by-line method as it is one of the most versatile techniques suitable for large amounts of data (Bryman & Bell, 2013). The sorting of data was done separately for the focus groups and separately for the interviews. The familiarization was done with the two corresponding research questions in mind in order to be able to sift through the data necessary and relevant for answering the research questions. The reduction of themes was made in accordance with the sensitizing concepts, and if the information was seen as completely irrelevant to the sensitizing concepts and research questions, it was omitted.

In the second step of the data analysis, the first step of sense-making was then attempted, in this step the empirical material was loosely matched to previous research regarding green marketing rules and flaws, whom people trust with regards to green marketing efforts, CSR and greenwashing and skepticism. Questions regarding "What is this about?", "Does this statement correlate to existing knowledge?" "Does the respondent challenge already existing knowledge with his/her statement" "Do the respondents give answer to previously unknown topics?" (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) and "What is this expressions an example of?" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003 p. 7) were asked to gain an understanding of the participants' reasoning and opinions. In this step, 21 codes were found in the empirical material from the focus groups and 17 from the interviews.

In the third step of the data analysis, open coding was done in a first attempt to summarize the data found in codes. The codes play the role of creating links between the data found in the initial steps and categories that are more organized codes (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This sense making was built upon codes that appeared to be related and comparable to each other. The open coding was done by asking questions such as "What does this data talk about", "Who are the respondents talking about and whose voice is heard?" and "How did the participants express their opinion?". By asking these questions codes such as Type of Organization, Knowledge about the Organization, Skepticism, and Content were found in the empirical material in the focus groups and Consuming to Sustainability, Sustainable products, Type of Communication, Sender and Responsibility were found in the interviews.

In the fourth step, conceptualization was attempted. In contrast of the conventional way of doing it where patterns among the codes are identified by trying to define similarities, differences, frequency and how they affect each other (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) were used to see how the identified codes within the themes were influencing each other. For example, in the focus groups, an overhauling theme of Knowledge about the Organization was identified which had subthemes of Origin, Brand Image, Knowledge about Core Values and Personal Relationship in it. These subthemes were analyzed to see whether and how they were affecting each other in this step. To aid the conceptualization process, we wrote a short description about each category to easily be able to stay consequent in the definition of it.

In the fifth step of the data analysis, focused re-coding was applied to define the most essential codes that were found to be the same as identified in the initial phase, as the coding was loosely done with the theoretical perspectives in mind. When the coding was done, we had the themes identified with the codes sorted underneath showing a clear, yet complex picture of what it is that can evoke trust in sustainable communication materials according to the participants and how the sustainable communication materials convey the message of sustainability.

The quotes used in the findings section were used based on the novelty of the topics raised, on being either in line or contradicting prior theory and illustrating the theme and category in a clear way. In the presentation of the empirical material the participants were completely anonymized, and no emphasis was put on whom had said what, as the interaction between the participants was not the focal point in the focus groups, but the complexity of the phenomenon of trust evoked in sustainable communication materials. When the quotes had been chosen a summary of the general findings in the code was written, and the quotes were used to exemplify the reasoning. When the empirical findings were described and exemplified, theory and prior literature was applied to see what similarities and differences could be found. Missing theory regarding unexpected topics raised in the empirical material was identified and added regarding these topics to be able to analyze the unexpected findings.

3.4   Validity and Reliability

When the interviews, as well as focus groups, were conducted, the participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded but that their answers, names and their participation would not be disclosed. The participants of the interviews and focus groups were orally given information regarding their consent which described the aim of the study, ensured their anonymity and that they could withdraw from the interview/focus group at any time (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

The trustworthiness (credibility), transferability, dependability, and confirmability) were assessed in this paper (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) in accordance with Guba's (1981) research on the applicability of the positivist concepts of reliability and validity on qualitative research. Guba (1981) did the translation of the concepts into the realm of qualitative research and found that credibility could be seen as being related to internal validity, transferability to external validity or generalizability, dependability instead related to reliability and dependability as correlating to objectivity.

Regarding credibility, whether the study examines what it is extended to examine this research measures such as captivating sufficient amount views included by reaching saturation were undertaken. It was found that the four (4) focus groups and nine (9) interviews provided us with information to reach this. The question of sufficient perspectives included could be seen as not being enough. But considering that saturation was reached in the focus groups as well as in the interviews, we see it as showing a sign of validity. According to Shenton (2004), there are measures that can be taken to ensure the credibility of a qualitative

study. Measures such as ensuring the honesty in the collection of empirical material were attempted by using convenience sampling with the researchers having a priori knowledge on the respondent level of comfort, the respondents were also ensured anonymity and were informed that they could leave whenever they wanted during the data collection if they were to feel uncomfortable.

With regards to transferability and whether the study can be applied to other situations, but in contrast to positivist work qualitative research focuses on a small sample and aims to research a specific phenomenon which makes the aspect of transferability difficult to ensure (Shenton, 2004). The prior knowledge of the researchers can be seen as diminishing the transferability and the same applies to the focus on personal opinions and experiences on the effects that trust have on the messages of sustainability as the perceptions, opinions and prior knowledge might have an impact on how the outcome of the study would be in a different situation. The data collection method of focus groups might also have an impact on the transferability of the study as the interactions and dynamics in a focus group are hard to replicate in a setting with a different set of participants. The sampling method being convenience sampling might also have some implications for the transferability of the study due to the difficulty to generate a similar sample. The transferability of the study is however ensured by having the questions and method explained so that it could be applied on different settings, such as different products and different samples, the outcome of the study could, however, be argued as not being the same, but this aspect is only a facet of the limitation of the study, and the transferability would only deepen the understanding of the phenomenon. There is, however, an implication on the transferability based on the sampling method. If other researchers were to choose a sample based on availability, there is a risk of the answers being different, which would have a negative impact on the transferability of the study.

In terms of dependability, the research talks about what evokes trust in sustainable communication efforts and how the trust is being seen affecting the sustainable communication efforts. As we reached saturation in both focus groups as well as in interviews and similar opinions were being voiced by the participants, which speaks for the study being replicable. There, however, is a limitation regarding the dependability when collecting empirical data through focus groups as much of the information is dependable on the discussions that are being held in the focus group, which talks against exact replicability of the study. As the focus group questions, as well as interview questions, were tested prior to the data collection in pilots the data collected was ensured to be testing what was intended to be researched which speaks for dependability. With regards to the dependability of the study, the intercoder reliability was used to see that both researchers similarly coded the material by coding it separately and then comparing it. The method of analysis was described thoroughly with the data collection methods explained in a step by step manner making it possible for other researchers to replicate the study.

In terms of confirmability, the question of the study being carried out in a way that shows that the research has been carried out objectively, even though objectivity can be seen as unrelated to qualitative research as it is based on subjective analysis (Shenton, 2004) both of the researchers were present during the data collection, interpretation and analysis and strongly, independently agreed upon the findings (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) the

confirmability of the research was also addressed by providing a step-by-step description of how the study was carried out.

3.5   Limitations

A limitation of the study is the sample. Even though a level of saturation was reached in the data collection, more perspectives could have been included, dividing the participants into homogenous groups regarding country of origin could be of interest to see what connotations people from different countries have with regards to appeals, senders, and information.

The type of pictures used in the focus groups could also be different. The pictures shown to the participants were depicting three types of popular consumer goods: bananas, oil, and oat milk, the sample of images could be chosen to be a different one, which also could widen the understanding of whom people trust and what impact sustainable communication efforts have on consumer perception of sustainability. The limitation and choice of pictures was made on the basis of products that all of the participants knew prior to the focus groups. The three different products were also chosen on the basis of bananas being regarded as a reasonably neutral product, oil as a negative one and oat milk as a sustainable product.

3.6   Chapter Summary

To summarize, this research is done with a qualitative, abductive approach in order to be able to understand the reasoning behind what it is that evokes trust in sustainable communication efforts. The collection of empirical material was done through four semi-structured focus groups and nine semi-structured interviews with people living in Lund, Sweden and being students at Lund University. In the focus groups, participants were shown three (3) pictures regarding three (3) themes, nine (9) in total. Within each theme, the senders of the messages were divided between a business, an NGO, and a government. The sampling method used for the focus group was convenience sampling where participants were chosen based on the ability and willingness to discuss the topics freely and elaborately. The sampling method for the interviews was based on the criteria that the participants had talked about trust in the focus groups. The analysis of the empirical material was done in a content analysis of the empirical material loosely tied to Grounded Theory, with the contrast that theory guided the generation of themes in the empirical material that was coded in a line-by-line manner, to some extent. The empirical material regarding the two research questions were treated separately, both in data collection as well as analysis, but overlaps were identified. Trustworthiness of the research was considered by raising the fact that pilot studies were used for both focus groups as well as interviews, both researchers doing the coding of the empirical material separately and independently, to name a few. Aspects of the research that could be seen as having a negative effect on the trustworthiness were also raised, such as the sampling method of convenience sampling.

4   Findings

In this chapter, the findings from our four (4) focus groups and nine (9) interviews will be presented respectively. The different themes will be explained by looking into how the participants reasoned around the different codes we identified. This will also be exemplified by including quotes from the focus groups and the interviews. At the end of the findings from the focus groups, as well as at the end of the findings from the interviews, a summary will follow.

4.1   Focus Groups

4.1.1   Type of Organization

Businesses, NGOs, Governments
The participants trust preference for businesses, NGOs, and Governments was not unanimous. A majority expressed strong trust for governments and NGOs. Their reasoning was that NGOs generally have an actual desire and vision to save the environment while they did not express precise reasons for trusting governments. However, multiple participants also expressed explicit distrust for NGOs and governments. This conflict of opinion can be seen through quotes like "*I think your association with NGOs is in general and that's why you are so skeptical about it. But I think, personally I have a really good perception of these organizations, I know they are supporting a lot of good causes so for me, actually knowing that they are kind of sponsoring this is good*". No participants initially said they had trust for businesses and almost all expressed distrust towards Shell because it is a money-making business just caring about its own profitability as seen in this statement made by one of the participants "*Because, like, we know that for them the aim is to make as much money as possible and they don't really care about the environment.*". Similar feelings were expressed towards Chiquita. The preference for NGOs over business in regards of trust for sustainability communication initiatives were exemplified through quotes like "*I mean, they're doing what Shell doesn't do or doesn't want to do. Yeah, they're protecting from Shell from that's how you perceive it and Shell is just trying to do better or they're just trying to be perceived as they are doing better. Well, you know, the WWE is doing it out of their pure motivation to save the environment because who else will would work voluntarily so many hours or like I mean it's hard work.*". When shown the example of Oatly though, a for-profit business, most participants expressed strong feelings of trust because they knew and liked the brand.

