LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

In Search of the Meaning of Mindful Consumption

An Exploratory Study of Generation Y Consumers

by

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May 2018

Master's Programme in

International Marketing and Brand Management

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to understand what is the meaning of mindful consumption for Generation Y consumers. There exist theoretical studies on mindful consumption but there is limited empirical research on mindful consumption and its meaning.

Method: This is a qualitative study with a social constructionist and relativist approach as meaning is socially constructed and there is not one single truth. The study's research design includes participant-produced photographs and semi-structured interviews. The photographs are mainly used for photo elicitation during the interviews.

Theoretical Perspective: The insights from two frameworks will be used as a starting point of the thesis. The first framework is called the 'development of mindful consumption' and the second framework is the 'mindful consumption' construct.

Empirical Data: The empirical data of the thesis includes the collection of 205 participant-produced photographs and semi-structured interviews with 14 participants. The totality of the interviews is included in the study. In addition, a few of the participant-produced photographs have been included in the findings to illustrate the quotes of participants.

Conclusion: The findings have shown that the meaning of mindful consumption is complex and varied. Seven main themes have emerged from the empirical data and represent the meaning of mindful consumption for Generation Y consumers. The complexity of the meaning of mindful consumption makes it difficult to create a comprehensive framework or model that would represent its multi-faceted meaning. However, the findings have contributed to the knowledge on mindful consumption and its meaning to consumers.

Keywords: Mindful Consumption, Anti-consumption, Over-Consumption, Mindset, Responsibility

Acknowledgments

We would like to use this opportunity to express our gratitude to everyone who supported us during the course of this project and the master's programme as a whole. First, we would like to thank our supervisor, Peter Svensson, for his support, guidance and kindness. Although this thesis was only written within a period of ten weeks, he provided us with valuable insights. Secondly, we would like to thank Julienne Stewart-Sandgren for her time and constructive criticism.

Additionally, we want to thank the participants of our study, who provided us with very interesting insights and made this project altogether more meaningful to us. Also, we would like to thank our family and friends for their constant support during this year.

Lastly, we would like to thank the Swedish Institute for granting Liliana a scholarship and therefore giving her the opportunity to further develop professionally and academically.

Lund, Sweden, 28th May 2018

Liliana Ávila Sánchez   Alexandra Raymaekers

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'There is enough in the world for everyone's need; there is not enough for everyone's greed.'
- Gandhi

1 Introduction

Since the mid-18th century, industrialisation has fostered economic progress which in turn has improved life expectancy, education and technological innovation (Ben-Ami, 2012). Yet, it has also caused important environmental damage and unstable economies (Gregory, 2015). Over the last century, consumption has evolved into a culturally accepted means of achieving a good life and being successful and happy (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002). As a result, society has been over-consuming. Botsman and Rogers (2010) claim that this generation has consumed as much as all past generations put together. For Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011), over-consumption occurs when consumption reaches a problematic level because of its consequences on the environment and on the economy. It is increasingly being suggested that the earth's carrying capacity will be surpassed if the consumption patterns of the industrialised world are duplicated by developing countries (Heiskanen & Pantzar, 1997).

Scientist estimate that since the 1970's humankind has been consuming more natural resources than the earth can generate in a year (Earth Overshoot Day, n.d.). Using the United Nations' statistics on the humanity's ecological footprint and the planet's bio-capacity, the economist Andrew Simms started to calculate the day when human demands on nature would exceed the planet's regenerative ecological capacity and named it Earth Overshoot Day (Earth Overshoot Day, n.d.). According to the Global Footprint Network (n.d.), an international research organisation in charge of calculating the date that marks the Earth's ecological deficit, this day has moved from late September in 1997 to early August in 2017. Current data from this organisation suggest that humanity is using the resources of the equivalent of 1.7 planets and the effects of the ecological overspending are already visible in deforestation, biodiversity loss, drought and the build-up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

In the past, ordinary consumers had little knowledge of the outcomes of their consumption, which include social and environmental consequences (Heiskanen & Pantzar, 1997). Indeed, according to Kasser's (2002) book titled 'The High Price of Materialism', consumerism and materialism undermine people's quality of life. In his study, the author reveals that people

who focus on accumulating wealth and material possessions face a greater risk of unhappiness, anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. However, according to Petrini (2006), people are becoming increasingly aware of the necessity to consume less in today's society and new solutions to over-consumption have emerged over the years.

As a response to over-consumption, sustainable consumption has become one of the ways to fight the problem. It is defined as a type of consumption that "simultaneously optimises the environmental, social, and economic consequences of consumption in order to meet the needs of both current and future generations" (Luchs et al., 2011, p.2). Another solution to over-consumption is the concept of anti-consumption. Anti-consumption is the rejection of or resistance to the acquisition, use and disposition of goods (Zavestoski, 2002; Lee et al., 2011). Even though these two types of consumption differ from each other, they both provide solutions to the problem of over-consumption. According to Luchs et al. (2011), these new ways of consuming demonstrate that society is entering a new phase in the development of a more sustainable marketplace. As another solution to over-consumption, Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) propose the concept of mindful consumption. This type of consumption is presented as a solution to mindless consumption and to the different consequences that current consumption patterns have on the environment and the economy (Bahl et al., 2016).

1.1 Background

Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) distinguish two elements within mindful consumption: the mindful mindset and the mindful behaviour. Mindful consumption, as opposed to anti-consumption or sustainable consumption, has not been explored empirically by many scholars. Researchers such as Lim (2017) have only studied mindful consumption theoretically. In his paper, Lim (2017) presents sustainable consumption practices, which include responsible consumption, anti-consumption and mindful consumption. He states that the integration of these different perspectives can help the understanding of the required mindset of sustainable consumers. However, in his paper, the author does not explore this empirically. Other theoretical approaches to the concept of mindful consumption include the work of Bahl et al. (2016) who explore the transformative potential of mindfulness in the consumption context. The authors present different mindful practices that consumers can engage in to mitigate the negative outcomes of mindless consumption. Similar to Lim's work (2017), the research by Bahl et al. (2016) is merely theoretical, however, it calls for further

empirical studies on how mindfulness can contribute to the well-being of the consumer, the environment and the society.

Pusaksrikit, Pongsakornrungslip and Pongsakornrungslip (2013) have researched mindful consumption empirically in rural Thailand and have, as a result, further developed the theory on mindful consumption. Indeed, the authors have explored the process of developing mindful consumption and have found four stages in this process. However, this study was done in the context of a sufficient economy in rural Thailand which can make it difficult to apply to other settings. Nonetheless, the empirical work on mindful consumption is limited and there is a need to further develop the different theories on this concept.

There exists very limited research on the meaning assigned to mindful consumption by consumers themselves. One study by Aktan and Kaplan (2015) explores how consumers from Generation Y define mindful consumption and which are the communication patterns that would enhance sustainable consumption among this group. However, the authors' empirical work focuses on all Generation Y consumers which could suggest that they end up with a general definition of the concept of mindful consumption. In their work, Seth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) introduce the concept of mindful consumption and attempt to give meaning to it. However, they only provide a theoretical definition without any empirical support.

Also, limited research on mindful consumption has focused on Generation Y consumers even though they appear to be more mindful and sustainable than previous generations. Indeed, Generation Y is especially aware of the importance of consuming less in today's society (Petrini, 2006). According to Sternberg (2000), they understand the need to consume mindfully as well as take action. They are also more aware of existing and looming environmental issues (Franzen & Meyer, 2010). In recent years, generation-based research has been used effectively to identify different groups of consumers and their particular needs (Corsten, 1999). Since the end of the 20th century, it has been argued that attitudes and values that concern the environment and quality of life have gained more support than materialistic values (Chhetri, Hossain & Broom, 2014). However, these shifts in values and attitudes do not necessarily occur in every generation. Indeed, each generation has different values and attitudes towards consumption as these have been shaped by a varied mix of cultural influences (Chhetri, Hossain & Broom, 2014). According to Knoll (2010), Generation Y is deemed as more tolerant and confident and is more interested in creating social connections.

This generation also desires new experiences. In comparison, the previous generation, Generation X, is more sceptic and motivated by money (Knoll, 2010). For these reasons, Generation Y consumers are an interesting group to focus on when studying alternative modes of consumption such as mindful consumption.

1.2 Aims and Purpose

To understand what the concept of mindful consumption means to consumers with a caring mindset, the study aims to explore the under researched topic of the mindful consumption of Generation Y. In order to gain insights into this issue, the following research question will be addressed:

RQ: What is the meaning of mindful consumption for Generation Y?

Previous research on mindful consumption and this specific generational group includes the work by Aktan and Kaplan (2015) which has been cited above. Although the results of the qualitative research by these authors mark a first generational approach to mindful consumption, this concept is explored within a broad sample. Indeed, the researchers recruited Generation Y individuals with different backgrounds and consumption values, which can lead to general conclusions on the definition of mindful consumption. Since the objective of this study is to understand the meaning of mindful consumption for Generation Y consumers, the research will focus specifically on individuals who state that they have a caring mindset.

This is a qualitative study which includes both visual data in the form of participant-produced photographs and semi-structured interviews. It will explore the meaning of mindful consumption for Generation Y consumers born between 1980 and 1995.

As a starting point, this research will use the insights on mindful consumption from two previous studies which are summarised in two frameworks. The first one is the construct on mindful consumption by Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011), which is based on the combination of both a caring mindset and a caring behaviour. The second framework is Pusaksrikit, Pongsakornrungsilp and Pongsakornrungsilp's (2013) 'mindful consumption process'.

The main contribution of this study will be to give meaning to the theoretical concept of mindful consumption in an empirical setting. This approach will contribute to the literature on mindful consumption and on the development of the mindful mindset of Generation Y consumers. Indeed, these topics lack empirical research and theoretical development. The present study will also aim to refine the existing theories by Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) and Pusaksrikit, Pongsakornrungslip and Pongsakornrungslip (2013). In addition, the aimed practical contributions of this study will be to understand how government and education can enable the development of a mindful mindset.

1.3   Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five main parts: (i) the introduction, (ii) the literature and theoretical review, (iii) the methodology, (iv) the analysis and findings and (v) the discussion and conclusions. In the introduction, the topic of mindful consumption is presented as a solution to over-consumption and the background of the study is introduced. In the following chapter, the literature and theory on mindful consumption and other types of greener consumption are reviewed. Next, the methodology chapter will present the research design and its limitations as well as the ethical considerations, which will allow the researchers to answer the research question. Following the methodology chapter, the data analysis and the findings of the study will be revealed. Finally, in the last chapter, the discussion of the results as well as the practical and theoretical implications of the research will be presented.

2 Literature and Theoretical Review

In this the chapter, the literature and theory on mindful consumption and on the different types of consumption that are deemed greener or more sustainable will be presented. The concept of mindful consumption will be explained and introduced as another solution to over-consumption and to mindless consumption. Additionally, the theoretical frameworks of mindful consumption will be presented. These include the theory on the 'development of mindful consumption' as well as the theory on the caring mindset and behaviour of consumers. In addition, the concept of anti-consumption and sustainable consumption will be explained as a way to differentiate these from the concept of mindful consumption. The attitude-behaviour gaps as well as the barriers to greener consumption will also be explained to further understand these different ways of consuming. Overall, it can be concluded that the topic of mindful consumption has been mainly researched theoretically and very little empirical research has been done on the concept. This is why the concept of mindful consumption needs to be explored further.

2.1 Over-Consumption and Materialism

According to Moschis (2017), materialism and over-consumption represent the dark side of consumer behaviour and have been extensively researched over the years. Burroughs and Rindfleisch (2002) define materialism as the value that is put on the acquisition of material objects. It has been found in previous research that materialism is negatively associated with well-being (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002). Indeed, the authors state that past literature suggests that materialism has long-term negative consequences not only for the individual consumer but also for society in general. It has been found that materialistic individuals are less happy (Belk, 1985) and have higher levels of depression (Kasser & Ryan, 1993). These negative consequences are caused by the tension that exists between family, community and material values (Schudson, 1991; Twitchell, 1999). Indeed, according to Burroughs and Rindfleisch (2002), materialistic values are positioned on the opposite end of the spectrum compared to collective-oriented values. This can create a conflict in an individual's mind. To solve this conflict, individuals will often attempt to realign their values and will, for example, choose to become less materialistic (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002). Several types of consumption emerge as certain individuals try to realign their values. Some of the commonly

known ones are sustainable or green consumption and the less known concepts of anti-consumption and mindful consumption.

2.2 Mindful Consumption

Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) introduce the term of mindful consumption as a customer approach to sustainability. In their research, the authors link consumption with the concept of mindfulness, which is explained as the quality of human consciousness and awareness of their acts. Additionally, mindfulness has been defined by Kabat-Zinn (1994) as paying attention to the present moment on purpose. According to Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1991) and Kabat-Zinn (1994), mindfulness leads the mind to the experience itself which prevents people from falling prey to their own expectations and opinions and enables them to free themselves from a state of unconsciousness. According to Epstein (1999), mindfulness is an attitude of mind and a discipline. This approach to consumption is suggested as a solution to address over-consumption. For Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011), over-consumption is understood as the stage when consumption reaches a problematic level by becoming unaffordable because of its consequences on the environment or the economy. The authors also describe it as a phase that has the potential to affect negatively the well-being of a person or a community.

In her work on consumers' moral consciousness, McGregor (2006) discusses the consumer's capacity to avoid reacting automatically and instead take decisions based on thoughts about what is right and wrong, good or bad. According to the author, moral consciousness is a about acting from new levels of awareness. McGregor (2006) proposes the 'affective domain learning' as a tool to help conceptualise the process of transforming one's internal value system and provides a good overview of how someone gains a deeper awareness of something, to the point that their entire world view and lifestyle change. This could be linked to Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas' (2011) concept of mindful consumption, which comprises both a mindful mindset and behaviour.

2.2.1 The Concept of Mindful Consumption

The model presented by Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) attempts to provide an alternative marketing view to redirect consumption patterns rather than restrict consumption (See Figure 1). According to the authors, mindful consumption is based on the combination of a mindful

mindset (sense of caring) and behaviour (temperance). This suggests that the consumers are conscious in thought of the impact of their consumption and are in the position to choose whether or not consume sustainably despite the external influences. As presented by Peattie and Collins (2009), consumption does not only describe the purchase action itself, but must be understood as a process that includes the acquisition, use, handling and disposal of a product.
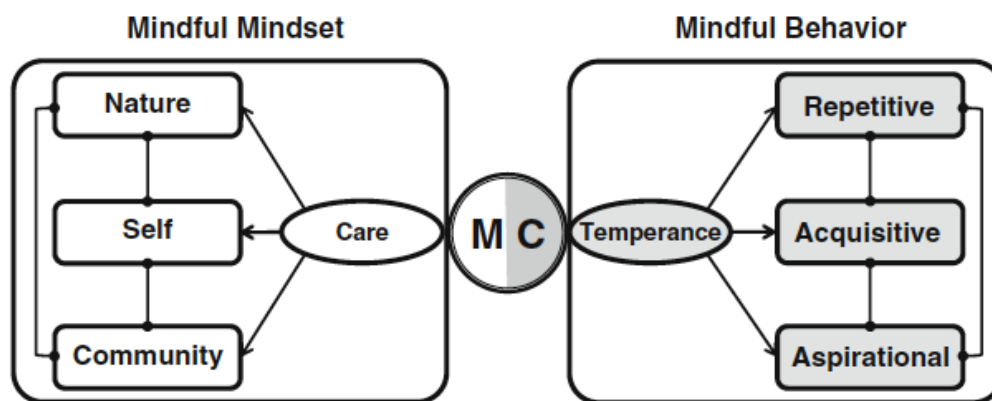
Figure 1. Model of Mindful Consumption by Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011)

The authors explain that each facet of mindful consumption is characterised by a core attribute. Regarding the mindful mindset, a conscious sense of caring towards the self, the community, and the nature should reflect one's values and attitudes (Sheth, Sethia & Srinivas, 2011). According to the authors, caring about the self is about paying attention to one's well-being, both emotional and economic. Since Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas' (2011) concept of mindful consumption is positioned as a solution to over-consumption, their thesis about personal well-being is mainly focused on the relationship between materialism and happiness and economic well-being. When explaining the sense of caring towards the self, the authors present evidence of what other scholars have identified in regard to the negative relationship of consumerism, material possessions, happiness and life satisfaction.

The sense of caring for the community presented by Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) is also tied to the idea of the detrimental relationship between excessive consumption and collective well-being. The authors summarise that over-consumption affects societal well-being in three ways: the undervaluing of human relationships, environmental degradation and fewer support for public goods and services. Meanwhile, according to Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011), a sense of care for the environment is viewed from three different strands: preservationism,

conservationism (nature as a resource for humankind) and human welfare ecology (environment valued from an aesthetic angle).

The sense of caring for the self, the community and the nature should serve as a motivator to adopt temperance in consumption, which is the basis of a mindful behaviour. In this facet, the authors argue that the consumers' actions should aim to be optimal and in accordance with their values (Sheth, Sethia & Srinivas, 2011). They also need to be aware of multiple perspectives and be attentive to the consequences of their acts (Sternberg, 2000). In this sense, temperance needs to be applied to three different practices of consumption: repetitive, acquisitive and aspirational. Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) describe repetitive consumption as the practice of acquiring products with a short usable life. These are generally disposable products that enter into the cycle of buying, discarding and buying again; and products that are discarded because of their obsolescence (Sheth, Sethia & Srinivas, 2011). Meanwhile acquisitive consumption refers to the phenomenon of buying things that exceed one's needs or capacity to consume. The authors explain that the negative effects of excessive consumption have led to the development of services and solutions for those who need help and space to manage their possessions. Finally, Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) present the category of aspirational consumption, which is associated with the concept of conspicuous consumption. According to the authors, it represents the desire of buying things to compete with others and be recognised by one's possessions, even if they exceed one's financial capacities.

Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) also present four consumer tendencies for mindful consumption based on the consumers' mindset or attitude (caring vs. non-caring), and their behaviour inclination (excessive vs. temperate) (see Figure 2).
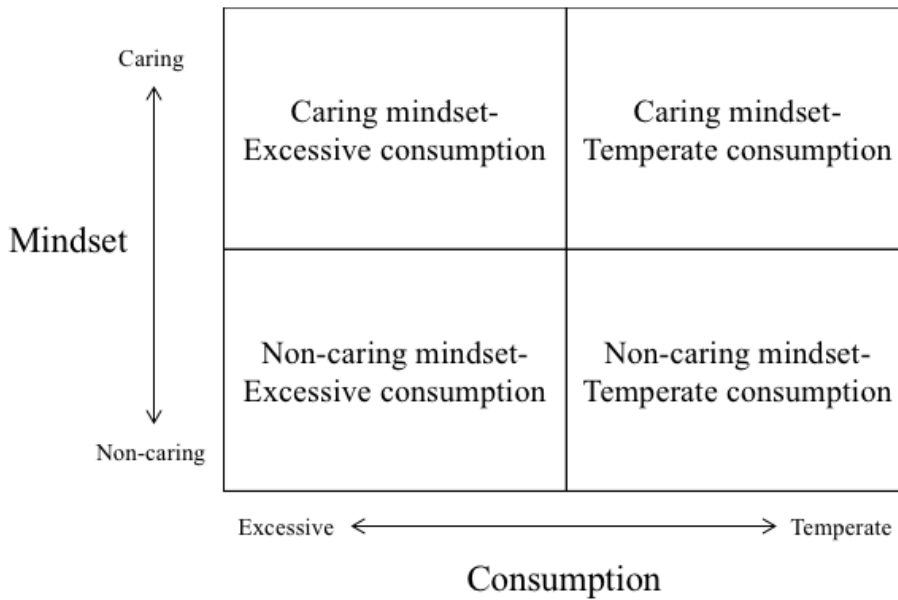
Caring

↑

Mindset

↓

Non-caring

Caring mindset- Excessive consumption	Caring mindset- Temperate consumption
Non-caring mindset- Excessive consumption	Non-caring mindset- Temperate consumption

Excessive ⟵ ⟶ Temperate

Consumption

Figure 2: Consumer Proclivities for Mindful Consumption (Sheth, Sethia & Srinivas, 2011)

'Caring mindset-temperate consumption' is the first of the categories proposed by the authors. It includes consumers with a caring mindset and temperate consumption practices. The second category, 'caring mindset-excessive consumption', describes consumers with a caring mindset but that are not able to temperate their consumption. A third group, 'non-caring mindset-temperate consumption', refers to consumers that avoid excess but lack of a caring mindset. The last one, 'non-caring mindset-excessive consumption', is used to outline consumers that do not mind about their level of consumption or the consequences of their practices.

The thesis presented by Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) introduces mindful consumption as a new concept that aims to be sustainable through the integration of both a mindful mindset and behaviour. It also builds upon previous studies on the negative relationship between materialism and happiness (Argyle, 1987; Belk, 1984; Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Frey, 2008; Jackson, 2009; Kasser, 2002; Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Lane, 2000; Layard, 2005; Whybrow, 2005), and prior findings on the association between mindfulness, happiness and less consumption (Brown & Kasser, 2005; Brown & Ryan, 2003, 2004; Jacob & Brinkerhoff, 1999; Rosenberg, 2004). These studies have explored the relationship between personal and planetary well-being through a more ecologically responsible and conscious behaviour.

2.2.2 Other Theoretical Approaches to Mindful Consumption

The conceptual integration of mindfulness and consumption proposed by Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) has been explored theoretically by a limited number of scholars as an attempt to study the field of sustainable consumption. In his theoretical paper, Lim (2017), presents three different literature streams to better understand sustainable consumption practices. These include responsible consumption, anti-consumption and mindful consumption. His work reflects on how each perspective and their integration can help better understand the mindset required for sustainable consumption.

Lim (2017) first introduces the premises and insights of each of the streams. For responsible consumption, he describes how the consumers' decisions reflect their social, environmental and ethical concerns (Antil, 1984; Fisk, 1973; Lim, 2016; Roberts, 1995; Webb, Mohr, & Harris, 2008). While for anti-consumption the author summarises the premises of different scholars on how consumers reject consumption through aversion, avoidance, and abandonment, which are reflected by rejection, restriction and reclamation alternatives (Hogg and Abrams, 1998; Iyer & Muncy, 2009; Lee, 2006; Lee, Fernandez & Hyman, 2009; Lee, Motion, & Conroy, 2009; Penaloza & Price, 1993; Zavestoski, 2002). Lastly, for mindful consumption, Lim (2017) agrees with Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas' (2011) initial thesis on how a mindful consumption reflects the awareness and conscience of a mindful mindset with a sense of care for the self, nature and community. However, the author argues that the consumers' practices should apply temperance not only in the private accumulative, repetitive and aspirational consumption practices. According to him, it should also include the public consumption, since this way of consuming might have more serious sustainability implications.

Besides his contribution to the theoretical concept of mindful consumption, Lim (2017) argues that by integrating the premises and insights of each perspective, it would be possible to better understand the mindset required for a sustainable consumption. He also claims that a research integrating the theoretical background of responsible consumption and anti-consumption could offer valuable insights on the dilemma of whether to consume differently or to consume less. Nevertheless, this research is limited to theory and does not explore any of the concepts empirically.