Certifications and Labels
Certifications and labels related to sustainability such as Rainforest Alliance, USDA Organic and The European Union Leaf evoked mixed feelings. Some stated that they see these

symbols as proof of sustainability to otherwise meaningless claims while others stated that they simply do not look for them by stating "*Especially these third-party labels there are so many. There are actually only a few this official ones, the Swan one. Some might just make it look like a logo and then say organic, but it's not officially recognized by anything.*". It was stated that the large number of labels and certificates makes it difficult to know which one to trust. The participants also reasoned differently towards the credibility of NGO labels versus government labels, which will be further described below. However, unrecognized labels that were perceived to be created by corporations themselves was highly regarded. Skepticism was also shown towards Rainforest Alliance at one point because they were thought to have been founded by business themselves. Some participants put great trust in labels on the oat milk which can be seen through quotes like "*Oatly...We didn't see a certificate there. I mean we know the brand is supposed to be kind of sustainable but they imagine themselves or markets itself as a sustainable brand but this one has proof.*" while others appeared to care more about previous knowledge and perception of the brand Oatly.

Financial Structure
The participants raised concerns about the financial structures of the different types of organizations. Some stated that they see a risk of NGOs being bought and that they permit companies to use their labels simply for paying. They also stated that they perceive the transparency of NGOs as low by for example stating "*my issue is that with the private organizations and alliances: you don't know where that money is going. They could be piling a bunch of money in to private organizations, but there is no visibility at all.*" With business on the other hand, most participants stated that they have less trust for companies' sustainability communication because they know that there primary goal is to maximize profit. However, some expressed that they trust companies because they are at least honest with their financial structure and because they disclose what they are doing. This was seen through statements like: "*They are a publicly listed company, they have to disclose what's going to different circles.*" Government was said generally trusted because of their relative financial independence but one participant also stated that "*But yet again, the government might also have other objectives so they don't really care that much and don't have that many regulations so I think that's why it's hard for me to choose one to trust more*" which tells us that some might worry that also government has a hidden agenda.

Industry
Industry had a mostly similar impact on the different participants' trust for the used examples of sustainability communication. For Chiquita most participants stated that they trust this industry to be sustainable in nature because they grow food but believe it is somewhat unsustainable because of what they have heard about banana production in the past and because they are transported over long distances. With oil, all expressed negative feelings towards shell and stated that it is difficult to trust a company saying that they are trying to be sustainable when their core business is in an industry that unarguably is destroying the environment. This was exemplified by quotes like "*We know that their aim is to make as much money as possible and they don't really care about the environment*" With the examples of oat milk, the industry was not widely discussed by the participants, but no one expressed it as a factor negatively impacting trust while some stated that because of being a substitute to milk, they found communication regarding the product trustworthy.

History and type of organization was just briefly discussed by the participants. They generally stated that history has shown that what we are being told and taught later has proved to be false. For governments for example, one participant said "*Because governments, based on the previous over 50 years, everywhere, half the time they say that nothing is happening and then 5-10 years later something comes out that there was actually happening. Oh, ok: you lied to us basically. You can not really trust i*t" telling us that trust for government might be weakened because of people feeling fooled in the past. Business was also widely blamed as environmental villains but also excused with statements such as "*I mean, it's not their fault that society 20 years earlier was not thinking about sustainability and that was the time when they got big and if they're trying now why not giving them a chance.*".

4.1.2   Knowledge About the Organization

Origin
Geographical origin of organizations, labels and brands was of high relevance to most participants. For example, they indicated that they trust European government organizations more than American ones by saying things like "*Is it an American thing? then I do not trust it*" and "*Well if the eco label takes, I know that it takes really long to get so I would say that it's you can bring a product on the market and.. I actually would trust this European leaf label. Yeah maybe more than America*". Some participants however found American organizations and labels trustworthy. Especially high trust was expressed towards the Swedish government through statements like "*Swedish government is one of the few I trust*". One participant stated that "It's the reputation of the government" that determines the credibility rather than the fact that it is a government. For NGOs and business however, less emphasis was put on geographical origin by the participants.

Brand Image
Familiarity, recognition and brand image was seen to how strong connections to trust. Participants expressed trust towards brands that they recognized and had heard good things about, expressed through statements like "*Obviously I don't know the ins and outs of the legislation but, because of the brand of it: yeah I think it will be reputable. So, I believe in it, in my perspective.*" and "*I perceive Oatly as a sustainable brand. I have a positive feeling already without reading any advert already*". However, participants were also aware that these emotions about the brand might make them less critical; one participant stated that "*I'm biased because I'm an Oatly brand fan*". Another participant had a hard time choosing between a brand he or she liked and a well-respected government certification saying "*But I know Oatly and it speaks to me, but the leaf I see it so clearly*". Recognizing the brand of an organization and thinking that you know what kind of organization it is was also seen to increase trust through statements like "*I trust that one more yeah* " a participant said when talking about trusting rainforest alliance more than WWF, he continued "*yeah you trust this one more, just because you know which organization is behind it, but the feeling about the other one with the frog was much better because it was yeah the emotions they have sent are so much more positive and you felt good about your choices. Whereas here. You feel bad if you don't do anything. So they are playing with happiness and guilt.*". Although mostly seen

to have a positive effect on trust, brands were sometimes seen to have a negative impact on trust such as with Chiquita where one participant said "*Unsustainable. I think I've heard things that it's not sustainable.*".

Knowledge About Core Values
The participants indicated that their perception of organizations' core values impacted their trust for their sustainability communication. Several of them for example expressed that they trust WWF because they believe that they have an actual commitment to doing good and improving the environment instead of existing to make money. Oatly was also trusted more in their sustainability communication due to the fact that participants felt like being sustainability was part of their core values and integrated in the business idea. One for example said "*I know Oatly and they are sustainable*" The opposite occurred for shell on the other hand where the participants expressed them to be less trustworthy because their core values were not to work for sustainability but to make the most money possible at the expense of the environment. This was exemplified by statements like "*They are going to lose their core business. They earn all their money through fossil fuels, feels unreal as it's their product*".

Personal Relationships
A personal relationship to a particular organization, sometimes through their product was seen to increase trust. When seeing WWF, one participant for example lit up and said "*My backpack when I was a child*" which clearly created positive emotions. A multitude of participants also expressed a personal relationship to Oatly because they felt like they were spoken to through their packaging, advertisements and presence. Many of them talked about their shopping experience, interesting packaging and how Oatly milk is present at their local coffee shop.

4.1.3   Skepticism

Origin
In the focus group it became clear that the origin of the sender of the sustainable communication material played a role in the perception of trust. As explained by a participant "*For me I would trust the EU stamp more than the US. Because in general people are distrusting to the US government.*" and another one as "*if you put like Venezuela and Sweden I will trust Sweden more.*". Which shows that skepticism can be experienced based on an a priori knowledge about the country of origin and what perception one has of it. Skepticism was also seen as being affected by the origin of the organization, when the participants were shown a picture of banana with a USDA plastic ribbon wrapped around them one of the participants said "*there is so much corruption in the US: so they show terrific results.*" and another one when viewing a packaging with oat milk "*the American products… what's true*" which shows that the origin of the organization needs to be regarded when creating a sustainable communication material.

Clarity and Lack of Information
The amount of information was also raised as a factor causing skepticism by the participants. As raised by one participant "*not very trustworthy: it just says organic*" which can be seen as

the lack of an explanation behind the organic label on the banana having a negative effect on the trust perceived, and as a consequence skepticism being experienced. One of the communication materials, perceived as positive by many, raised skepticism for one of the participants "*I don't see the connection between planet and a cappuccino*" which shows that without a priori experiences information and explanations are even more needed in order to evoke trust as the other participants, who were positive to the message, had previously talked about how much they liked the sender of this advertisement whereas the participant who did not understand it, did not know it from before.

The clarity of the message conveyed, could be seen as verging on the lack of information, where the lack of explanation behind a claim can be seen as a lack of clarity. Unclarity expressed by the participants can be seen as not entirely knowing where a product is coming from and what is meant by for example "*organic*". The clarity and lack of information was shown to affect the skepticism, this was exemplified by one of the participants as "*For me it's quite nonsense, because why shouldn't a banana be organic? I've never heard about non-organic bananas.*" and another one explained the need to look for more information in order to understand the concept "*I think that in that case you can look for international guidelines of organic.*". But the unclarity of the message could also be seen as causing skepticism in a different way, for example "*In the way that they say: managing the greenhouse gas emissions from our own operation. And state all of these nice sentences. It's not clear how they do it*" the green sentences, without exemplification could be seen as causing skepticism, a similar standpoint was voiced by other participant who was talking about achieving sustainable goals "*You can easily manipulate those because maybe that fact is good but the other one isn't so we will tell the other one.*" which also can be seen as unclear information causing distrust, and also causing a feeling that the reason behind the lack of information might be co called greenwashing.

Greenwashing
The question of greenwashing by companies was raised many times in the focus groups, the question of it was discussed primarily in the way corporations communicate their sustainability and it being perceived as a mere add-on. This was exemplified by one of the participants as "*Reading it I would be like " oh yeah, greenwashing" but just because there is no, it's just points and no real explanation behind it: how do they do it, what do they do? Just very nice pictures, and it looks nice you know.*". Greenwashing was also seen as communication that was being perceived as being false due to a superficial use to make a brand/organization or government look more sustainable than it actually is and the skepticism that this brings. As explained by one of the participants "*For me, just adding the word organic, doesn't necessarily make it organic.*" and by another one as "*Probably that's the tactic behind, just words that sound nice but don't really mean anything. And they hope that people say: ah, yeah they are doing something but don't really pay attention to reading it.*" and "*The industry is known for exploiting people, war, countries wasting the environment. Hard to connect it with climate and or safer climate topics, stuff like that. It doesn't fit together.*" which shows that the lack of information, and the perception that the message conveyed by the communication is not internalized by the corporation might be causing skepticism.

History

The skepticism voiced by the participants could be seen as being based on knowledge they have about the brand/organization/ government and historical events that had occurred involving them. A spillover effect from one company to an entire industry was voiced sveral times in the focus groups, one of the participants said " *I think it's my skepticism towards these have come from the likes of Red Cross where you see reports of where money has gone it to those and they have been completely, like the money has fed in to the wrong places : it's gone in to the wrong hands and there's been quite a few times they've com under hot fire for it and unfortunately the perception on one organization goes over to another one.*" when being shown a communication material where WWF was the sender, which shows a spillover effect from Red Cross to NGOs in general, and in this case WWF. When talking about skepticism and drawing parallels to other historical events, one of the participants also talked about the oil industry when being shown a communications material from Shell " *Look at what happened with BP. They said that BP: we all know what has happened to that company, and they took the risk of saying: not British Petroleum but BP and it didn't show that it was like that, so I think it is quite risky. "and* when talking about the finances of organizations and NGOs another one said that they "could *be in Panama somewhere...* ". The participants seemed to be making connections and drawing conclusions based on previous events and scandals that had been a part of the related organization, and that this had created a skepticism towards the communication perceived.