Other theoretical attempts to mindful consumption include the work by Pusaksrikit, Pongsakornrungsilp and Pongsakornrungsilp (2013), who study the concept of mindful consumption through the sufficient economy framework. According to the authors, a sufficient economy is based on the principle of balance between the needs and wants to achieve happiness. Pusaksrikit, Pongsakornrungsilp and Pongsakornrungsilp (2013) argue that it also appeals for a sensible and sustainable development that encompasses the interdependence among people, nature and society. It also highlights the importance of conscious efforts to consume moderately (Krongkaew, 2003). By adopting this framework, the authors explore the process of developing mindful consumption and the elements that influence both a sense of caring and temperance in behaviour. Through an empirical research conducted in a rural region in Thailand that successfully adopted a sufficiency economy community programme, the researchers identified four stages of mindful consumption: 'willingness', 'training', 'practicing' and 'showing and caring' (See Figure 3).
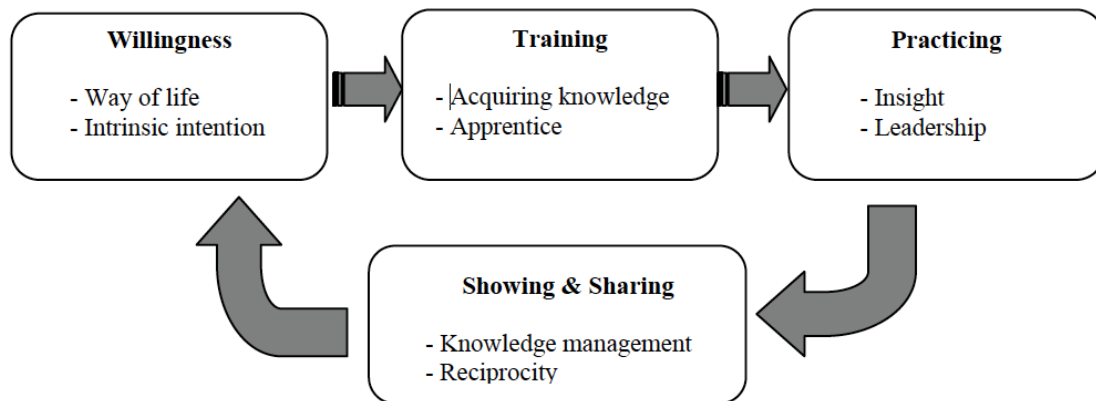
Figure 3: The Mindful Consumption Process (Pusaksrikit, Pongsakornrungsilp & Pongsakornrungsilp, 2013)

The first phase of this model, 'willingness', refers to the process of recognising the benefits of the sufficient economy and the desire to adopt certain practices in order to be part of the network (Pusaksrikit, Pongsakornrungsilp & Pongsakornrungsilp, 2013). The study also showed an interest from the participants to acquire knowledge and be informed. This would allow them to make mindful decisions in the different stages of consumption, which is the second stage of the process ('training') proposed by Pusaksrikit, Pongsakornrungsilp & Pongsakornrungsilp (2013). 'Practicing' is the third stage of this process, which involves leadership and consuming in a comfortable but measured manner. The final category

presented by the authors, 'Showing and Sharing', revealed the participants' desire to share their knowledge with the community in order to invite others to engage in mindful consumption practices. This paper obtained key empirical insights about the adoption of mindful consumption and identified a four-stage process. Nonetheless, the results reflect the practices and thoughts of a homogeneous rural community. This represents an opportunity to explore if other consumer groups, such as the Generation Y, can replicate or provide different variables to the results.

Bahl et al. (2016) contribute to the concept of mindful consumption by presenting mindfulness as a solution to mindless consumption. The authors propose that mindfulness can help reduce the consumption problems and negative impacts that mindless consumption can have towards the individual, the community and the environmental well-being (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Although the authors' definition of mindful consumption is in essence similar to Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas' (2011), they stress on the fact that the consumers' decisions need to be guided by their sensations, thoughts and emotions rather than only paying attention to the impact of their behaviour. They introduce the notion of the transformative potential of mindful consumption. They argue that when consumers learn to listen to the stimuli, both internal and external, they can enhance their awareness of their behaviour and are able to have a better understanding of the nature of their consumption. The authors propose mindfulness as an alternative to merely informing consumers about their choices, which has proven to not be enough to promote personal and environmental well-being.

Bahl et al. (2016) highlight the importance for consumers to direct and sustain that enhanced awareness during the consumption process. This state is developed by the consumers' capacity to self-regulate their actions. It also requires the ability to think and conceptualise the experience in the moment rather than only let their actions be driven by the internal or external stimuli without deliberation (Brown, Kasser, & Creswell 2007; Hölzel et al., 2011; Mick, 2016; Sheth, Sethia & Srinivas, 2011). By self-regulating their actions, consumers can avoid practices that only provide ephemeral happiness, such as over-consumption or addictions (Bahl et al., 2016). According to the authors, these are practices that lead to unsustainable and unhealthy lifestyles and that can have a negative impact on the environment (repetitive consumption and waste of resources).

Bahl et al. (2016) position mindful consumption as a solution to mindless consumption and its different negative consequences. The authors also recognise that the adoption of mindfulness in consumption is a task that requires both time and resources, which can be a challenge. It requires the consumer to be opened to adopt new ways of living, which can be demanding, especially in the initial stages (Bahl et al., 2016). The authors also pinpoint further studies in different areas which could help better understand the phenomenon of mindfulness in consumption. This quest for future research includes the exploration of how mindfulness can contribute to the individual, societal and ecological well-being of different age groups, such as Generation Y, which is the consumer group that will be studied in this research.

2.2.3 Mindful Consumption and Generation Y

One of the few attempts to analyse the concept of mindful consumption within the Generation Y group includes the study by Aktan and Kaplan (2015). In their research, the authors aim to define mindful consumption from the perspective of Generation Y and identify patterns of communication that enable this group to raise its consciousness about mindful consumption. The authors build their thesis on previous characterisations of the Generation Y. Previous studies describe this group as an attractive and powerful market segment in terms of power of acquisition and consumption, and as a generation who is more aware and concerned about problems in the world (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011; Fromm & Garton, 2013; Hill & Lee, 2012; Jayson, 2006; Nayyar, 2001; Williams & Page, 2011).

In accordance with previous studies, the research establishes that in spite of their potential buying power, Generation Y individuals are conscious about the importance of consuming mindfully and feel that they need to take action (Sternberg, 2000). Aktan and Kaplan (2015) identify two approaches to mindful consumption in the Generation Y segment, individualism and collectivism. The former reflects how consumers are concerned about their individual needs and well-being. However, the study revealed that there is a higher inclination for collectivist attention and it is reflected by the feeling that they need to contribute to a change. Aktan and Kaplan (2015, p. 431) also identify three categories in mindful consumption: "consuming in accordance with your needs", "consuming on a level without damaging the exterior world and nature", and "a process of logical thinking and state of awareness".

Regarding the patterns of communication, the authors conclude that campaigns that aim to reach emotions and supported by facts are relevant for Generation Y individuals and can help increase awareness in society. Aktan and Kaplan (2015) contribute to the existing literature on mindful consumption by providing an understanding of how Generation Y perceive mindfulness in consumption and what type of communication is valuable to them. However, there is a lack of exploration of the concept of mindful consumption with individuals that state that they have a caring mindset.

2.3 Green Consumption and Sustainable Consumption

As a solution to over-consumption, 'greener' types of consumption have emerged over the years. There are many different ways to describe 'greener' consumption which are similar to mindful consumption: green consumption, sustainable consumption or anti-consumption. It is important to describe these different types of consumption to understand the similarities but also the differences between them. There are no major differences between green and sustainable consumption. According to Luchs et al. (2011), sustainable consumption simultaneously optimises the economic, social and environmental consequences of the purchase, use and disposition stages of consumption. The authors add that sustainable consumption aims to meet the needs of both current and future generations. Green consumption has been defined by Haws, Winterich and Naylor (2013) as aiming to not only conserve environmental resources but also personal, financial and physical resources. This definition of green consumption is similar to the concept of sustainable consumption by Luchs et al. (2011), which aims to optimise economic, social and environmental resources.

The global consensus is that sustainable/green consumption is important and necessary and represents an ideal that consumers would like to achieve (Luchs et al., 2011). However, according to the authors, this is more of an abstract goal for consumers. To make it less abstract, Luchs et al. (2011) discuss a set of options in order for people to consume sustainably across the three different stages of consumption: from acquisition to usage and disposition. In the first one, the stage of purchase and acquisition, the authors propose to see consumption as a cycle and not as a linear process. They suggest buying pre-owned or used products as a way to extend the life of existing products. The authors also advise renting or leasing goods to increase the intensity of use. Finally, they recommend postponing or avoid

purchases that are viewed as unnecessary. In the second phase, the stage of usage, Luchs et al. (2011) suggest using products efficiently and to extract all the utility available. In the third one, the stage of disposition, the authors advise recycling as well as donating and selling used goods. All of these suggestions can transform the abstract goal of sustainable consumption to an achievable way of consuming.

2.4 Anti-Consumption

In addition to sustainable or green consumption, Seegebarth et al. (2016) state that it is primordial to take into account the concept of anti-consumption when researching alternative modes of consumption. Indeed, anti-consumption involves fighting the problem of over-consumption which is considered unsustainable (Iyer & Muncy, 2009). According to Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011), over-consumption represents the neglect of both the environment and the community's well-being. According to Zavestoski (2002) and Lee et al. (2011), anti-consumption is the resistance to or rejection of the acquisition, use and disposition of goods. From a sustainability perspective, anti-consumption means that consumers decide to reduce their own consumption as a way to support social, economic and environmental goals but also individual self-interest and well-being (Black, 2010; Seegebarth et al., 2016). However, according to Craig-Lees (2006), anti-consumption does not only reflect a reduction of consumption but can also be targeted towards specific brands and products. This is why anti-consumers can be placed in different categories such as 'global impact consumers' and 'simplifiers' (Iyer & Muncy, 2009). According to the authors, 'global impact consumers' want to reduce their general level of consumption to benefit society and the planet as they do not believe that the current levels of consumption are good for people. 'Simplifiers' want to live a less consumer-oriented lifestyle and have a simpler life as they believe that maximising their consumption can cause stress and distraction (Iyer & Muncy, 2009; Zavestoski, 2002). By looking at Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs, one can further understand anti-consumption. Indeed, Zavestoski (2002) suggests that lower-level needs such as safety and psychological needs can be met through consumption, however, it is much more difficult to meet higher level needs such as self-fulfilment needs.

2.5 Behaviour Gaps and Barriers to Consumption

Nonetheless, despite consumers' concerns towards the environment and society, many of them fail to purchase environmentally friendly products or act 'green' (Gupta & Ogden, 2009). This is called the attitude-behaviour gap or the value-action gap (Olson, 2013) because consumers' green values and attitudes often do not translate into actual behaviour (Leiserowitz, Kates & Parris, 2006). According to the literature on sustainable consumption and anti-consumption, there are many barriers that restrict the translation of sustainable values and attitudes into actual actions (Leiserowitz, Kates & Parris, 2006). However, there is no consensus among scholars when it comes to what are the different barriers to sustainable consumption. Indeed, according to Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002), many theoretical frameworks have been created to explain the different barriers, but the question is so complex that it cannot be summarised in a single framework.

Leiserowitz, Kates and Parris (2006) distinguish three types of barriers: (i) strength of values, (ii) individual barriers, (iii) structural barriers. The first type of barrier is the existence and strengths of particular values and attitudes (Leiserowitz, Kates & Parris, 2006). This has also been observed by Rajecki (1982), who calls this type of barrier normative influences. The second type of barrier is the individual barrier, which includes lack of time, money, knowledge and power (Leiserowitz, Kates & Parris, 2006). This type of barrier has also been mentioned by Olson (2013), who states that higher prices and lower quality of green alternatives represent a potential explanation to the attitude-behaviour gap. Hines, Hungerford and Tomera (1986-87) call these situational factors whereas Blake (1999) names them practicality barriers. Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) talk about internal factors which include individual motivation and environmental knowledge as well as the emotional involvement and locus of control. The third type is structural barriers, which include laws, regulations and social norms (Leiserowitz, Kates & Parris, 2006). Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) call these external influences which include institutional, social and cultural factors.

Blake (1999) adds another type of barrier to sustainable actions: responsibility. According to the author, this barrier is very close to the notion of 'locus of control' mentioned by Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002). Blake (1999) states that people who fail to act sustainably feel like they cannot change the situation and have no responsibility for it. This can be related to one of Rajecki's (1982) four causes to explain the attitude-behaviour gap: the direct versus indirect

experience of environmental problem cause. This means that the consumers are not likely to consume sustainably if they do not have a direct experience with environmental problems. According to Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002), demographic factors such as gender and years of education as well as desires for comfort and convenience are also factors that influence sustainable attitudes and actions.

2.6 Summary

To summarise, as a response to materialistic values and over-consumption in society, different types of consumption have emerged in recent years as a way to counter the negative consequences of consumption. These different consumption types include anti-consumption, sustainable consumption and mindful consumption. On one hand, anti-consumption is the resistance to or rejection of the acquisition, use and disposition of goods (Zavestoski, 2002; Lee et al., 2011). On the other hand, sustainable consumption is the optimisation of the economic, social and environmental consequences of the purchase, use and disposition stages of consumption (Luchs et al., 2011). Mindful consumption, however, aims to redirect consumption patterns rather than restrict consumption, which is why it differs from anti-consumption (Sheth, Sethia & Srinivas, 2011). Mindful consumption is based on the concept of mindfulness which is defined by Kabat-Zinn (1994) as paying attention to the present moment on purpose. According to Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011), practicing mindful consumption means that consumers understand the impact of their consumption and that they can choose whether or not to consume sustainably. This highlights the importance of being aware and mindful when taking consumption decisions, which is why it differs from the concept of sustainable consumption. Thus, mindful consumption is a concept that can be differentiated from sustainable consumption and anti-consumption as it puts emphasis on the concept of mindfulness. As little empirical research has been done on this concept, an exploratory study on mindful consumption is needed in order to gain rich insights into this phenomenon and understand the meaning of it for consumers with this mindset.

3 Methodology

In this chapter, the methodology that has been crafted to answer the research question: *'What is the meaning of mindful consumption for Generation Y?* will be presented. This segment will include the philosophical and research approach, as well as the research design and its limitations. Additionally, the ethical considerations and the quality assessment of the data will be included.

3.1 Philosophical Approach

This section will deal with the philosophy of the research. For many centuries, philosophers have debated the relationship between theory and data (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). According to the authors, it is important that the researchers understand the philosophical issues of research. Indeed, the authors argue that this will help them to have a clear idea of their reflexive role in research methods. They also state that it will help them to understand what evidence needs to be gathered and how it is to be interpreted.

The central philosophical debates concern matters of epistemology and ontology (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). For this study, the aim is to explore and understand the meaning of mindful consumption for Generation Y. Accordingly, the epistemology of the study is social constructionism as the reality is determined by people and not by external factors. The ontology of the research is relativism as the reality is subjective and socially constructed (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Indeed, as the aim is to find out the meaning of the concept of mindful consumption, the reality will be different for various participants as it will be based on their perceptions. Also, there will not be a single truth out there and the reality will change over time (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

3.2 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the study is exploratory as the aim of the research is to find out what is happening and to seek new insights about the meaning of mindful consumption for Generation Y (Robson, 2002). Adams and Schvaneveldt (1991) compare exploratory research to travelling and exploring. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), doing an exploratory study is particularly useful if the researchers wish to clarify their understanding

of a phenomenon. Additionally, according to Cooper and Schindler (2013), exploration allows the researchers to develop concepts and establish priorities. For this study, mindful consumption among Generation Y will be explored as a way to further develop the concept of mindful consumption and better understand this phenomenon. The main advantages of doing exploratory research are that it is adaptable to change, flexible and gives the opportunity to the researchers to change the direction of the study as new insights are found (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

3.3 Qualitative Method

To explore the phenomenon of mindful consumption and find new insights about the meaning of this concept for Generation Y, a qualitative study has been chosen. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), qualitative research enables discovery and exploration of a topic. As the purpose of this study is exploratory, a qualitative methodology has been chosen over a quantitative one. Qualitative research differs from quantitative methods as it seeks to describe and decode the meaning, not the frequency, of a phenomenon in the social world (Van Maanen, 1979). Meanwhile, quantitative research seeks to measure precisely something, which is not the aim of this study (Cooper & Schindler, 2013).

3.4 Research Approach

There are three approaches to research: inductive, deductive and abductive. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), when the researchers plan on exploring the data and to later develop theories from the findings, it is called the inductive approach. When the researchers use the literature to identify theories that will be tested using the data collected, this is the deductive approach (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). For this study on mindful consumption, the abductive approach is used. It is seen as a mixture of inductive and deductive approaches (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). The main characteristic of the abductive approach is a constant shift between the empirical and the theoretical worlds (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). According to the authors, this approach aims at refining existing theories rather than creating new ones. For this study, the purpose is to refine the existing theories on mindful consumption and not to test or generate a completely new theory. The starting point will be the insights from the studies by Sheth, Shia and Srinivas (2011) and Pusaksrikit, Pongsakornrungsilp and Pongsakornrungsilp (2013), which have been presented earlier in the

thesis. The abductive approach of this study will allow the researchers to go back and forth between the theory on mindful consumption and the empirical insights gained during the collection of data.

3.5 Purposive Sampling

This research was conducted with individuals from Generation Y using a purposive sampling strategy. This sampling method was chosen since the researchers have a clear idea of the type of units needed in order to meet the purpose of the study (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This strategy is based on a non-probability sample design that ensures that specific characteristics of a segment of population can be taken into consideration when different criteria for inclusion in a sample are defined (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

There were a number of criteria for the screening of the sample for this study. Participants were firstly selected from the Generation Y segment. Currently, there is no consensus regarding the range that this generation represents or the name that should be used to describe it: millennials, echo-boomers, internet generation, iPod generation, among others (Aktan & Kaplan, 2015). Some scholars say that this generation groups people born between 1980 and early 2000, while others argue that these are individuals born from 1978 to 1991 (Aktan & Kaplan, 2015, Arsenault, 2004; Brown, 2017; Lescohier, 2006; WJSchroer Company, N.D). Independently of the boundaries or names found in the literature, there are a number of common characteristics that describe this generation regarding their position in the marketplace. Generation Y is described as a representative part of the population with an increased access to education when compared to previous generations (Hill & Lee, 2012; Levenson, 2010; Ramesh & Vasuki, 2013). According to the authors, this generation is also gaining a more important share in the workplace. They are currently one of the biggest consumer groups and are aware and concerned about the problems in the world, including environmental issues (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011; Fromm & Garton, 2013; Hill & Lee, 2012; Jayson, 2006; Nayyar, 2001; Williams & Page, 2011). This research focuses on young adults born between 1980 and 1995, currently aged between 22 and 38 years old. This age range was selected since it groups individuals that possess a certain type of financial independence which enables them to make their own decisions regarding their lifestyle, habits and consumption.

Other demographic criteria to select the sample included the level of education of the participants. The research focuses on individuals that already own or are completing bachelors or master's degrees. Education was an important criterion for the selection of participants for the research as a positive relationship between education and environmental concern has been identified (Arcury & Christianson,1993; Chanda, 1999; Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Hsu & Rothe, 1996; Klineberg, McKeever & Rothenbach, 1998).

A third guiding principle for sampling was theory. The researchers selected participants that meet the characteristics of individuals with a mindful mindset (sense of caring), which is one of the two facets of the model of mindful consumption proposed by Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011). As explained by the authors, a mindful mindset is the intangible facet of consumption and refers to values, attitudes and expectations encircling consumption. According to Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011), mindful consumers are guided by a mindful mindset that reflects their sense of caring towards the self (one's well-being), the nature (environment well-being and preservation) and the community (collective well-being). The selection of participants based on theoretical sampling enabled the researchers to choose individuals from Generation Y who said that they possess a caring mindset, which guides their behaviour in their everyday life activities, including consumption. This sampling method suited the objective of this research and allowed the exploration of how individuals with a caring mindset from Generation Y give meaning to the phenomenon of mindful consumption (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

3.6 Data Collection

The data of the study was collected through two different methods: participant-produced photographs for the purpose of photo elicitation and semi-structured interviews. The combination of these methods aimed to collect the views and experiences of the participants of the study from different perspectives (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The collection and the discussion about the images produced by the participants as well as the testimonies collected in the posterior interviews provided valuable insights about what is the meaning of mindful consumption for Generation Y. Each stage of the data collection process will be described in this section.

3.6.1 Phase 1: Participant-Produced Photographs

The first phase of the empirical research consisted of the collection of participant-produced photographs for a period of seven days. These images were later used in the interview stage of the research for photo elicitation. This interview technique uses visual mediums to generate discussions and data about images (Glaw et al., 2017).

Although text and audio are among the most used types of data in qualitative research, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) argue that the collection of visual data is a valid method to explore situations or phenomena. According to Glaw et al. (2017), visual data add further depth, richness and validity to other data collection methods such as interviews. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) define visual data as all the visual material that provide a sense of a specific situation and that can reveal insights of human experiences. The authors present two types of visual data, primary and secondary. On one hand, primary visual data refers to the material specifically created for the study, either by the researcher or the subject of research. On the other hand, secondary visual data include all the images that were taken by third parties for purposes other than research (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This study will solely use primary visual data in the form of participant-produced photographs.

During a period of seven days, the 14 individuals that took part in the research were asked to take pictures of the things that they did which they considered to be caring for the environment, the community and the self. In the instructions provided at the beginning of the research (Appendix A), the participants were asked to take the photographs and deliver them to the researchers on a daily basis. The 14 participants provided 205 pictures in total. In the table below (Table 1), the information that is presented includes the participant number, the age, the level of studies, the occupation, the number of pictures sent as well as the name of the participant. The real names of the participants have been replaced by other given names in order to maintain anonymity.

Table 1: Participants' Information

Participant	Name	Age	Level of Studies	Occupation	Number of Pictures
1	Victor	28	Masters	Student	27
2	Elisabeth	25	Masters	Student	18
3	Anne	24	Masters	Student	11
4	Harry	23	Masters	Student	9
5	Angelica	36	Bachelors	Entrepreneur	14
6	Sofia	26	Masters	Student	8
7	Celine	27	Medical School	Doctor	22
8	Olivia	22	Masters	Student	8
9	Richard	26	Bachelors	Entrepreneur	13
10	Isabella	23	Bachelors	Student	9
11	Oscar	27	Masters	Student	35
12	Lucia	24	Masters	Student	15
13	Amanda	27	Masters	Student	11
14	Gabriel	32	Masters	Student	5

The use of participant-produced photographs has been identified as a useful exploratory method to study society as it provides insights that are not accessible through other means (Banks, 2007). Besides stimulating discussions between the researcher and the subject of study in posterior interview settings, participant-produced photographs can reveal the individual's perception of the world through image-based data (Banks, 2007; Seegebarth et al., 2016; Sharples et al., 2003). It can also allow the participants to think about who they are and to express this through their photographs (Noland, 2006). This collaborative approach to research has been widely used is sociology and anthropology since it enables the researchers to perceive the vision of the world as the subjects of study see it (Banks, 2007; Sharples et al., 2003).

The use of participant-produced photographs enables the understanding of how images can reflect the participants' ideas and values regarding the concept of mindfulness in consumption (Hammer et al., 2015). The primary visual data produced by the subjects of study will provide the researchers with a rich variety of qualitative data that is expected to reflect both the knowledge and the experience of multiple individuals regarding their mindful consumption (Hammer et al., 2015). The daily record of these images also enabled a closer relationship between the researchers and the participants, which was an advantage in the subsequent interview stage of the study.

3.6.2 Phase 2: Semi-Structured Interviews

As a final stage of the data collection process of this study, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews in order to better understand the participants' pictures and what meaning they attribute to mindful consumption. This non-standardised interview type was selected for the research since the objective of the research is exploratory and aims to obtain deep insights from the interviewees. Due to their flexibility and thoroughness, interviews are deemed to be the most widely used method in qualitative research (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) separate interviews in three categories: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. According to the authors, semi-structured interviews offer flexibility with the possibility of adjusting the questions. As the purpose of this type of interview is to obtain more natural and authentic responses from the participants, the researchers prepared a topic guide for the interviews rather than a structured list of questions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The design of this guide was intended to obtain the interviewees' reflections and understanding of the meaning of mindful consumption in a rich and comprehensive way. Additionally, the researchers decided to conduct the interviews individually rather than in multi-persons interviews or focus groups since the opinions of the interviewees could be influenced or restricted by a group.