Financial and Business Structure

The participants also voiced concerns about where the money in the organizations was going and whether this was disclosed in a transparent manner. When discussing NGOs one of the participants said " *I'm just not sure whether some of these organizations are like the typical fat cat where you are piling money into a system or a company. You've got the big guys at the top going "yeaaah, [*?#!] big bonus for me: great!" At least Shell and the other ones are ballsy enough to go, yeah: we've just destroyed parts of the ocean but you know what: I've just bought myself three cars: great! Like at least they are ballsy enough, like these organizations they're not...*" which could be seen as skepticism towards the organizations, how the money is distributed and how much about this actually is being disclosed. The structures of the organizations were also discussed and one of the participants seemed to care about whether Oatly was owned by another company and said "*Is it owned by another company though? That also make it like really big difference, if the brand is owned by a different [company]*" the focus group continued by discussing Ben & Jerry's and said that it now was owned by Unilever, which was discussed as lowering their credibility. The way that the organizations make their money was also discussed and one of the participants said "*It's more the non-profit. The distribution of money that goes in to the company. It's more how the money comes in to the organization and how it floats out. It's meant to be a non-profit organization then it's you know, it's meant to be fair just.*" and they discussed that transparency and skepticism towards the lack of it was particularly important if the money was stemming from people giving them to the organization which was discussed as causing a need for more transparency.

The size of the organization was also voiced in the focus groups as having an impact on the skepticism experienced, this aspect could be seen as relating to the subtheme mentioned above (financial and business structure) whereas the participants voiced skepticism towards large corporations as exemplified by one participant *"Give me an example of a company, a big company, that has never had a situation."* and by another one as *" I think it's a huge company and in huge companies it's always about profit and never it has never been in the core about sustainable aspects so I think that they just have to explore the new field because of external pressure basically because they are anyhow polluting the environment and it's like: yes, shit we have to do something so we are perceived as a green company /.../"*, once again the size of the corporations can be seen as speaking to the financial structure and this causing a skepticism towards their sustainability efforts.

General Skepticism

A general skepticism could also be found in the focus groups, sometimes the participants couldn't explain what it was that made them skeptical, like one of the participants said *"I am always very critical about these things. That's why I don't know if I would believe it but it's because I am very critical of this."* and there was several discussions regarding the search for information and the need to read up on things on your own as a consumer, which can be seen as a general skepticism to the information available, as explained by another participant *"Yeah, I would probably doubt it anyways because I would go and Google it and would feel like I will find something bad about it anyways. That is how I feel about these kinds of especially when you put this kind of frog looks happy and is like, they can make it really sustainable if they transfer bananas. From there, and we did here. I mean, that's how I think you can't be sustainable. So this is the best effort they can do"*. A general skepticism was voiced towards governments, NGOs, corporations, the cooperation between governments and corporations and certifications of different sorts by the participants in the focus groups as one of the participants phrased it *"I think you always have to be sceptic"*.

4.1.4   Content

Facts and Information

One of the main aspects discussed in the focus groups was how the content of the information was portrayed in the communication efforts. The question of too little information and it being vague, intangible goals being displayed, the difficulty of understanding what the sustainable causes actually do, what the vision would contribute with, when and what organic actually means was voiced as being important facets of the communications. One of the participants explained this by *"Facts will be very attractive, so to say, like say what they have already done and what they would like to do in the future."* and when being shown an advertisement from Chiquita and Rainforest Alliance in comparison to the advertisement with only Chiquita as a sender one participant said *"I think that the message is more clear than the previous one. Because, like it messages about like it has been said, the ecosystem. Because it gives you a feeling that by buying the product can make you perhaps contribute to a better environment or save some species on the earth compared to the last one. ."* another participant said *"Rainforest Alliance is more trustful because they give us more information "*

the opposite was voiced by a participant when viewing communication from Shell "*They don't show their achievements. By when? 2050 or in the next few years? It is a big difference*". Some participants expressed a confusion regarding how Rainforest Alliance was related to Chiquita, others expressed a confusion regarding how WWF was related to the topic of oil exploitation and others expressed a confusion regarding what organic means which shows that the participants expressed a clear need for explanations and factual information.

Packaging
The participants discussed different types of packaging and opinions were voiced regarding the color, certifications and the general look of the packaging. It was clear that the packaging has an impact on some of the participants, as exemplified by one of them "*Well, yeah they are including a lot of trash in their packaging. Like, why they have all those things. First of all it's not sustainable at all.*" which shows a skepticism towards the discrepancy between the message and the packaging. Another participant discussed the Rainforest Alliance ad shown and how it was created and said "*I think it's very memorable because of the funny way to present it, so that's good and yeah, it's positive: obviously because it's smiling.*" which shows an importance of how a message is packaged, according to this particular participant humor was a positive way of conveying a message. In the focus group the type of product and it's packaging was also discussed, one of the participants said "*Personally I don't watch the labels that often… especially not for low involvement products I don't, I don't check if there is a label* " which talks about the amount of information portrayed on a packaging and the motivation behind reading it.

Appeals
The appeals discussed, both positive and negative in the focus groups were the use of calls to action, which by some were seen as effective and comprehensible "*Something bad happening to the environment it would be much more: act now. Because it would be more emotionally appealing. It's rational how they display it. /…/*". others however didn't fully agree, as they thought that the appeals used by, for example WWF in the ad shown was making them feel guilt and pressure "*I know like I trust these organizations and I would support for them, but I feel like they always put so much pressure on you it's like not, they're like, DO IT instead of like "think about this" and that but they're really like DO IT. And I'm like, just rejecting somehow like when someone is like do it. And I'm like, you know, I don't know, just leave me, you know, so I think that's kind of also a problem with those organizations*" and "*You feel like you are a heartless piece of shit for not doing it.*". The Oatly advertisement however evoked more positive feelings by the majority of participants and the appeals in it were perceived as doable and positive "*I could do a little bit every day if you compare it to the oil thing with the "act now",I don't know why but it's probably like I need to send one fee and I'm done. But it feels like a big commitment to send money to a organization. This feels like I'm already drinking coffee And by drinking coffee, I can actually do it, yeah. You can have an impact as it's an everyday kind of yeah…*" In comparison to the call to action made by WWF in their communication one participant explained the Oatly advertisement as "*They kind of give you guidance on how to improve the environment and say no. So they kind of assist the customer a little bit by saying okay, you have to do this and that and then you already kind of attribute positively to the environment. So it's not. You don't have to do something very, very special. It's just a daily habit you have to change a little bit and that truly makes an impact, and that's good.*" which shows that there is a difference how a call to action is portrayed, that it can

serve as a good way of portraying a message but it can also verge on being too intrusive so the recipient dismisses the message.

Certifications
The messages portrayed to the participants in the focus groups contained different types of certifications and symbols, which were discussed as either having a positive or negative impact on the content. The lack of an official label was discussed as a negative whereas having more than one was voiced as being positive " *Yes but I think independently of who is giving the label or whatever like I think it is showing that they don't just sell with one of them but at least they are trying to get different approvals and it is not: ah I got one green label and that's it but they are kind of proving that they are concerned about that and they try to get more certifications.*" and "*They have three labels: must mean something. Those three labels would make me trust this brand in comparison to the other.*" which shows that the nature of the certification and label also plays a role in the message perceived.

Design
The design of the messages shown was thoroughly discussed by the focus group participants, where aspects such as color, perceived tidiness, quality, amount of text and layout of the message were touched upon. The amount of information seemed to be a barrier for some participants as they expressed an unwillingness to read a lot of text and felt a negative feeling towards many elements in a message *" If you re not into like, figuring out these things you would probably not read it, so that's a bit sad. Often happens like that with these kinds of things. You have to really be interested in order to find out. Like if you want to buy only good stuff from the store it can take your hours to research the companies and try to figure out what to buy."* and "*Too much text, make it nicer and communicate in a more concise way.*" . The colors in the messages were discussed in terms of fitting the message, and the coloring for content conveying a sustainable message was discussed as being*" Really interesting because they usually use green or something or some other earthy colors and e they're just using the wrong color scheme it is really yeah, as you said warning, like blue and red and brownish.* The use of color red in sustainable communications was also discussed by another participant "*As they are using red, it is warning me already like: NO, not true.*" showing a need to consider the colors that are regarded as being coherent to the cause. The way of portraying the message was also discussed where some of the participants found the WWF message as being a bit too aggressive and feeling blamed while others found it to be clear and conveying the message in a good way.

4.1.5 Summary Focus Group Findings

The table below shows the identified themes and codes from the focus groups. Participants initially expressed trust for NGOs and government over business. However, when given examples, this was strongly impacted by geographical origin, brand image, knowledge about core values, and personal relationship with the organization. Financial structure, industry, and financial structure of particular types of organizations was identified as main drivers of skepticism. In general, certification and labels evoked trust for sustainability communication because it was seen as a type of proof even though some were trusted more than others. Skepticism was also rooted in the feeling that organizations are trying to provide false

information and by being vague in order to just improve their image. The participants also expressed stronger trust for small organizations than large ones, especially for business, and expressed a general skepticism because they felt that organizations in general like to portray themselves in a preferable manner and do the expected. The participants appreciated and trusted clear information and facts over vaguely defined policies. Labels on the packaging was also important boosters of trust but knowledge about a brand was sometimes more important as seen in the case of Oatly.

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION	KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION	SKEPTICISM	CONTENT
• Businesses, NGOs, Governments • Certifications and Labels • Financial structure • Industry • History	• Origin • Brand image • Knowledge About Core Values • Personal Relationship	• Origin • Clarity and Lack of Information • Greenwashing • History • Financial and Business Structure • Size of Organization • General Skepticism	• Facts and Information • Packaging • Appeals • Certifications • Design

4.2 Interviews

4.2.1 Consuming Towards Sustainability

Doing Good by Consuming More
The perception of whether consuming was the way to sustainability differed between participants. Some felt like if they consumed products that they trusted to be sustainable, it was enough to live a sustainable life. Others said that they believe that consuming less was the only way to become sustainable. One of them however said that sometimes, it is easy to forget about this because sustainability communication makes you lose track and consume more just because something is being said to be organic or sustainable. Another participant said *" I mean, there's the example of Patagonia where they, they tried to say that, but then in the end, the stats show that, that that even sold more, I think, just because I'm a marketing student, and like, I worked in advertising for a long time. So I just know everything is just about selling more everything, our message, everything that you do, and like, also, like the Oatly telling you, "hey, rather use oat milk, then like cow milk" because it's better for the environment. And then they didn't found the business to have people not consuming cow milk anymore, they founded it to sell oat milk and make a profit."* and *" H&M is having this huge sustainability campaign with their bio cotton and a conscious collection. But I think if they really want to be good, they should just say "consider whether you really need this shit". Consider if you really need to have this one more plain white shirt or whether the other 10 that you already have, are actually enough"* and reasoned that companies are using

sustainability to pretend they care about the environment while they should actually focus on not promoting consumerism if they actually want to be sustainable.