As explained in the previous segment, during the interviews, the researchers used participant-produced photographs for photo elicitation in order to better understand the motivations and rationale behind each picture. During the interviews, the researchers aimed to cover the different topics of the guide in the discussions while offering flexibility to the interviewees on

how to respond (See Appendix B). Laddering techniques were also used to better understand the individuals' rationale on mindful consumption and obtain examples. The interviews were conducted with 14 participants and lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. Each one was scheduled in accordance with the time availability of the participants. The interviews were conducted through face-to-face, phone and Skype meetings. All of the interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed for further analysis. The researchers also took notes during the interviews.

The original topic guide that had been drafted before the interviews changed over time. Some topics such as responsibility and awareness have been added at a later stage following the first semi-structured interviews. This reflects both the dynamic and exploratory nature of the study and the abductive approach of the research. Indeed, the abductive approach allowed the researchers to go back and forth between the theoretical world and the empirical world (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Finally, the topic of the study and the concept of mindful consumption were not disclosed in the instructions, nor during the interviews as to not lead the participants.

3.7 Data Analysis

In order to make systematic inferences and to identify patterns from the interviews conducted, content analysis was considered as an appropriate method for this study. This interpretative approach to data analysis aims to examine the meanings and relationships of ideas or concepts emerging from the research, and which are related to a pre-existing theory (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The systematic description of the data is done by assigning parts of the material to the different categories identified during the research (Flick, 2014). Although some of these categories were related to the existing theory, new categories emerged from the data and provided new insights about the meaning of mindful consumption for Generation Y. This method of analysis enabled the researchers to go back and forth between the theory and the empirical insights gained during the collection of data in order to refine the existing theory of mindful consumption (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

The data analysed in this study were obtained through 14 semi-structured interviews using photo elicitation with participant-produced photographs and a topic guide (Appendix B). Although the collection of participant-produced photographs was an important element of the

empirical research, the images were gathered with the purpose of photo elicitation only and were not the object of further analysis in this research. However, some images are used in the analysis and findings section in order to illustrate specific comments from the participants.

For the analysis of the data, the researchers transcribed each of the 14 interviews and later performed the coding and analysis of the data using NVivo, a software package for the management and analysis of information in qualitative research (Bazeley & Richards, 2007). First, the transcripts of the 14 interviews were imported to the NVivo software for the screening and posterior coding of the information. This allowed the researchers to identify words and phrases that suggested key categories or themes that could help to understand the meaning of mindful consumption for the individuals from Generation Y that participated in this study. The initial stage of the analysis of the data enabled the identification of seven themes: 'caring for the environment', 'caring for the community', 'caring for the self', 'becoming mindful', 'being responsible', 'conscious decisions' and 'ambivalence'. The data from each interview was analysed and classified in one of the seven categories using NVivo's coding tools. The fragments of the data that were out of scope were discarded.

The data selected for each of the themes were later reviewed and analysed by the researchers in order to recognise similarities, differences and conflicts between the testimonies of the participants. The analysis also aimed to identify if the opinions of individuals from Generation Y selected for this study were in line with the theses and hypothesis of previous studies on mindful consumption, both theoretical and empirical.

3.8 Quality Assessment

Qualitative studies are frequently criticised for being of small scale, biased and lacking rigour (Anderson, 2010). This is why researchers need to think about the credibility of the findings when carrying out a qualitative study (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). According to the authors, the credibility of the research findings includes their validity, reliability and generalisability. In the past, validity and reliability were associated with quantitative research but they are now increasingly seen as important in qualitative studies (Anderson, 2010).

When using semi-structured interviews to collect data, a number of quality issues can arise. Semi-structured interviews usually lack standardisation which can affect reliability

(Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015), reliability is concerned with whether other researcher would find the same information. Semi-structured interviews can also create issues of bias such as interviewer bias and interviewee bias (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). According to the authors, the former occurs when the tone and non-verbal behaviour of the interviewer creates bias in the way that participants answer the questions. Additionally, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) suggest that researchers can also demonstrate bias in the way that they interpret the participants' responses. When it comes to interviewee bias, this can be caused by the unwillingness of participants to talk about certain topics which will in turn only provide a partial overview of the topic being explored (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). However, it is possible to minimise bias and the threats to reliability by having several researchers conduct the interviews and interpret the data. Additionally, by audio-recording the interviews as well as taking notes during the process, it is possible for the researchers to better grasp the exact nature of the responses given by the participants (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Moreover, to minimise interviewee bias, the topic of the study was not revealed to the participants at any stage of the process. Finally, the issue of generalisability will arise when doing semi-structured interviews. These types of interviews will not allow statistical generalisations about the whole population as the aim will be to explain what is happening in this particular research setting (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Indeed, according to Janesick (2003), qualitative studies often offer uniqueness instead of replicability.

It is also important to assess the quality of the visual data in the form of participant-produced photographs as they were collected in addition to the data from the interviews. According to Banks (2007), visual data can be interpreted and analysed in different ways depending on the researcher's personal and social context. This is the reason why the collection of the photographs was followed by an interview, which gave the possibility to participants to talk about their photographs and their meanings. Thus, the meaning behind the images has been checked by the participants and the researchers which added trustworthiness and rigour to the findings and limited the researchers' biases (Glaw et al., 2017). Unlike semi-structured interviews, visual data will not necessarily provide exclusive insights or be verifiable in varying context, however, they will enable the research to be lead in new directions which closely matches the unstable social world (Banks, 2007). As the aim of the study is to explore the meaning of mindful consumption and to construct multiple realities, the collection of

participant-produced photographs and their different meaning can be accepted as a valid data collection method in social sciences (Frith, Riley, Archer & Gleeson, 2005).

To increase the credibility of the participant-produced photographs, questions regarding the experience of the participants during the seven-day period were asked at the beginning of each interview. One of the participants, Isabella, mentioned that the seven-day collection period became a sort of personal project:

> *I think this is a very interesting exercise and, in a way, it becomes some kind of personal project for a week focusing on how you care, what you care about. I think it has been really good for me (Isabella).*

Additionally, for Oscar, the process of taking pictures enabled him to be more reflective and conscious of his decisions:

> *I think it was kind of nice because I am generally trying to be more conscious of what I do. This kind of falls into considering what type of situation I would take pictures of. It was also nice to call out my own hypocrisy. I try to record a lot of unsustainable or uncaring stuff and to reflect on how I should behave and how I would like to see myself behaving (Oscar).*

Isabella also mentioned that the whole process was a useful exercise to start thinking about what represents a caring mindset:

> *The instructions were very easy to follow and to understand. Sometimes I am a bit scared of participating in things because I think it is going to be very complicated [...] this one was not at all. There was a bit of an ambiguity about what is caring for yourself, what is caring for the community and I understand that, of course, that is the essence of care. Obviously, you cannot define it and so I had to sit down and think about what this is for me. That was quite a useful exercise to think about how do I care for myself, for the community and for the environment? (Isabella)*

However, for one participant, Victor, it was difficult to take pictures of things that he avoids doing. He explains: *I feel the most caring things I do is the things that I avoid doing and it is hard to take photographs of those things (Victor).*

The quotes from the different participants of the study illustrate the strengths but also the weaknesses of visual data collection in the form of participant-produced photographs. However, they illustrate that the instructions were easy to follow and that the process was interesting and enabled reflection on the participants' part. This demonstrates that future researchers can easily reproduce this research process and yield interesting results.

3.9 Limitations

After having looked at the credibility of the research findings, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the research design. Both the limitations of the participant-produced photographs and the semi-structured interviews will be presented in this section.

Firstly, this study was done in a short period of 10 weeks and it was conducted with limited financial resources considering the student status of the researchers. Due to the time constraint, only 14 people were interviewed as semi-structured interviews can be time consuming, both in the data collection and data analysis processes. This is one of the limitations of the research design. Another limitation is that the quality of the research findings depends on the researchers' skills and biases (Anderson, 2010). To limit these biases, two researchers conducted the interviews and transcribed the data at a later stage. The choice of a purposive sampling method represents another limitation of this research design. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method which means that the sample will not be representative of the population. The generalisability of the study's findings will thus be limited. However, as the purpose of the research is exploratory, the study's research design allowed for a rich and deep collection of data.

When it comes to visual methods in the form of participant-produced photographs, a limitation can be that the images can be interpreted in different ways by the researchers and the participants (Glaw et al., 2017). This is why semi-structured interviews were conducted at a later stage as a way to minimise the misinterpretations of the participant-produced photographs. Another limitation of visual methods is that they require the study's participants to own a camera or phone with a camera and have the skills to use these. However, this study explores the mindful consumption of people between the age of 22 to 38, so it was less likely that the researchers would encounter people with no camera or no knowledge of how to use

it. Nonetheless, one of the participants had to drop out of the study because she did not own a high-quality camera on her phone. Additionally, another limitation is that for some participants who may be introverts or shy, it takes courage to take pictures of what represents their mindful consumption (Glaw et al., 2017). This is why the researchers have tried to make the participants feel as comfortable as possible and have assured them that the photographs will be kept private if they wish not to include them in the final thesis.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015), when undertaking empirical research, a range of ethical issues can arise. Before conducting the study on mindful consumption, the ethical implications of the research have been carefully thought through as a way to ensure that the project is carried out in an ethical manner. All of the study's participants gave their consent to participate in the interviews and to take pictures. However, all participants had the possibility to withdraw from the study at any time if they wanted to. All of the empirical data that was collected during the course of the study has been kept confidential and the names of the participants have been removed from the data collected. Instead, the names of the participants have been replaced by other given names. As a researcher, one has the control and ownership of the data that has been collected and must not share any information that could be harmful to the participants (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). For this reason, the audio-recordings of the interviews as well as the pictures will be deleted after the completion of the study if the participants have not agreed to have their pictures included in the final thesis. These measures have been taken as a way to protect the privacy and anonymity of the participants as well as to ensure the confidentiality of the research data (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

3.11 Summary

To summarise, the methodology chapter has presented the research approach as well as the research design of the study. The empirical data of the thesis was collected through visual data in the form of participant-produced photographs and was followed by semi-structured interviews with 14 participants. The data collection methods enabled the gathering of deep and rich data from the various participants. The research was designed in order to answer the study's research question, that is, to find out the meaning of the concept of mindful

consumption for Generation Y. The researchers have chosen an abductive approach to research in order to be able to go back and forth between the empirical and theoretical world. This approach has shaped the topic guide and the direction of the research process along the way. The data analysis method that has been utilised is content analysis with the help of the NVivo software. In the next section, the collected data will be analysed and the findings of the study will be presented.

4 Analysis and Findings

In this chapter, the data that has been collected during the interviews will be analysed. Fourteen interviews were conducted with participants from Generation Y and a total of 205 pictures were collected. From these semi-structured interviews, seven main themes emerged. These main themes represent the meaning of mindful consumption for the different participants of the study. The seven categories identified are: 'caring for the environment', 'caring for the community', 'caring for the self', 'becoming mindful', 'being responsible', 'conscious decisions' and 'ambivalence'. In some cases, some of the participants' comments were elicited by the pictures that they had taken. For this reason, some photographs have been included to better illustrate the quotes and the themes.

4.1 Caring for the Environment

For many participants, 'caring for the environment' represents one aspect of their mindful mindset and is reflected in their mindful behaviour. The theme 'caring for the environment' can be related to one of Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas' (2011) types of caring. The authors put forward 'caring for nature' as one of the elements of the mindful mindset. It is also presented as one of the main motivators for a mindful consumption in later studies of the concept (Aktan & Kaplan, 2015; Bahl et al., 2016; Lim, 2017; Pusaksrikit, Pongsakornrungslip & Pongsakornrungslip, 2013).

During the interviews, it was possible to identify that a sense of caring towards the environment and concerns regarding the humans' impact on nature were the main topics cited by the participants when talking about the environment.

One of the participants describes her relation to nature and the environment and how she became more caring towards it:

> *Having grown up so close to nature and the environment (in Lapland), it becomes impossible not to think about the way that your behaviour influences what is around you, so I think this has definitely shaped the way I think about my responsibilities towards nature (Isabella).*

Another participant talks about how her studies have shaped how she feels about the environment and the importance of taking action to protect it:

> *Being a student in a climate strategy master's programme, I am very interested in the environment. I feel for the environment. I think it is important that we take care of the environment, for the future generations but also for ourselves. There is a lot of shit going on in the world and someone needs to do something about it (Sofia).*

In addition to having a caring mindset, Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) explain that this mindset should be a motivator to engage in mindful behaviour. Many participants have described different actions that they perform, and which reflect their mindful behaviour. A lot of participants have mentioned the importance of reducing waste generation and referred to specific actions such as avoiding the use of plastic bags or plastic packaging:

> *Instead of buying plastic bottles I have my water bottle. We have this rule in the house that we do not buy plastic bottles, we only buy glass bottles and we all have our own reusable plastic bottles. The same thing goes for hot drinks, we all have our own thermos, no reusable cups. These are all of the things that I do and that I think are important to do to avoid plastic (Olivia).*

Victor also talks about avoiding the use of plastic bags:

When I go grocery shopping I try to avoid using a plastic bag and try to put the stuff I buy in my bike basket, or not using more plastic bags than needed (Victor).

Figure 4: Picture from Victor

Another participant talks about the behaviour that reflects his caring mindset towards the environment. For many, reducing or stopping the consumption of meat or dairy products is a way to care for the environment but it is also a way to care for themselves, as Richard describes it:

When I consume I try to go for the product or option with the lower environmental impact, that is one of the reasons that motivated me to adopt a vegetarian diet. I first became aware of the consequences of a meat-based diet through a documentary, and then I started a personal research. I understood the health benefits of changing my diet. Also, I have always loved animals and after being more aware of the meat-production process, I realised that I prefer to see them alive rather than in my plate. I also believe that when animals die in a stressful situation, they die with fear and that fear causes a bad energy that transfers to your body when you eat their meat (Richard).

Figure 5: Picture from Richard

Richard explains that he is more aware of certain production processes and that this awareness has made him change his way of consuming. This can be related to one of the three categories formulated by Aktan and Kaplan's (2015), which is "consuming on a level without damaging the exterior world and nature". It is also in line with Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas' (2011) definition of mindful consumption, which states that mindful consumers are in a position to redirect their consumption patterns. They describe being temperate in three different types of consumption: repetitive, acquisitive and aspirational. However, the definition and categories proposed by the authors neglect the role of products like groceries in the consumption patterns of a mindful individual, which as previously illustrated, has been

one of the main examples cited by the participants as a way to reflect their mindful mindset. The closest category to this group of products could be 'repetitive consumption'. However, this is limited to goods described as disposable and that fit in the consumption cycle of buying, discarding and buying again. The only reference to food and grocery shopping in the research by Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) is related to organic food, which the authors argue can also be over-consumed.

As an example of how individuals reflect their mindful mindset on their food consumption and the impacts of over-consumption, Victor and Anne explain how they make conscious decisions when it comes to the acquisition and use of food. Victor provided a picture of a meal made of leftovers and explained how this was an example of his caring mindset:

I made my meal with leftovers and a lot of stuff that were about to go bad. When it comes to food, I think I don't throw anything away that is not an actual waste, like fruit skin. Food that can be eaten I definitely don't throw it away. I think it is unsustainable and a waste of money (Victor).

Figure 6: Picture from Victor

Meanwhile, Anne expressed that being careful about the amounts of food that she buys reflects her temperance towards food: *I try to buy healthy food but also enough and not too much stuff because it will become waste. I always try to buy the right amount of food (Anne).*

Both of these comments reflect another one of the categories identified in the study by Aktan and Kaplan (2015), which is "consuming in accordance with your needs". This can also be linked to the concept of anti-consumption, which is the resistance to or rejection of the acquisition, use and disposition of goods (Zavestoski, 2002; Lee et al., 2011). Victor explains that for him it is important to consume less as opposed to consuming environmentally friendly products instead:

> *As part of my caring mindset in terms of consumption, I try to consume less. Before I thought that by buying something that was organic I was doing a good thing, but now I think that if I buy something that is organic I am just doing a less bad thing, when compared to not buying something at all. I think I have reduced the amount of the things I consume a lot, except for food (Victor).*

Victor adds that it is easy to be tempted by consumerism and that he tries to be temperate in his consumption patterns and to buy better quality goods:

> *Sometimes when you are not busy or see something you like or that other people have, you want to buy it. It is really easy to have those feelings, especially when you can go online. It is really easy to browse down through thousands of products. When I feel that, I try to think: is this something I really need, and if I do, will I actually use it. This is especially for clothes. It is so easy to buy from the sales. I don't want to buy cheap things at the expense of sustainability. However, I try to buy affordable things that seem good quality (Victor).*

In addition to being temperate in their consumption patterns, many participants mention recycling as an important action that one can adopt to care for the environment. For Victor, you have a duty to reduce waste when you consume:

> *Recycling is really important for me, because if you consume, you have to try to reduce waste, and recycling is a way to ensure that the resources can be reused. I also collect little pieces of metal and gather them for a few weeks to recycle them together. I even pick up pieces from the trash from my roommate because I feel bad when they are not separated accordingly (Victor).*

This can be linked to Peattie and Collins' (2009) description of consumption which they describe as not only the action of purchasing, but as a process that also includes the use, the handling and the disposal of the product. Elisabeth illustrates this process as she explains her personal experience with recycling:

We recycle paper, plastic and different waste as much as we can. It has become this kind of game where we need to have the least amount of trash as possible and the least things that you cannot recycle [...] I think it's really important to do it. I guess it is pretty easy to recycle, it is almost imposed on you (Elisabeth).

On the other hand, some people are aware that it is important to care for the environment but wish to do more things to care for it. This demonstrates that the participants are mindful as they are conscious of the importance of the environment and the impact of their decisions on it. This is illustrated well by this participant's quote:

I think I want to do more lifestyle changes that are good for the environment. I would like to ideally stop using deodorant because that is really bad. But then I would like to do something better, something more. I feel like in the consumer's paradigm it is quite easy to tap yourself on the shoulder and say: I am good to the environment because I do eco-friendly choices. At the end of the day, that is not what is going to change the world, so I would like to do something better, I do not know what yet (Isabella).

To summarise, 'caring for the environment' is one facet of the meaning of mindful consumption for participants. The findings suggest that participants become more 'caring for the environment' by modifying their diet (eating less meat), buying less low-quality products, but also by avoiding plastic and by recycling as much as they can. Participants are aware of the impact that they have on the environment and many wish to do more to care for it, for themselves, but also for future generations.

4.2 Caring for the Community

In addition to 'caring for the environment', many participants mention 'caring for the community' as one of the facets of being mindful. For many, one of the meanings of mindful consumption is caring for others in many different ways such as joining NGOs and creating a

better future for the next generations. This can be linked to Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas' (2011) theory on the mindful mindset, which includes 'caring for the community' as one of its aspects.

Some of the participants explain that they are engaged in different NGOs and initiatives that help the community. They believe that it is important to take care of each other by educating the younger generations and contribute to the future. One participant explains the reasons why she has joined an NGO:

> *Last September, I started volunteering for the Red Cross in global citizenship education [...] I am active in that because I took the international humanitarian law class last year and had no idea that they were actually doing that. What I do is going to schools in Brussels to talk with children from 11 to 18 years old. We raise awareness about situations of conflicts and migration, international humanitarian law and child soldiers by playing and doing activities. We try to ask the children to tell us about the basic and fundamental needs that they have, and which needs do they think disappear when their country is in war. That is how we start raising awareness about that. We explain what is legal, that you have to treat everybody with respect even the war prisoners, and that is how they learn. I started doing that because I am really interested in that topic and it is also my studies (humanitarian action). I think it is important to contribute to society for a better future. Because nowadays, especially in Europe and the US, people are becoming more and more closed to other people. I am so afraid of what the future is going to be like. Education is key (Olivia).*

This quote also illustrates the importance of education in shaping a more caring mindset from a young age. As a solution to the increasing tendencies to become closed off to others, education and knowledge can shape people's mindfulness.

Lucia also describes her engagement in NGOs and explains how it is important to learn more about some of the problems of the world:

> *I am a board member of the women and youth shelter. We have meetings and we talk about the direction of what they do at the shelter. It is for the community that I do that. I just want to help. I also wanted to learn more for myself about these issues*

because I just know that it is a problem here in Sweden, honour related violence, but I do not know the details of it. I wanted to learn more, so I could also do more (Lucia).

Even though 'caring for the environment' is important for some participants, for others, 'caring for the community' is the most important aspect of a caring mindset. Olivia explains that 'caring for the environment' is something that everyone must do and it should not be considered as something out of the ordinary. This why Olivia believes that the focus should be put on the community:

To be honest, I am more interested in doing things for the community rather than for the environment. Doing things for the environment I think is something that is so easy and logical, and it is not even something I should be taking pictures of [...] The most relevant picture for me is the one from the Red Cross, because education is so important. That is the only thing that has an impact because it is raising awareness in children and they are our future, the future generation and hopefully they will do something. But we should not be counting on them, we should be doing something now. Old people are always saying: this is the future generation. But no, the future is now (Olivia).

Figure 7: Picture from Olivia

Isabella mentions that she has deeply rooted feelings that she needs to take care of others and that this is the most important type of care:

I do not know why that is, but I have this big urge. I really feel like I need to do things for the community and for society. I currently feel I do way too little. I don't do anything significant right now, but I definitely feel like there is nothing more important than the care for community. Really deep down I feel like this is the most important thing, because after all, we are social beings. The social networks we create, we need to care for them in order to care for the planet (Isabella).

However, Isabella also mentions that, in the end, all three types of care are interlinked and can influence each other:

The way that we think and the way that we care for each other is how we also influence the environment and the world. When you care for the community and you have that mindset, you automatically will make choices which are way more environmentally friendly and less destructive. I agree with that. They are connected. I have realised as well that the more you self-care, the more you have energy for that project for the community. When you do that project for the community, it is way easier to think of how you can be environmentally friendly because then you suddenly have an impact. I feel like all of this is interconnected. I also think that care in itself is one of the most essential things to create a person, even a person in the liberal society we live in today. We are all born out of care and care is something that is omnipresent and quite invisible, but I think all care is interlinked (Isabella).

To summarise, participants think that it is important to care for the community and, in some cases, they believe that it is the most important type of care. As a reflection of their caring mindset towards the community, participants explain that they have joined NGOs in order to become more active citizens and to contribute to a better future. For many participants, education is important to become more caring towards others.

4.3 Caring for the Self

On top of 'caring for the community' and 'caring for the environment', many participants talk about how they care for themselves. This is the third category identified in the study, which is 'caring for the self'. A number of pictures provided by the participants and their

comments during the interviews revealed how the things that they did for their own well-being play an important role in their caring mindset.

Health was one of the aspects that most participants referred to when discussing the things that they do which reflect a sense of care for themselves. As part of the activities that they do in pursue of a good or better health, some participants mentioned food and diet as one of the things that they pay more attention to:

> *I wanted to start to understand what food is good for me and what food makes me feel good [...] now, I am cutting out sugar as much as possible. I am also trying to stop eating gluten and dairy products just to see if I feel better. If I do feel better, I will continue (Isabella).*

Gabriel also talks about how his diet and what he eats contributes to his well-being. He also mentions that to be informed about what he consumes helps him to achieve that goal:

> *I want to know what I am eating and what is inside the package. I always pay attention to the nutrition facts. For example, when I buy jam I always compare the sugar quantity of the options and go for the one with the lowest quantity. I just want to be healthy and try to choose the one that I think is the best option (Gabriel).*

Exercise is also cited a number of times as a behaviour that participants practice in order to have a healthier lifestyle. For example, Celine said: *I try to run three times a week. I mostly enjoy it but sometimes it is hard. However, I force myself because I know it is good for me (Celine).*

Additionally, some participants explain that doing exercise is a good way to take care of themselves and become more mindful:

> *I think cycling is self-care, both physically and psychologically. For me, because I have had a lot of physical limits that have felt like psychological limits as well. It becomes very limiting, and overcoming those limits feels like letting go of a big burden (Isabella).*

Besides citing personal well-being as one of the main reasons to adopt a certain diet or to do physical activities, Harry illustrates that thinking about his relationship with the community in the long-term motivates him to have a healthy lifestyle: *It is important to take care of yourself and be healthy. That way you are less of a burden to society in the future (Harry).*

It was also possible to identify that the participants reflected their caring sense towards themselves in behaviours that were intended to contribute to their emotional health. The testimonies of some participants show that they have developed a level of consciousness towards the importance of their happiness and emotional well-being. For these participants, this is a key element to be a mindful individual.