Distrust
Several participants said that they felt like companies were trying to make them act in a way they do not want to or trick them into consuming by making claims or creating offers intended at making them consume more. One mentioned meat producers trying to portray organic meat consumption as good for the environment and one said *"I know how shitty it is to consume. I could say no: but I'm down. Like why does a shirt need to cost five euros? It's like, where they sell the clothes people are not that poor that they wouldn't be able to afford it because it is 10 euros, it's still really cheap but it would have like such a big impact for like what the workers in Bangladesh are earning yeah, it's like for them, it's a really big difference, for us it's just convenience we are used to buying a T-shirt for 5 Euros. "* and explained that it is hard to resist these offers even if you do not need or even wanted a T-shirt initially.

Too Positive Information
Some participants mentioned that they feel that companies are creating a too positive image of their products by focusing on few attributes and that this could trick consumers into thinking that they would actually have a positive effect on the environment if consuming these products. They said that instead of communicating that these products are less bad, business communicated that they are good. One participant said that *"So you really have to put yourself in a bubble and just ignore what's around you. And it's difficult for sure. But I don't know how, it's been two years that, that I've managed to do it."* when talking about how to handle this type of sustainability communication.

Reduce and Reuse
One participant stated that some governments communicate to reduce consumption but mostly of hazardous materials like plastic. Other participants expressed a desire to reduce consumption of goods they do not need but explained that it is more difficult with food for example and one participant said *"I mean food wise, you still have to eat at some point. So I think I buy what I need to survive. So I could not really reduce my consumption of veggies. Meat: yes. So food wise, I would say that I need more information. Everything else wise: I think could reduce my consumption.".* Clothes consumption was also frequently mentioned as a product category to reduce and one person said that *"Being sustainable is caring about environment, others and yourself. In order to make something more decent. Buy less clothes, for example. Which is something I tried to do. Buy from secondhand shops.".*

4.2.2 Sustainable Products

Incentive for Buying
All participants stated that they feel better about consuming if they trust sustainability communication about the product or organization through statements like *"I don't mind spending a little bit more if it's going to be a better option for both my health and environment and if I trust the product and I really like the brand"*. However, they expressed a difference in how important it is to consume products they deem sustainable versus unsustainable. One participant stated that *"You feel you don't feel so guilty for having so much in the first world, I*

sometimes feel that we do. I mean, our society that we do think, take things for granted. Yeah. And then you do feel like a bit guilty of having all these luxury and all these goods and all this consumption rates. But in the end, if you do it in a sustainable way, if you consume sustainable products, you don't feel as some guilty and I would say, is as bad about consuming all these things." which shows that trusting sustainability communication can take away some of the guilt felt for consuming on unsustainable levels in the western world at the expense of others. Some participants expressed that when believing a product to actually be sustainable, they would consume a larger amount than they otherwise would have done. Quality was also mentioned as a reason for consuming, for example *"I think if I feel like I get what the message is about, and I and I trust that message generally, I think I will feel perhaps the quality of the product will be better compared to others. And also it feels like I'm making a difference by buying the product.".* Instead of considering the actual need, this participant felt that by buying a product communicated to be long lasting and of high quality, environmental impact would be lowered due to the elimination of future purchases.

Not Knowing What to Consume
A majority of participants said that it is hard to know what products are actually sustainable. They said that labels can help but that it is hard to understand information at times. One interviewee said *"I will probably buy more from something that is stamped by, by that kind of organization. Rather than, I don't know, ISO 2004: you don't even understand what it's written, so like okay fine. I don't know.".* Another interviewee said that "*Because even though, as I said before, even though you think they're sustainable, doesn't necessarily mean that they are. Yeah, so if it's not local, like, there are other things that have an impact that you don't see right away* " which means that consumers who want to find sustainable products hesitate to do so because they do not know what claims are false and what are true because they are difficult to value.

Doing Good by Consuming Sustainable Products
Initially, many of the participants reasoned that consuming sustainable products would have a positive effect on the environment. One interviewee stated that *"And then, as I said, you know, when it comes to, you know, organic stuff, you know, that even my little part can still mean something big in the long term"* which implicates that people might feel like they can become sustainable through consumption long term. Further into the interviews, some people started to shift in this opinion however. Some participants also stated that they think that buying products communicated to have a better quality is doing good because it limits future consumption.

4.2.3   Type of Communication

Information: Clear and Transparent
The type of communication mentioned in the one to one interviews concerning what impact trust has on the perception of the message. One of the participants exemplified this trust with a telling a story about a French brand she really trusted and liked, they were not doing any advertisements but the word was spread through word of mouth and their official Instagram account where "behind the scenes" in their factory was shown. The insecurity of knowing what one is buying was also raised, that often communication is lacking in depth and clarity,

as explained by one of the interviewees as *"Now I don't do enough background research. Like sometimes I just trust too much but think it requires more. Yeah, more time. And if I become even more sustainable in the future. But I think that's kind of a barrier, because you don't have enough time and your resources to go and look at what they're actually doing in real life. But like corporations, I don't trust them at all."* another participant explained the skepticism that unclear information can have by telling what kind of marketing she would wish to see " *Informative marketing, something like that. That you actually know what information, like transparent, in a transparent way they show you what they do, like it what they do for sustainability, and why they do it, and how they do it, and not just telling you, like, Oh, we are so great. And we're so green. And that's it. But rather, actually be transparent about it and inform your consumers and not like. Don't give the feeling that you hide something, but rather be open about everything"*.

Engagement
A want for engaging materials was expressed by some of the people interviewed on the contrary a hesitation towards reading wordy texts was expressed, one of the people interviewed explained it as wanting the message *"I mean of course, in an appealing way, which means, you know, not maybe less and I mean, it needs to be informative but shouldn't bel like, man I have to read like two pages now to find out like, you know, videos, it's always nice, like, of course, less educational aspect like, yeah, make you think about the first thing about the frog advertising advertisement. It was nice, that you get the sense and it was entertaining, entertaining."* when talking about how sustainable messages should be portrayed in the liking of the interviewed, one of them said *"I if you combine WWF, like a company and combine how they advertise like Oatly. I love the company but I felt more emotional with WWFs advertising"* which shows that the emotional appeals can be of importance, however as mentioned above, not too much, as calls to action and emotional appeals by some also can be seen as intrusive which leads to the recipients discarding the message as a whole.

4.2.4   Sender

Ties of the Sender
Depending on what the sender of the sustainable message is associated with also has an effect on the trust perceived and how it affects the message, one of the interviewed people said " *I liked the frog one the most, because Rainforest Alliance is a private organization: not connected to a business agreement. Also, I think it's because they only focus on one purpose: because they only focus on one purpose: you probably, I mean, we can probably think that their expertise with this field is better."* and another one said that the ties of a company play a part *"I think it's the fact that they are independent, and that they focus on one purpose. So it makes them more legit."* which shows that the ties of the sender can be seen as having an impact on the trust experienced.

Size of the Organization
The size of the organization seemed to have an impact for some of the interviewees, the general notion in the interviews seemed to be that smaller corporations were perceived as more trustworthy, for example *"When the brand is small, I tend to trust more because their,*

how is it called in English, Conflict of interest? Because if they are so small, I mean, they have nothing, they have everything to lose. Because they don't have the financial power to bribe people." another participant also expressed a similar opinion *"If it's a small size company, and they found out that maybe one of the suppliers had been a little bit not quite kosher, then yeah, I can probably still trust them."* and more people interviewed talked about the need for big companies to change in to becoming more sustainable which could be seen as explaining the skepticism towards them and their sustainability "*If i's a large organization that's found out that they've had something quite damning Yeah, then I think that to me is going to be more difficult to buy into that because you know that they are going to have to make a lot of changes* ".

Priori Experiences
Prior knowledge was also expressed as having an impact on how the sender is viewed and also how the perception of the sender affects the perceived trust of the sustainable message, one participant expressed a hesitation to buy from corporations that had lost her trust *" Not directly, I don't think so. Unless it's a commodity product and I have no choice. if I think about Wells Fargo, when that kinda got found out that basically, they were being incredibly shady. Okay, it's nothing to sustainability. Yeah, when I found out that they were very, very shady in that respect, that they want to taking money from their customers, am I ever likely to trust that organization? Probably not.*" and the trust was said to play a role in choosing a product by another one *" I mean, once I trust the source I would probably pick the product over one that that doesn't have a credible source."* and this skepticism was also expressed by a third person who said, "I don't trust corporations at all.".

Type of Sender
The origin of the organization was also briefly mentioned in the interviews as having an impact on the perception on the sender, for example, one of the interviewees said "*I would trust it more than the US government: I have no idea and I don't trust the US government.*" another one explained it in line with the previous statement as " *It really depends on the governments and who's in power.*" which shows that even though there is trust towards governments, it depends on the origin of the government and who is in power.

4.2.5   Responsibility

Self
The individual was considered to be responsible for consuming less and consuming sustainably according to some of the people interviewed, one of the participant voiced an opinion regarding minimizing consumption being *"/.../ more doable than being aware and knowing more as you have to dig deeper. Like the effort is more time-consuming.".* There were also opinions raised regarding the problem behind the consumption and the underlying reason for consumers consuming as they are, one of the interviewed expressed this as *"I feel like consumers are kind of trapped into this, because we've been consuming without thinking for so long, and like companies also played us for so long."* another one talked about sustainable consumption and mentioned choosing to buy sustainable goods and second hand, but also items from smaller, locally produced luxury goods and voiced an opinion about the choice of *companies "But in my opinion, when you consume even more. like higher end*

products, like luxury or so and it's not sustainable, for me that's the worst." talking about the consumer being in charge for choosing whom they decide to purchase products from can thus be seen as a responsibilization of the self, that the individual is held responsible for looking for information regarding the sustainable aspects in order to be able to make a qualified decisions and making a sustainable choice.

Corporations
In the interviews the responsibility for diminished consumption/sustainable consumption was put on corporations by some, the reasoning about this revolved around personal experiences from working in grocery stores and in retail as one facet, as explained by one of the interviewees who talked about that companies should have campaigns saying "do you really need that?" instead of promoting more consumption. The same person continued to explain that companies should elevate the prices on some products, like for example a t-shirt that now costs 5 EUR should be priced at 10 EUR as this would promote sustainability much more than having a small part of the collection labeled as sustainable. On the question who should take responsibility another one answered "*Fast fashion, by introducing less styles and less collections. Every day new clothes come in.*" another one had a similar standpoint and said "*For me because working with like food and whatever. Okay: I know how much the company talked about being green or whatever, working with sustainability. But then, like we throw away tons of food and, like, how are we like... we're talking about... then we're not really, the small stuff loses loses loses meaning….So I think a lot of people who work within business understand that there's a lot of bullshit. So yeah, there is a lot of distrust…".* Another standpoint was also raised, that if corporations actually were to take responsibility without having it imposed on them by legislations or law the trust towards them would be higher.