Celine, for example, represents one of the cases where the sense of care towards her own emotional and mental well-being played an important role in her mindful mindset. A series of pictures provided by her reflected that she invests time in activities that provide her with joy and wellness (Figures 8 & 9).

I like to walk and enjoy the weather. I appreciate doing things for myself, enjoying time (Celine).

Figure 8: Picture from Celine

I like to colour when I have had to work too much or when my head feels really heavy. It helps me think of something else (Celine).

Figure 9: Picture from Celine

During the interview, and when referring to these pictures, she explained that she had come to realise that by doing things for herself she will obtain the energy required to complete her everyday duties. According to her, it will also enable her to do things that show her sense of care towards the community and the environment:

> *When time passes by you realise that it is important to take care of yourself and that doing things for your well-being is as important as doing things for work [...] I appreciate doing things for myself, enjoying time in order to be able to do things for the others (Celine).*

Meanwhile, Olivia mentions that being with friends and being sociable enables her to be caring to herself:

> *I like to make sure to care for myself, be with friends, be social, and partake in social activities, especially in those difficult times of exams and thesis. It's important to stay aware that there are other people around you that are in the same situation and it's also important to go outside and do those things (Olivia).*

As way to care for himself, Oscar mentions that he keeps a diary to reflect on his actions and be more conscious of all of his decisions:
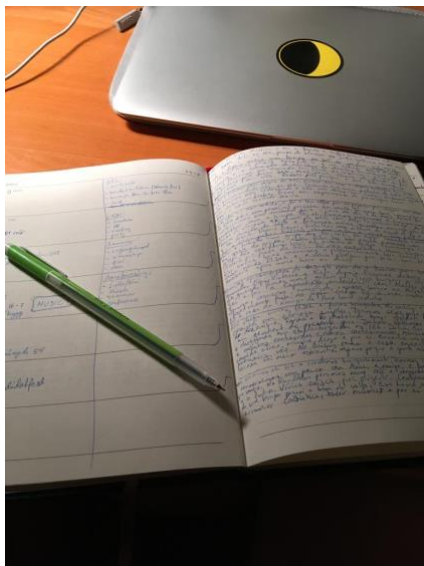
> *It is a project since November or December last year because I have this experience that every week is very long, but the years are so fast [...] So I decided to start to have a short reflection at the end of each day, kind of registering what I actually did. I also try to put reflections or what I felt or thought about. This is done to kind of maintain my life a little bit more, to slow down time a little bit. I also try to learn to meditate for the same reason as well, so it is very much about caring for myself (Oscar).*

Figure 10: Picture of Oscar

As another way to reflect about his behaviour, Harry mentions the act of meditating as a way to become more critical and aware of one's actions:

I would say the most typical thing that I do for myself is meditating, which I do on a daily basis. I would say that it makes you more aware of the impact that you have on the environment and in general you are self-aware and self-critical (Harry).

Meditation has long been connected to mindfulness, which is cited by Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) as the capacity of human consciousness and awareness of their acts. The role of personal reflexion cited by some participants can be related to what Bahl et al. (2016) propose in their study on the transformational potential of mindful consumption. In their study, they stress the role of sensations, thoughts and emotions in becoming a mindful consumer.

The statements shared by the participants revealed that activities such as exercising, eating better, meditating, spending time with friends, among others, reflect their interest in doing things that make them feel good, happy and ultimately fulfilled. These testimonies revealed that for the participants a sense of caring for the self has a much greater dimension than what has been described by Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) in their study of mindful consumption. Although the authors do acknowledge the evidences found by Frank (2004) regarding the links between happiness and 'inconspicuous goods', they neglect the importance of this facet in the mindset of a mindful consumer. In their study, Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) mainly focus on discussing the relationship between the emotional and economic well-being within materialism and consumerism. However, the authors overlook the role of personal experience and satisfaction towards developing and maintaining a mindful mindset, which was an important aspect cited by the participants of this study.

When discussing about the things that they do that reflect a sense of 'caring for the self', some participants mentioned that, for them, the whole process of becoming mindful was a journey.

4.4 Becoming Mindful

In the exploration of understanding the meaning of mindful consumption for the participants, the theme 'becoming mindful' as well as the development of that mindset were frequently discussed during the interviews. Although the experiences of the participants are unique, it was possible to identify that most of them describe this development as a constant journey of learning and internalisation of information as well as finding alternatives to do things differently.

Some participants explain that the process of becoming mindful started at an early age, highly influenced by their families and school:

> *I would argue that I have never been super wasteful because of the way I was brought up [...] I would say that somewhat of a responsible education was the basis, but I think my mindset has definitely changed over time (Harry).*

Isabella also talks about how the way that she was brought up highly influenced how she understands her role in society and her responsibility towards the community and nature: *I guess that as a woman we have been taught to take care, to be more attentive to care and how that influences people around you. I guess that is how it all starts (Isabella).*

Meanwhile, Angelica mentions that being influenced by a group like the Scouts during her childhood was crucial to the development of a more caring mindset:

> *I know people make fun of me when I tell them I was a Scout when I was little, but I highly value all the things I learnt there. They teach you how to be a better person and to serve the community. When I have kids, I would like them to have the experience of being scouts and I would recommend this to every parent (Angelica).*

In the process of becoming more mindful consumers and individuals, some participants also highlighted the role of education, which links to the positive association between education and environmental concern identified by many authors (Arcury & Christianson,1993;

Chanda, 1999; Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Hsu & Rothe, 1996; Klineberg, McKeever & Rothenbach, 1998; O´stman & Parker, 1987).

In relation to that, some participants express that being exposed to an environment of new information and knowledge had a great impact on their journey. For example, Harry says:

By studying and learning more about sustainability issues, I became even more aware of my own behaviour and what I'm doing with the choices I make in my everyday life and I try to improve it (Harry).

Oscar also mentions the importance of education in his personal development process:

I think I have been really lucky to have very good professors at university who have been inspiring and that have encouraged this kind of critical approach […] My recent education has enabled me to learn more and to get more understanding of the world (Oscar).

Victor also talks about how his experience has been influenced by the discussions that occur in his studies: *Within the last year I have been thinking about not consuming, in part influenced by the classes I have taken in my master's and the general discussion in society (Victor).*

Besides the influence of their education, some participants argue that being exposed to different environments and surrounded by people who share a caring mindset had an impact on their behaviour. Amanda, for example, expressed that she feels that she has always had a sense of concern towards injustice in society and environmental risks. However, it was not until she moved to Sweden that she thinks she actually changed her behaviour and adopted practices that reflect her caring mindset:

It is really interesting to look back to my 'one year ago' self, when I was equally interested in the environment, but wasn't really exposed to discussions about the topic. Here, I met people that do a lot of things for the environment, even making their own personal care products, so that really inspired and motivated me (Amanda).

Amanda also mentioned that having access to products and different alternatives that have a lesser impact on nature was decisive in her process to become mindful: *Here in Sweden, there are a lot more substitute products and it is actually easier to make changes, for example, to be meat and dairy free (Amanda).*

Anne and Gabriel also mention that the social norms and the way that the market and the system work had a great influence on their behaviour and on specific practices such as recycling:

> *We put a lot of attention into separating the waste, very carefully [...] Back in Brazil we used to separate organic from the rest, but in Sweden there are a lot of options and here I started to pay more attention [...] If everyone does it correctly why wouldn't I? It is a system that is working for everyone and I don't dare to make it wrong (Gabriel).*

Anne also explains how moving to Sweden changed her attitude towards recycling and how this activity is normal to her:

> *When I came to Sweden I started to adopt some habits because they are common here, such as recycling. Everything is made so everyone does their part. I don't think about it that much or go out of my way to act environmentally friendly. I think that when I move somewhere permanently I will try to recycle and implement some other of my new habits (Anne).*

Although the participants' process to become mindful has been different, it is possible to identify that some external factors had a great influence on their journey. Going back to Pusaksrikit, Pongsakornrungsilp and Pongsakornrungsilp's (2013) study on mindful consumption in a sufficient economy society, they propose 'willingness' as the initial stage of the process of becoming mindful consumers. In their research, the authors highlight that the desire to adopt certain practices or a way of living is one of the most important factors for consumers to become mindful. However, since this study was executed in the context of a sufficient economy in rural Thailand, it overlooks the factors that could influence the origin of the willingness to become mindful, such as upbringing, education, and society, which were frequently cited by the participants of this study.

When explaining their personal journey to become mindful, other key factors brought up by the participants during the interviews are curiosity, the desire to know more about how things work as well as the consequences of their behaviour. This can be linked to second stage of Pusaksrikit, Pongsakornrungsilp and Pongsakornrungsilp's (2013) mindful consumption process, which is 'training' and refers to the desire to acquire knowledge.

Richard explains that after watching documentaries and reading more about the effects of the current average consumption patterns, he realised that he wanted to do things differently:

> *Later on, I started to meditate and informed myself of how things actually work. Within that process, I came to realise that as traditional consumers, we are just seeing the tip of the iceberg. That is why I decided that I would use the power of information and break paradigms by consuming differently. People in general have unhealthy habits and that reflects in time on their bodies (Richard).*

Elisabeth acknowledges that, in her case, the task of informing herself has been the main factor intervening in her change of behaviour towards her well-being, the environment and the community:

> *I think the biggest thing for me has been informing myself and reading about different issues. It is really a continuous task, because in the case of food, for example, you read contradictory things on the internet, so you never really know what is true or not, so you have to read a lot (Elisabeth).*

Elisabeth also provided a picture of the activity of acquiring information and explained why it would illustrate the things that she does that reflect her caring mindset:

This was also to show that for me the biggest sustainable thing I can do is to inform myself of issues around the environment and sustainability […] Here, I was thinking about increasing my knowledge of issues and hopefully being able to discuss and transmitting them to people in the future (Elisabeth).

Figure 11: Picture from Elisabeth

Elisabeth, as well as Victor and Amanda, for example, agreed that their personal journey of informing themselves made them reflect on the way that they grew up and, on the way, that they used to live their lives before. According to them, this new knowledge has encouraged them to share their experience and influence their families, for example. This is related to being responsible of informing others and have an active role in society to promote change. 'Being responsible' is another theme that has been identified in this study.

4.5 Being Responsible

For some participants, being a mindful person and consumer is not limited to having a certain type of mindset and behaviour. For them, being a mindful individual requires commitment and willingness to have an active role in society. It involves the responsibility of informing and influencing others about the alternatives that are available when developing a caring mindset. On the contrary, other participants argue that although they like to talk about the reasons why they behave the way that they do, they admit that they are selective regarding the people who they have this type of discussions with and feel like they do not have a responsibility to inform others.

During the interviews, it was possible to identify that the participants who believe that they ought to be responsible recognise that, as conscious human beings, they have to contribute and promote things that can provide positive outcomes in the community, the environment and the personal well-being. Oscar explains:

We have to help other people become more conscious, to love other people and support them. In that sense, I think we have a very fundamental responsibility as humans to try to make the world a better place. On top of that, I think that having won the lottery and being born in Denmark, there is easy access to good education, material needs are covered [...] I have also had the luck of having a lot of inspiring people in my life that helped me to get where I am now. In that sense, I think I definitely owe something to the rest of the world and especially having the privilege of studying what I do and having access to the kind of knowledge I do. It would kind of be pointless if I did not spread the word and if I did not try to pass on this knowledge that I have had access to. I want to change the world, but no one can do that alone (Oscar).

Amanda also considers that she feels like she has a responsibility to share her experience. She explains that she values the results of the efforts that she is making to have a more responsible and sustainable way of life. She also would have appreciated if someone would have done that with her in the past. She explains:

I do think we do all have a responsibility to share our experience and spread the word. I would have been really grateful if a year ago someone would have approached me and shared their knowledge in a kind manner (Amanda).