Civil Society
The interplay between people and other instances in society was also mentioned to be one of the facets of responsibility and one of the interviewees said, "*They could do much more and be more specific, like certain actions that citizens can take. Because I think now it's a bit. I mean, now, more and more people are becoming sustainable or aware that they need to be sustainable, but you have to have kind of a guide on how to do things that really have an impact.*" and another talked about the interplay between demand and *supply " I think from a very large picture, yes. Because, like I said, if, like, more and more people buying sustainable products, then logically, more and more manufacturers will see the there are a big opportunity for profit. So they will continue to do that. And this might contribute to less consumed energy or resources on the planet. And gradually there will create a positive cycle there. And the whole society will be like, more and more sustainable in a way. And that's kind of because we all live in this in this world. It is society so people living in this kind of system will like little mortals, they will live with the bigger improvement of the society."* so according to these interviewees not one instance could be held responsible for promoting less consumption and sustainability.

Governments
Some of the people interviewed thought that governments should impose regulations and legislations in order to cope with the problem of sustainability, when talking about whom should be held responsible one of the interviewees said *"I think for example if like the government would like pressure companies to like doing things differently I would be so much*

easier for the consumer. We wouldn't need to be the ones pressuring but then on the other hand, the government is also depending on the money that the companies made. It's really hard , it is so political and it is like every decision that you take has like so many like outcomes they can maybe don't even know before it's really hard to find like the one solution they could save the world it's impossible yeah. So I think everyone would everything a person would be a liiitle bit more considerate, if people in the city would be fine with earning, I don't know? 100K". A similar standpoint was raised by another participants who mentioned that legislations and regulations should be put in place due to their effectivity, because as mentioned above, consumers are "*locked in*" to buying the way they currently are.

4.2.6   Summary Interview Findings

The table below shows the identified themes and codes from the interviews. Most interviewees initially stated that sustainability for them means to consume products they perceive and trust as green from sustainability communication. Further into the interviews many however stated that reduced consumption is important to sustainability but because of the difficulty of consuming less, it is easier to choose to trust a selection of sustainability communication and continue to consume but more selectively to not feel guilty. In terms of who is responsible to change consumption patterns to become sustainable, the participants had rather complex reasoning. Many felt that individuals are responsible to consume less and more sustainable products but that business tricks consumers into purchasing by having tempting offers and portraying products as sustainable when they are actually partially sustainable. Some interviewees also expressed that government needs to do more and put more pressure on business.

CONSUMING TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY	SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS	TYPE OF COMMUNICATION
• Doing Good by Consuming More • Distrust • Too Positive Information • Reduce and Reuse	• Incentive for Buying • Not Knowing What to Consume • Doing Good by Consuming Sustainable Products	• Information: Clear, and Transparent • Engagement

SENDER	RESPONSIBILITY
• Ties of the Sender • Size of the Organization • Priori Experiences • Type of Sender	• Self • Corporations • Civil Society • Governments

5   Discussion

In this chapter, the themes identified in the focus groups and interviews will be connected to previous research and theory as reviewed in Chapter 2. By doing this, we will discuss how our findings and previous research jointly provides sufficient knowledge to answer the two research questions: What evokes consumer trust in sustainability communication? and What impact does sustainable communication efforts have on consumer perception of sustainability?

5.1   Type of Organization

Whether sustainability communication originated from business, government, or an NGO seemed to affect the trust among the participants in the focus groups. In line with what Reid, Soley and Vanden Bergh's (1981) research, the focus groups participants stated that they trust business the least and instead trust sustainability communication from governments and NGOs more which is also what Haley (1996) concluded. Wootliff and Deri (2001) stated that NGOs are generally trusted more than government which we could not clearly see; important to state though is that their research, being quantitative in nature, might me more appropriate to determine this question of distribution. Interestingly enough, when not asked directly about different types of source organizations but given an example of sustainability communication from Oatly, a company many of them were familiar with, plenty of the participants shifted perspective. They then expressed stronger trust for the commercial business than for government and NGOs which raises the question if previous studies have been able to include whether other attributes can outweigh the importance of type of organization impact on trust. We will return to this later.

The participants were shown examples of labeling where one organization utilized the positive attributes associated with another organization to project it to their own products. Among many of the focus group participants this seemed to evoke trust, just as expected in line with the research of Wootliff and Deri (2001), as the participants mentioned that this works as a type of proof to otherwise meaningless claims. This also aligns with Alves' (2009) idea of proof being essential to avoid the suspicion of greenwashing. As suspected and described by Pedersen and Neergaard (2006), unrecognized labels that were perceived to be created by companies themselves were largely ignored and simply created skepticism. Pedersen and Neergaard (2006) however also claimed that independent third-party labels, most commonly awarded by governments, are the most trustworthy because of their financial independence. This was not necessarily how the participants reasoned; although paying some attention to financial dependence, they expressed more trust for some governments than others, and more trust for some dependent NGO labels than independent government labels.

We can here see a connection to the example of where Oatly was perceived as very trustworthy although being a commercial business; we believe that previous research has focused too much on some aspects and failed to see the complexity in the dynamics of trust.

Participants claimed to distrust businesses at large in their sustainability communication because they value profit over sustainability. However, when sustainability was integrated in the core operations of a business in a spirit of CSV as described by Porter and Kramer (2011) this was not the case as we saw with the example of Oatly, which aligns with Lewandowska, Witczak and Kurczewski (2017) research. With Shell on the other hand, where sustainability was perceived to be an ad-on in a more traditional CSR spirit, participants were widely skeptic and talked in terms greenwashing in accordance with Prasad and Mill's (2010) research. Important to state however, is that honesty about their intent to maximize financial profit, made the participants express some trust towards business.

A concern regarding the financial structure of NGOs and their labels was raised in the focus group that greatly reflects Pedersen and Neergaard's (2006) idea about their financial dependence. However, mistrust did not solely exist because they become dependent from their revenue sources but because some participants felt that these organizations also fail to disclose what the money is used for. Interestingly enough, they expressed strong trust in WWF although their labels can be used by companies solely by paying for it (Pedersen & Neergaard, 2006) which indicates that other attributes can make people less critical and prone to actually search out facts.

With government, Pedersen and Neergaard (2006) argued their direct financial independence to make them more trustworthy than other certifiers. It was however clear during the focus groups that although some participants agreed with this, some felt that government can also have a hidden agenda related to policy and macroeconomic goals. We believe this skepticism to be justified, at least in part. It is not unreasonable that one nation state will use sustainability communication to create a competitive advantage for domestic products over imported goods. Returning to the ideas of Haley (1996) the amount of importance consumers put into this depends on their perceptions of a particular organization, the issue and self. A consumer with great interest in environmental sustainability sees him or herself as an environmental champion, and who is more skeptical about a certain type of organization is also less likely to simply trust information based on the fact that it comes from a type of source widely seen as credible. This can be connected to Chen, Lin and Weng's (2015) ideas that trust depends on evaluation of the overall interaction with a business. This means that if a company is perceived as being honest in one aspect, they are more likely to be trusted in another aspect.

According to our results, as briefly discussed earlier, and as stated by Lewandowska, Witczak and Kurczewski (2017), consumers tend to trust sustainability communication from organizations where sustainability is part of the core business idea and integrated in the operations. This can explain why environmental NGOs are widely trusted, because working for sustainability is the major part of their mission. Supporting this is also the research presented by Wootliff and Deri (2001). In their definition of NGOs they describe how their core function is to work with their chosen issue and seen as watchdogs and seen as selfless. Additionally, it explains the participants reasoning for trusting Oatly more than Shell and

Chiquita although they are all for profit businesses. Also, as described by Wootliff and Deri (2001), companies are seen as greedy while NGOs are perceived as heroic and selfless. With Oatly, it appeared as if they were perceived as having some traits otherwise associated with NGOs. For example, they were highly trusted because they were perceived as wanting to do good and being here for us which is another way of expressing selflessness. This suggest that although an organization belongs to one out of the three types of organization, they are not fully stuck there but can move across the borders and adopt attributes from the other types.

Historical considerations partially explain why type of organization is important to trust. Chen, Lin and Weng (2015) stated that perception of overall interactions determine the trustworthiness and Haley (1996) explained that congruence with own values and logical association impacts trust. Because consumers evaluate past interactions and their values have been emerging over time, historical actions of different types of organizations are logically assessed to determine their present congruence with one's own values. As seen in the focus groups, the participants were skeptical towards businesses because they blamed them for creating a system around environmental destruction in the past and towards government because they had not lived up to what they have previously promised.

5.2   Knowledge About Organization

In their research, Wootliff and Deri (2001), and Reid, Soley and Vanden Bergh (1981) focused largely on mapping how type of organization affects trust but did not look into how knowledge about a specific organization affects trust. We have seen that this type of knowledge and preconceptions are also of great importance. Although many of the participants said that they trust sustainability communication from government, they also expressed that they trust some countries or regions more than others. All participants in the focus groups for example said that they trust European government institutions more than American ones and some went as far as saying that they do not trust sustainability communication from the American government at all. Sweden on the other hand was frequently referred to as an example to trust because of its environmental ambition, reputation, and accomplishments. Important to remember though is that this study took place in Sweden with people who at the moment lived in Sweden which tells us that first-hand experience can impact the reasoning for trust.

In his research, Haley (1996) studied how perception of self, issue and organization interacted as mediators to trust and also stated that NGOs and Government are generally trusted more than business. Although this being true when asking the participants, several of them abandon this idea when given an example of a business, Oatly, they are familiar with. Haley's (1996) ideas about perception and the fact that people did not emphasize trust to depend on Oatly being a business talks for that other attributes might be just as important or more important at times than type of organization. For government institutions and label for example, the type of organization just had a positive impact on trust if people trusted the country and its government to begin with. Oatly, being a Swedish commercial business, appears to be an example of this as it is trusted more than the American government in regards of

sustainability communication. Brands can therefore play a major role for trust and compete with type of organization.

The perceived core values of business and other organizations appeared to have great impact on the trust of sustainability communication among the participants. Prasad and Mills (2010) explained that claiming to be environmentally sustainable without complying with green core values of the environmentalists' movement cause greenwashing practices. Additionally, Bhattacharya, Smith and Vogel (2004) claimed that values, beliefs and brand preference of consumers are all important drivers of corporate social initiatives and Alves (2009) stated that CSR is putting the value of public relations in focus. This could be recognized in the focus groups where several participants felt that Shell was just trying to respond to public opinion with their CSR activities and sustainability communication instead of being sincere. It is clear that they perceived this as greenwashing and that Shell must transform their core values if they want their sustainability communication to be trusted. However, many of the participants had a hard time imagining this to happen.

5.3   Skepticism

The skepticism expressed by the participants in the focus groups was found to have seven themes, as above mentioned, these were found to be: Origin, Clarity and lack of information, Greenwashing, History, and Financial and business structure, Size of organization/company and General Skepticism. These subthemes to skepticism were shown to be intertwined and affecting the other themes found in the empirical material.

Firstly, the origin behind the sender of information was raised as a factor that potentially could raise or diminish the trust experienced by the participants in the focus groups. The general perception was that the participants trusted information from the Swedish government more than the US government as mentioned in the findings, which shows that the question of trust is more multi-dimensional than explained by Wootliff & Deri (2001) and Haley (1996), as they both mention that Governments are the second most trusted sources when looking at it from the tri-sector model, where NGOs are seen to be the most trustworthy and corporations the least trustworthy. The empirical material however shows that the question of trust towards governments depends on the origin of the government and who is in power, and that the question of whom to trust is more complex than the division in to the three sectors and that the omission of taking the origin in to consideration can evoke skepticism.

Montague and Mukherjee (2010) defined as the three flaws of marketing as being: poor credibility, consumer cynicism and confusion, in line with these three flaws the empirical material collected evolved about similar aspects which were shown to evoke skepticism by the participants. The clarity and lack of information, which could be related to greenwashing in the findings, as greenwashing was perceived to be using empty words, could also be related to the by Montague and Mukherjee (2010) found confusion. Ottman (2011) emphasized that sustainable communication efforts should be created in a way that is informative and comprehensible for the recipient, and as sustainability claims tend to be intangible and vague,

this also is in line with the findings from the focus groups and the lack of, and unclear information raising skepticism and a suspicion that the lack of information might be a sign of greenwashing. Alves (2009) mentioned that the use of unclear, vague and untrue claims regarding green aspects can raise a feeling of greenwashing, which goes in line with the opinions voiced in the focus groups. Hosseinpour et al. (2016) discussed that consumers are unwilling to buy sustainable products if there is a lack of information regarding the actual meaning of the sustainable attributes conveyed, which also can be seen as being in line with the lack of information and unclarity of it found as raising skepticism in the focus groups.

As found in the focus groups the history of a company, industry or type of organization plays a role in the skepticism experienced which can see being in line with what Vanhamme and Grobben (2008) describe in their study, that history and the way organizations have been dealing with sustainability in their communication has an impact on how they are perceived in times of sustainability related crises. The empirical material collected showed that the participants made connections to prior knowledge, which can be tied to the second flaw with green marketing as identified by Montague and Mukherjee (2010) which talks about credibility and can be seen relating to Ottman (2011) first golden rule, that companies should walk their talk, and to the claim that the short-term gains made by companies have been the cause for a long-term mistrust felt by consumers (Montague & Mukherjee, 2010).

The financial and business related structure and size of organization could be seen as being affecting each other and the skepticism experienced by consumers, as expressed by the participants in the focus groups. This skepticism can be related to the type of organization that is the sender of the message. Reid, Soley and Vanden Bergh (1981) made a distinction between commercial and non-commercial senders and claimed that non-commercial ones were perceived in a more positive light, which goes in line with what Haley (1996) claimed, that NGOs are perceived as more trustworthy than corporations. When relating this to the business and financial structure mentioned in the focus groups a concern regarding NGOs and the way that money was made by it being donated by people was voiced and that this called for a carefulness of transparency of where the money was spent. This skepticism voiced in the focus groups can be seen as speaking against the Reid, Soley and Vanden Bergh (1981), Haley (1996) and Wotliff and Deri (2001) claims that NGOs are the sources regarded as most trustworthy, or at least that the factor of transparency plays an important role of trust, and the lack of transparency can be seen as raising skepticism. The size of the organization was also voiced as a source of skepticism, where the empirical material showed that the bigger the organization is, and the more complicated the business structure is the more skepticism was expressed by the participants.

A general skepticism was also a topic of consideration that some of the focus group participants regarded, this skepticism could be seen stemming from all of the factors mentioned above: or as Yang, Fitzpatrick and Varey (2015) found in their study, a general skepticism regarding sustainability marketing is based upon a skepticism towards marketing in general and the notion that sustainable products have elevated prices. The general skepticism can also be seen as a consequence of historical events where consumers, as mentioned above, tend to draw conclusions and relate events they have heard of before regarding the type of organization, the industry or similar companies. But it could also be seen as relating to the fact that consumers have the access to internet, and many participants

expressed that they tend to search for information even if this seen as time consuming and that if they search for information they will find something negative, in accordance to this Lewandowska, Witczak and Kurczewski (2017) found that consumers having access to internet will scrutinize and try to verify the claims made by companies in their marketing. The general skepticism can in conclusion be seen stemming from historical events, which can be seen having an impact on the perception of the origin, size and business structure of the corporation, NGO or government. This can furthermore have an impact on whether the communication is seen as truthful or as greenwashing.

When looking at how the empirically found themes affect the perception of trust felt by the recipients of the sustainable communication efforts the findings show that a general skepticism tends to have an impact on the interpretation of the knowledge regarding an organization/ corporation/ government

5.4   Content

When assessing what it is that evokes consumer trust content wise in sustainable communication efforts five facets were identified in the empirical material. The five facets were expressed as either having a positive impact on the message, or on the contrary, a negative one. The five themes identified in the empirical material were: facts and information, packaging, appeals, certifications and design.

Regarding the facts and information, a confusion was expressed by the participants where some of them expressed that they didn't fully understand what the sustainability aspect communicated was about, they expressed a lack of knowledge regarding what the appeals were based upon and a will to have more concrete facts instead of goals and visions. An insecurity and will to know more about the certifications placed on sustainable products was voiced, which can be seen being in line with Ottman (2011) second golden rule for marketing being that green marketing needs to be created in an easy, comprehensible way without excessive information where the marketing claims are made clear due to their often intangible nature.

Lewandowska, Witczak and Kurczewski (2017) stated that the packaging is the placement that can be regarded as the most important one when communicating sustainable aspects to consumers. In the focus groups a lot of opinions were raised about the sustainable packaging that the participants were shown pictures of. One of the primary aspects were that the participants reacted when packaging involved unnecessary trash such as plastic labels on the bananas and plastic wrappings saying sustainable, as the participants seemed to regard this as unsustainable and in that sense lessening the credibility. Ottman (2011) stated that the fifth golden rule for green marketing was the design of the packaging that corporations have a tendency to forget but can be equally important to promotional efforts which shows that the message of sustainability needs to be coherent with how the packaging as a whole is perceived.

In accordance with Montague and Mukherjees (2010) finding that consumers tend to be more positive towards green marketing efforts regarding high-involvement products an opinion was voiced by one of the participants saying that low-involvement products should contain less information as the participant felt less inclined to actually read what was written on the packaging. The participants reacted positively towards efforts made with a sense of humor, if they were familiar with the sender before and if the message still was clear and comprehensible.

When looking at the appeals that the participants thought were the most positive about it was shown that clear calls to action were regarded as positive. The participants however also expressed that the message should not be involving too much of negative emotions, making the recipient of the information feel guilty. This was expressed as having a counteractive reaction, where the possibility of the recipient discarding the message as a whole was raised, contrary to this positive calls to action were mentioned to be the most positive and instilling hope and motivation. This reaction can been seen as an effect of the message being too assertive and due to this loosing it's persuasive power (Kim et al. 2017) the feeling expressed is also in line with the theory of reactance, that recipients of a message feel that there is too much persuasion conveyed so they experience their freedom being threatened and due to this reacting with a negative reaction (Aronson, 2012; Wang, Krishna & McFerran, 2017) which shows that calls to action could be regarded as positive if they were not too assertive causing reactance.

Certifications were discussed as either evoking trust or skepticism, depending on the organization behind the certification but also the number of different certifications displayed. It was shown that the participants perceived independent third-party labels to be the most credible in line with Wootliff and Deri (2001) finding that third-party independent labels are the type of highest regarded labels which also could be seen as being in line with the findings of Ottman (2011) who also showed similar findings. Having more than one independent label was also discussed as a positive aspect as it was said to evoke trust and dedication which can be seen as being in line with the fourth of Ottman (2011) golden rule regarding third-party certifications and their positive effect on the perception of sustainable communication efforts.

The design of a sustainable message was shown to play a role, the colors used in the materials were either being connotated to sustainability which was explained to be enforcing the message conveyed or on the contrary, creating confusion. The colors were discussed as being related to sustainability was green, and red was seen to be the opposite creating a distrust. Other design related aspects mentioned were the feeling of a messages being messy, with a lot of different elements displayed in the message. The participants also expressed a will to have the information conveyed in a concise way buton the other hand they all recognized a governmental message and said it was typical for them. When looking at information and regarding governments as one of highly regarded sources for sustainable communicateon, other companies could be seen as having the possibility of adapting a typically governmental way of communicating in order to create trust. The participants however also explained that they would wish governments to change the way they communicate in order for the information to be easier to understand and less time-consuming to take in. The aspect of design was researched by Ottman (2011) and is regarded as the fifth of her five golden rules

for green marketing. She mentioned, as this should be regarded equally as important as design related issues. The question of clarity could also be see as being in line with the previously mentioned aspect regarding the importance of clear, comprehensible information in sustainable communication efforts as mentioned by Montague and Mukherjee (2010) and Hosseinpur et al. (2016).

5.5   Consuming Towards Sustainability

The interviewees held different views of consumption's role on the path to sustainability. As explained by Hurth and Whittlesea (2017) marketing is an activity intended to drive wants in order to sell more and many of the interviewees felt that information communicated is often too positive and focuses on a few positive attributes and ignoring negative ones which is explained by Alves (2009) as the hidden trade-off. The participants said that when companies do this, it is easy to think that buying their products does not just have a less negative impact on the environment but actually, a positive one. They also explained that although being aware of this, it is easy to forget about it in everyday life. Holt (2012) discussed this as a part of his ethical values paradigm. He explains that choosing a sustainable option among the vast number of offerings and that consumption is an integrated part of daily life where we think that consuming and possessing will make us happy although not true. Trusted sustainability communication appeared to have the potential to drive consumption because it made the interviewees feel good about consuming. At the same time they were aware of this being an excuse and without being familiar with Holt's (2012) research, they agreed that moving away from consumerism is essential to sustainability.

All participants however agreed that moving away from consumerism is not easy and cannot be done at once. Jackson's (2005) idea of complete abandonment of consumerism as we know it to achieve sustainability is therefore too radical to actually succeed according to us. This is probably the case because of the part consumption plays in our lives as described by Holt (2012) and because of the practices used by corporations as explained by Hurth and Whittlesea (2017). Fuentes (2015) said that an emphasis has been put on making consumers responsible for making sure they are consuming sustainably and although being important, form the findings from the interviews, we believe that in order for this to actually become reality, corporations must stop luring consumers into buying more by using hidden trade offs. Instead, businesses who actually want to be sustainable should enter into sustainable marketing by trying to reduce consumption as described by Saren (2000). Reducing consumption was also discussed by some participants and they frequently referred to this as simply just buying what you absolutely need, buying things of better quality that will last longer, and purchasing second hand. They however also stated that this, according to them, applies more to some product categories such as clothes but less to for example food. This tells us that there is a desire among some consumers to reduce their consumption but that commercial interests are making it difficult for them.

Distrust was also expressed by some interviewees towards attempts by businesses to make people consume more than they actually have a need for. Even when having a mindset to

consume less they said, it is hard to say no when offers are too good; cheap H&M clothes were given as an example. Thinking that consumers will be rational when business are doing all they can to sell more is not reasonable. As described by Villarino and Font (2015) consumptions is related to emotions and Holt (2012) states that consumers who want to be sustainable must choose the sustainable over the monetary choice. However because of emotion described by the interviewees we argue that this cannot be suspected as long as companies bombard consumers with traditional market communication intended to drive sales.

5.6   Sustainable Products

When trusting sustainability communication, some interviewees stated that they feel good about consuming and believe that it has a positive impact on environment and that they do not feel guilty. We can here return to Holt's (2012) ethical values paradigm. People who want to be sustainable can get confused and think that they can consume endlessly as long as the products are sustainable. The first problem here is that it is very difficult for consumers to assess what products are actually sustainable; it also depends on the definition of sustainability. Because consumerism is so deeply rooted in our lifestyles, thinking that you are doing good by consuming is the easy option. As a matter of fact though, it is important to remember that most products, although communicated to be sustainable, has some, most often substantial, effect on the environment. As stated by Jackson (2005), it is not enough to refine, reuse, and recycle products as these process still uses raw material and energy, and because the processes are generally still emitting pollutants.

The interviewees stated that it is sometimes difficult to know what to consume to be sustainable and that consuming products that are perceived as sustainable through communication reduces the feeling of guilt. Returning to Caruana and Crane's (2008) reasoning, sustainability communication is used to create a competitive advantage and make consumers feel good about consuming without worrying too much about its ethical consequences. The risk here is that companies are using sustainability communication simply to create a competitive advantage and seduce consumers to choose their option because they then do not have too feel guilty. Instead, this goes can, again, be an example of greenwashing that creates profits for business and gives consumers and excuse not to actually deal with the difficulties of actually living a sustainable life.

5.7   Type of Communication

The impact that trust has on the perception of communication was expressed as being affected by the type of communication conveyed. In the interviews it was expressed that the information was preferred to be clear, concise and transparent. Which could be seen as going in line with that previously was expressed in the focus groups. The opinion that consumers sometimes consume sustainable products in order to diminish the feeling of guilt could also

be reflected in the communication used, showing the personal benefit for the consumer in a clear, factual way (Ottman, Stafford & Hartman, 2006). Another facet described was a want of having the communication conveyed in an authentic way and one person said that a lack of advertisement was raising the trust experienced. The need for authentic, trustworthy, concise information was explained as raising trust, and also saving time. The question of authenticity could be seen as going in line with what Brusseau, Chiagouris and Brusseau (2013) found in their study, where authenticity was seen as the solution to the perception of greenwashing, they furthermore said that authentic communication needs to stem from the business core values in order to be authentic. This could be seen as being related to the lack of advertisement, as the corporation mentioned in the interview instead were using Instagram to show the way they manufactured their shoes in a sustainable manner.

With regards to the type of communication that was seen as raising trust the emotional aspect was also mentioned, but no real conclusion could be drawn upon this. Some of the people interviewed expressed a want of having emotionally appealing messages with calls to action but in contrast to this others mentioned them to be perceived as too intrusive and causing an emotional discard of the message, this dividend can be seen corresponding to the psychological reaction of reactance, where a too emotional and assertive message can invoke a feeling of the recipient loosing freedom, causing a counteractive reaction (Aronson, 2012) but it can also, to some extent, be explained with Villarino and Font's (2015) findings regarding the need for sustainable messages not only to include facts and information, but also emotional appeals. With these findings in mind, we can argue that facts and figures are perceived as positive if they are conveyed in a emotional, authentic matter, without being perceived as intrusive.

5.8   Sender

In the interviews the sender was mentioned as having an impact on the perception of the message and how it was to be interpreted. The elements mentioned regarding the sender were the ties of it, the size of the organization, priori experiences and the use of third-party certifications/ government labels. With regards to the sender it was shown that the ties of the sender could be regarded as positive as well as negative depending on the incentive behind them, if it was perceived as genuine it was regarded as positive whereas if the notion was that it was to make money it was regarded as negative. The ties of the sender could be seen correlating to what Reid, Soley and Vanden Bergh (1981) found regarding people experiencing trust towards organizations or initiatives without a commercial source. The perception of the size of the organization was in general that the smaller than better. A small organization or corporation was shown to be regarded as more trustworthy based on the perceived transparency but also because of the perception that it's harder for big organizations and corporations to implement changes towards reaching sustainability this could be seen as relating to the question of authenticity as explained by Brusseau, Chiagouris and Brusseau (2013) and the question of whether a company is engaging in greenwashing as explained by Vlachos, Theotokis and Panagopoulos (2009) as companies engaging in CSR activities might not be as important as the perceived reason for them doing so. Priori experiences impacted the

sender and the perception of trust in the communication conveyed in the sense that companies and organizations that had lost the trust of the recipient would have a hard time of regaining it which is related to the three flaws of marketing as explained by Montague and Mukherjee (2010) where two of the flaws were identified as poor credibility and consumer cynicism and Yang, Fitzpatrick and Varey (2015) explained the diminished power of green marketing being caused by consumers distrusting green marketing in general. It was however shown that even though the trust was lost, the consumers felt locked in to buying from them, which can be seen in the expression that one participant didn't trust corporations at all but still talked about buying products. This can be interpreted as consumers feeling a distrust but it not always having a negative impact on the final decision of for example making a purchase or not. Third parties and governments were also expressed as impacting the perception of the sender and the messages sent in accordance with prior findings (Reid, Soley & Vanden Bergh, 1981; Haley, 1996; Wootliff & Deri, 2001), the origin was expressed as having an impact which also was discussed in the focus groups, once again US as a sender was regarded as having less credibility than the EU which talks against prior findings regarding governments and NGOs being seen as the most credible courses of communication.

5.9   Responsibility

In accordance with the tri-sector division between Governments, NGOs and Corporations the responsibility for sustainability expressed in the focus groups was shown to be divided into four sectors; the individual, corporations, society or governments. Not one of the three sectors were seen as exclusively responsible for sustainability, instead an interplay was voiced which was identified as a fourth theme. The general notion expressed in the interviews was that the individual could be seen as being responsible for making qualified choices by looking up information regarding what is regarded to be the most sustainable, which could be seen as congruent to the findings of Fuentes (2015) who concluded that consumers have been seen as responsible for making sustainable choices. Corporations were seen to be responsible for advocating diminished consumption and it was explained in an interview that this would evoke trust if it wasn't imposed on them by legislations or regulations. Lastly, governments should be responsible for imposing legislations and regulations and sending out guidelines regarding how to be sustainable citizens.

5.10 Chapter Summary

To summarize the data collected in relation to the theory and literature, the main findings were regarding the complexity of the phenomenon of trust, that it can not be explained by solely one theory, such as attempted by for example Haley (1996) or Wootliff and Deri (2001) who found that governments were the most trusted, NGOs came in on second place and businesses were regarded as the least trusted. In contrast to this, the empirical findings in this study showed that the question of the origin of the sender should be taken in to consideration

as the perception of the origin could affect the trust experienced. The respondents expressed trusting corporations the least but when shown an advertisement from Oatly a different opinion was voiced, showing that the specific corporation needs to be regarded when assessing the trust. In addition to this, the nature of the message was thoroughly discussed, and showed that communication efforts aiming at sustainability should be created in a clear, concise way in accordance with Montague and Mukherjee's (2010) findings, the messages should balance facts balanced with emotional appeals, in line with Kim et al.'s (2017) findings and aim at not being too assertive, as this could evoke a complete disregard of the message in line with the theory of reactance (Aronson, 2012). The view on sustainability was shown as divided, where reduced consumption was raised but a consumption of sustainable products was expressed as being the easy alternative which can be regarded as being in line with Holt's (2012) findings that consumers tend to think that consumption will make them happy. These findings, to summarize show that the perception of trust does impact how consumers choose to believe sustainability, and how they can be sustainable.

6   Conclusion

In this final chapter, we will return to the aim and objectives of this study by answering the two (2) research questions : *What evokes consumer trust in sustainability communication?* and *What impact does sustainable communication efforts have on consumer perception of sustainability?* In order to do this, we will draw on the empirical findings from the focus groups and interviews in relation to theory regarding what evokes consumer trust regarding sustainability communication and how this trust and sustainability communication impacts consumers' reasoning for sustainability. Skepticism, and CSR and Greenwashing. Following this, we will explore the Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications of this paper to lastly finish by proposing where future research is needed.

When assessing the first research question it was found that the trust consumers feel towards sustainability communication efforts conveyed by governments, NGOs and corporations to some extent was in line with previous research which had shown that governments and NGOs where regarded to be the most trusted sources and corporations considered as the least trusted ones (Reid, Soley & Vanden Bergh, 1981; Haley, 1996; Wootliff & Deri, 2001). In contrast to this, our findings showed a more complex depiction; that even if governments were regarded as trustworthy it is equally important to consider the nationality of the government when assessing the credibility of the sender. The findings furthermore show that messages having the US government as a sender were regarded as less trustworthy than communication materials having the EU or Swedish government as a sender by the focus group participants. Thus, it is concluded that the question of whom people trust is more complex than only considering a certain type of organization.

In accordance with Reid, Soley and Vanden Bergh's (1981) findings regarding sources of communication, it was shown that if a consumer knows and has a positive image of a brand and the brand also has an integrated sustainability aspect as its core business, it could diminish the experienced distrust of being a for-profit business. This was very much clear when focus group participants expressed a preference and stronger trust for Oatly over oat milk with the European organic leaf on the package; especially as they previously had expressed strong trust for this particular label.

In line with the finding in previous research that people feel trust towards NGOs (Reid, Soley & Vanden Bergh, 1981; Haley, 1996; Wootliff & Deri, 2001), our research shows that the question of experienced trust towards NGOs is more multifaceted. It shows that a spillover effect from events and historical event concerning similar organizations can diminish the trust experienced from the type of organization because a general skepticism develops. We thus conclude that organizations should consider and address historical events and scandals, not only of their own but also of associated organizations, in order to diminish the experienced distrust.

In terms of what evokes consumer trust in marketing efforts promoting sustainability, focus group participants expressed, in line with the findings of Montague and Mukherjee (2010) and Lewandowska, Witczak and Kurczewski (2017), that the information conveyed should be specific, measurable and comprehensible. An interesting finding is that even though prior research already has shown these elements to be of importance when creating sustainability marketing communication, none of the pictures shown in the focus groups had taken this into consideration. Our research also shows that the general skepticism experienced by the participants could be approached in a reactive way whereas the participants expressed that they search for additional information online when assessing whether a sustainable claim is true in accordance with Lewandowska, Witczak and Kurczewski's (2017) findings. This shows that information that is measurable, clear, concise and comprehensible should be placed easily accessible on the web. We conclude that corporations and organizations should take these guidelines to heart in order to be able to create sustainability communication regarded as credible.

To answer the first research question, this study shows that previous theory regarding what senders of communication regard as credible is more complex than previously found. Previous studies have focused on determining who, in terms of business, government, and NGOs, most consumers trust for sustainability communication. We argue that the matter of consumer trust for sustainable communication is more complex than this and that consumers when directly asked might provide an answer that does not align with their actual reasoning about trust when presented to an example. When simply asked who they trust the most for sustainability communication, and given the option to choose between business, government, and NGOs, the answer is likely to be different than how they perceive sustainability communication in real life when a multitude of aspects interact. Consumers might think they trust NGOs or governments more than business but in reality, other aspects are likely to be more important and consumers seem to have more complex reasoning. This means that the type of organization the sustainability communication derives from is of subordinate importance compared to what was previously believed.

Moving on to the second research question, from our interviews, we discovered that many consumers are aware of the fact that transforming consumption and consuming less is considered as important to sustainability and sustainable development as described by Holt (2012). However, because of the challenges of doing so, many prefer to find sustainability communication they trust and choose sustainable products while continuing to consume. As some of the interviewees stated, they can then live their life as normal without feeling guilty on an everyday basis although knowing on some level that they are still unsustainable. As described by Caruana and Crane (2008), they then fall victims of corporations' creation of a responsible and sustainable consumer that according to them does not exist. Because very little sustainability communication by corporations pays attention to reducing consumption but instead focus on sustainable attributes of products, the participants in this study stated that even though they believe that the amount of consumption plays an important role in sustainability, it is easier and more fun to pay attention to the positive attributes of products. Some even stated that sustainable attributes make them consume more even though they know this might be counterproductive for sustainability. In addition to this, some participants stated that sometimes felt guilted by sustainability communication from NGOs. This tells us

that some consumers prefer the easy option to feel good and independent instead of the option they actually believe is right.

Consumers who care about being sustainable are struggling to handle the aggressive marketing efforts by companies, intended to drive sales as described by Hurth and Whittlesea (2017), according to the findings from the interviews. CSR, often driven by public relations but lacking substance, makes it hard for consumers to withstand attractive offers. It was found that consumers do not find responsive CSR to represent sustainability. Instead, they want business to integrate sustainability at its core and throughout operations, preferably also by increased quality to avoid excess consumption. Several participants in this study did, however, express that they disagree with this type green marketing and believes that companies should take responsibility by not market products at low prices and try to cover up their negative environmental impact with CSR initiatives. Instead, they had positive associations with companies promoting quality.

6.1   Theoretical Contribution

Previous research has focused greatly on determining what type of organization consumers trust in sustainability communication. We have been able to show that consumers' trust for sustainability communication is more complex than this and stems from a multifaceted reasoning process. In this study, we have determined that it is indefinably to question consumers solely about type of organization since they then might think of a particular organization and provide a general answer based on this. Because trust is a complex and intangible phenomenon, we have concluded that a broad analysis is necessary.

Additionally, we have shed light on the effect sustainability communication and perceived trust of it can have on consumers reasoning of what sustainability is. It seems like many consumers reason for continuous consumption although paying attention to sustainable products attributes communicated by corporations. Many however believe that changing consumption is essential to sustainability but that this is too challenging to do on an individual level.

6.2   Practical Implications

This study has also provided valuable insights for practitioners. From our findings and conclusions, they can better understand how to create their sustainability communication in order to be trusted. To be perceived as credible, sustainability communication needs to be created in an easy, concise and tangible way. Transparency needs to be evoked by showing facts and figures, and not goals and aspirations. Third-party certifications evoke trust, and the more credible certifications the better. Additionally, integrating sustainability at the core of a business instead of as an add-on creates credibility and handling issues and history related to

industry and type of organization instead of just the own organization is crucial to avoid spillover effects.

Practitioners can also gain insight in how their sustainability communication affects consumers' perception of sustainability and what their own role is if they actually want to take responsibility for sustainability. Many corporations trying to drive sales with sustainability communication and green marketing need to question if this is not just reducing unsustainability.

6.3   Future Research

Previous research has shown a clear-cut answer to whom people trust with sustainability communication efforts in terms of business, government and NGOs. This study however shows that the answer to this question is more multifaceted and more complex, that rather than ranking the senders from the most to least credible, more aspects such as the country of origin, history, and brand familiarity need to be taken into consideration. We recommend further research to be done on the question of trust for sustainability communication but taking country of origin, history, and scandals into consideration as these have a spillover effect that impacts trust as well. We have shed light on the complexity but further research to better understand these phenomena is necessary, also in a quantitative manner to be able to generalize findings. Further research on participants not living in Sweden, and with varying demographics can also provide additional insights. Conducting a study with other examples is also a path that needs to be explored to determine how other concerns and industries effect trust. Finally, researching the effect trust for sustainability communication has on actual consumer behavior rather than on perception will provide important complementary insights to understand if people act according to their beliefs.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide - Focus Groups

- What do you think when you see this picture?

- How do you perceive the sustainability of this product/company?

- What is your perception of the communicated message based on the sender?

Appendix B

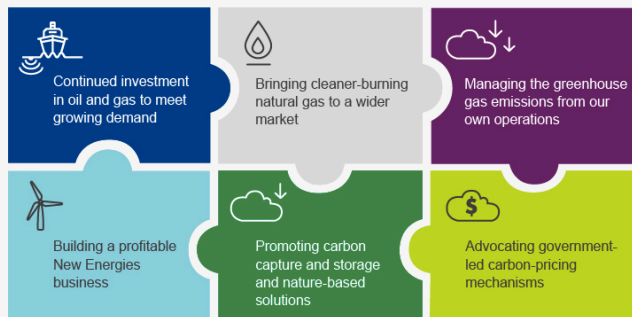Examples shown in Focus Groups in order as presented.

Energy transition

Society faces a dual challenge: how to make a transition to a low-carbon energy future to manage the risks of climate change, while also extending the economic and social benefits of energy to everyone on the planet.

FEATURED

Energy transition and climate change

We believe that the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which are largely caused by burning fossil fuels, will transform the energy system in this century.

- Continued investment in oil and gas to meet growing demand
- Bringing cleaner-burning natural gas to a wider market
- Managing the greenhouse gas emissions from our own operations
- Building a profitable New Energies business
- Promoting carbon capture and storage and nature-based solutions
- Advocating government-led carbon-pricing mechanisms

Fossil-free transport and travel: The Government's work to reduce the impact of transport on the climate

Sweden will be one of the world's first fossil-free welfare countries. To achieve this, all actors in society must work actively to reduce emissions. By taking responsibility for our climate impact at home, we are demonstrating leadership on the world stage. The transition to a green society creates new jobs. This is why the Government is investing in renewable energy, fossil-free travel and investment support for reduced emissions.

Shortcuts

> Central government budget
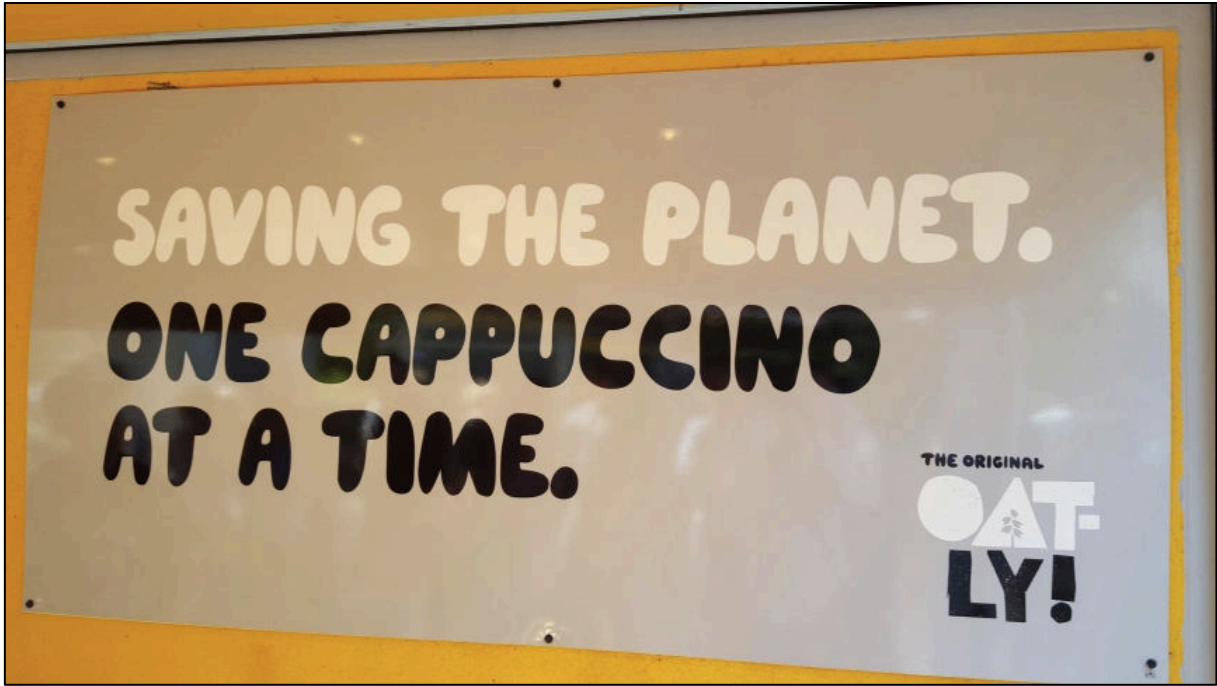
Appendix C

Interview Guide – Semi Structured Interviews

- When viewing an example of sustainability communication (like the examples from the focus group) that you find credible and from a source you trust, how does that make you feel about the product/issue?

- When viewing an example of sustainability communication (like the examples from the focus group) that you do not find credible and from a source you do not trust, how does that make you feel about the product/issue?

- Considering the communication you see in society about sustainability, how do you think you can live a sustainable life?