Referring to having an active role as an 'influencer' in society, Richard said:

I think I am activist and like to share the knowledge I have acquired, and it is each person's responsibility to listen or ignore to what I say. I like to inform people about the possibility of doing things differently or to make them reflect on the level of awareness or consequences of the processes behind the things they do. Sometimes with my friends I joke with some critical observations, but I respect that everyone has the right to choose (Richard).

Amanda explained that, in her case, she believes that, although she wants to share her knowledge and experience, she tries to do it in a cautious manner. She believes that instead of trying to impose something on someone, the best that she can do is to share her experience and to explain that positive outcomes are possible even with small changes. She says:

With my family or friends, I try to explain them how I am doing things now just to show them my personal experience, instead of trying to convince them that what they are doing is wrong or pinpoint the negative aspects of their behaviour. I feel that when you tell people what they should do, you just generate a negative reaction towards what you are trying to discuss with them (Amanda).

Several participants also agree that one of the groups that they feel committed to influence the most is their families, and more specifically their parents. However, they recognise that generational differences can be a barrier in the process of influencing their mindset. Sofia explains:

I feel responsible with some people like my family, who are not very caring for the environment. With them, it might not be very effective due to the fact that they are older and have their own way of seeing things, but at least I try (Sofia).

Sofia has a similar perception regarding the age barrier when trying to influence parents when it comes to more caring practices, in her case, towards the environment. She says:

When I go shopping with my mum and she wants to use plastic bags and I tell her 'you do not need this'. I think it is really difficult and it is about generations. Older people are like: 'oh no this is too much of a change for me and I have always done this and nothing bad has happened'. So, I think it is very difficult to change older people's behaviour (Sofia).

Besides trying to influence and sharing their experience with their family and friends, some participants manifested joy in having a more active role in trying to influence and inform people outside of their close social circles. Angelica, for example, provided a picture of her, speaking to an audience. During the interview, she explains why it is important to her to talk about health and well-being with others and how it is now part of her entrepreneurship project:

With my group, we organise conferences and talks for staff at offices and clinics, for example. I think that by sharing my experience and knowledge in how to live a healthier lifestyle, I feel I am doing my part. I see that most people are only focused on work and money and don't pay much attention to important aspects such as their wellbeing and health. I want to be able to influence them and to share with them the importance of a good nutrition, meditation, exercise, and emotional intelligence (Angelica).

Figure 12: Picture from Angelica

Isabella also explains that she enjoys organising events and fundraisings where important causes or matters can be discussed. She adds that she believes that providing a platform for discussion is one of the best actions she can do for the community:

When you do a fundraiser, you make a fun event but really you are just enabling people to care for the community in a way that suits them, and same thing with conferences. You are just creating a platform for people to interact and for people to share ideas that, at the end of the day, could change things for the whole community. Offering that platform, where people get to talk to people they do not usually get to talk to, you suddenly create a way for action to be way smoother and you are just making it easier for others to care for others. Basically, this is what I want to do, and I feel that this is what my role is going to be, as a person caring for the community. In the end, it is making spaces in which people have it easier to care for each other (Isabella).

On the other hand, some other participants have mentioned that they do not feel responsible when it comes to transmitting their mindset. They do not always enjoy discussing the

importance of caring for their personal, environmental and societal well-being with everyone. Victor, for example, explains that he is selective regarding the group of people he discusses such matters with, meaning that he prefers to talk about those topics with people that share his mindset. He also argues that when he takes part in this type of conversations, he does it in an attempt to discuss and debate with others. However, he does not want to feel like he has a responsibility to inform others:

> *I don't like to be the kind of person that pinpoints something is wrong. People might find it annoying and this could create negative feelings and they might feel like they don't want to agree. There are also some people that are impossible to change, and I don't think it's my job to spend a lot of time trying to convince people about something. You have to be careful so that you don't become annoying (Victor).*

When elaborating on the reason why he does not have a sense of responsibility towards informing others, Victor explains:

> *I don't think the solution is making people mindful about the consumption but having a solution all the way around. The reason why we have to be mindful is because everything is so cheap and available. However, these things are often not very sustainable. We don't put a price on sustainability. It is cheap to buy something that harms the environment. But if you put a price on it, all products would have a better quality, would be more expensive, and would be produced with processes that reduce their impact, like closed loops. In that case I think people will not be able afford to buy unsustainable stuff and the things they actually buy will be sustainable (Victor).*

This comment from Victor challenges one of the theses by Pusaksrikit, Pongsakornrungsilp and Pongsakornrungsilp (2013) on developing mindful consumption in a sufficient economy society. In their model on the process of mindful consumption, they propose 'showing and sharing' as the last element of the journey. In this stage, the authors argue that the members of the community persuade and educate others in order to promote the sufficient economy model and build a stronger network. In their research, Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) also mention the role of mindful consumers as advocates and suggest that individuals with a caring mindset and temperate consumption can act as 'mindful consumption evangelist' and serve as role model for others. Nevertheless, the insights obtained during the study's

interviews revealed that the phase of sharing knowledge and influence others depends on the context and motivations of the individual.

In a similar way to Victor, Anne says that she is selective of the group of people that she likes talking about her mindset and behaviour with. With them, she usually shares things that mainly reflect her sense of caring towards the environment:

> *With people that understand that sustainability living it is normal and it is ok to talk to them. However, with other people who are not conscious, I guess it's hard. Sometimes I say it to do a bit of remarks [...] I think it is not my responsibility but at least I think you should show others that you can do things differently (Anne).*

The testimonies gathered during the empirical research suggest that some members of the Generation Y who have a mindful mindset and behaviour do like to share their experience and knowledge with others. Some participants agree that the main motivation towards that willingness is the sense of responsibility to invite more people to adopt practices that are more caring towards the self, the environment and the community. Some participants manifested that, besides doing their part by being more responsible individuals, they feel like they ought to have a more active role in informing others in addition to their families and friends. On the other hand, some participants manifested that they do not feel that they have a responsibility to inform others. They said that they are also selective of the group of people that they discuss such matters with, especially if people do not share the same mindset. In addition, some participants mentioned that they are cautious about debating about their mindful mindset and behaviour with others in order to avoid negative reactions.

4.6 Conscious Decisions

For many participants, another important aspect of having a mindful mindset and behaviour is to make conscious decisions and to be aware of the impact that these decisions have on the environment, the community and themselves. This links back to Lim (2017) and Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) who describe mindful consumption as a reflection of an awareness and a conscience. It is also linked to the category "process of logical thinking and state of awareness", which has been found in the study by Aktan and Kaplan (2015).

Oscar talks about the importance of making conscious decisions as this could have an impact on a person's consumption patterns, in this case, meat consumption:

> *It all comes down to consciousness. Everything we do: are we aware of what we do and why we do it? We want to have at least one or two meals with meat every day and it is not just a small piece of meat. People just stuff it in their mouths and they do not necessarily appreciate it that much, so imagine if everyone had meat once a week, once a month and it was a celebration, it was something you really waited for and appreciated. You would enjoy every bite and you would know where it came from and the whole process. In that case, everyone could eat meat, no one would have to be a vegetarian for environmental reasons, at least. It would be possible to create meat that was produced with a lot of less suffering. But some people do not consider what they do and do not have any perspective and reflection (Oscar).*

Many participants have mentioned examples of things that they have done that they were conscious are unsustainable or uncaring. This highlights the gaps that exist between people's mindsets and their behaviours. The literature on attitude-behaviour gaps is rich but also complex. Many researchers such as Leiserowitz, Kates and Parris (2006) and Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) have described different types of barriers that prevent people from translating their values to their behaviour. However, no consensus exists when it comes to the barriers that create attitude-behaviour gaps. The interesting insight, in the case of this study, is that participants are aware of these mindset-behaviour gaps. Even though they are aware of these gaps, many participants still act in an uncaring manner. These insights thus demonstrate the complexity of the concept of mindful consumption. Indeed, mindful consumers will not necessarily act in a caring way in every situation. For example, Victor says:

> *I think about whether to use or not a lid for my coffee cup. But when I do it, I am aware that I am being unsustainable. I also think that if I recycle it, it's not the worst thing I can do in a day to minimise the damage (Victor).*

Anne also talks about this mindset-behaviour gap and describes how the different structural barriers do not allow her to recycle when in a different context:

This picture shows that I wasn't recycling back home. I knew it was really bad because I am used to doing it here in Sweden, but it wasn't easy to do it back at home. I usually do it and I felt weird when I'm not able to recycle in a different environment (Anne).

Figure 13: Picture from Anne

These structural barriers, as explained by Leiserowitz, Kates and Parris (2006) include laws, regulations and social norms.

For Richard, the gap between his mindset and his behaviour creates a conflict and frustrations in his mind. He explains:

I find it frustrating and annoying when my behaviour doesn't reflect the way I think. I don't like to know that I have to do things as everyone because I am limited by the circumstances. When you are informed and break paradigms you realise that you don't like to behave as everyone that is inside "the matrix" of the current world. I believe that I have reached a level of consciousness when it is easy to identify if the things I do or my decisions will have a positive outcome (Richard).

Amanda also talks about the guilt that comes with being conscious of one's decisions but explains how this can be a motivator to do more caring things:

When you do small things, you realise that there is still a lot more to do. For example, reducing the use of products with harmful chemicals such as dishwasher or conditioner, which are products that you can do yourself. I am really proud of myself because of the process that I have started, and although I think I won't stop eating dairy products or meat, for example, at least I am reducing my consumption. However, although I know I only consume them sometimes, I feel a bit guilty. But I think that this guilt is good because instead of making you feel bad about yourself it

makes you realise of all the things that you still can do or change with a little more
effort (Amanda).

However, Oscar mentions that being conscious all of the time is really difficult but that one should be as conscious as possible when taking different decisions in regard to the environment, the community and themselves. This can be linked to what Bahl et al. (2016) have described in their research. The authors have highlighted the importance for consumers to sustain an enhanced awareness during the consumption process. However, Oscar explains that having enhanced awareness all of the time is a difficult process:

It is impossible to always be conscious, also you can only be conscious about what
you understand. I think I strive, I wonder: Is this the best thing I can do? It is not that
I act upon it every time. I think that is the only thing you can ask of a person. Far
from all the time but as much as possible (Oscar).

Some participants mention that being conscious becomes an exercise and sometimes even a fun activity. Oscar explains: *It is an exercise to be as conscious as possible and as reflective as possible (Oscar).* In addition, Victor says:

If you start being mindful about your consumption it can become an interest. It's kind
of fun after a while because you try to minimise your consumption and your waste.
However, it also feels like a useless thing because you know there are so many people
that are not mindful at all (Victor).

To summarise, for participants, being conscious of one's decisions is an aspect of the meaning of mindful consumption. For many, being conscious of their decisions can create feelings of guilt and frustrations when their behaviour does not reflect their caring mindset. However, for others, the process of being conscious of their decisions at all times can become an activity that is enjoyable and motivates them to do more. The insights described above also demonstrate that there exist attitude-behaviour gaps when it comes to behaving mindfully. However, some participants are aware that it is difficult to be conscious of every action and every decision, but that one should try to be as mindful as possible.

4.7 Ambivalence

Even though mindful consumption has been explained by different participants as a process that starts with them becoming aware of their decisions and caring for the environment, the community and themselves, some have mentioned that there is an ambivalence in their minds. According to some of the participants, there is an ambivalence and a paradox in how they think and act mindfully. 'Ambivalence' can be described as simultaneous and contradictory feelings (such as being attracted and being repulsed) toward a person, an object or an action (Merriam-Webster, 2018). Angelica, for example, explains: *I know that traveling has a great impact on the environment, but I love traveling and I don't want to stop doing it (Angelica).*

Harry explains the contradictory feelings that he has towards being mindful and states that a person should not burden himself too much. He states:

> *I think that in every new environment, you have to adapt and find your ways. I think that after a short time you can always try to do as much as possible. I would say that I am always trying to do more but you know, once in a while, I take a longer shower. I'm not dogmatic about it in a way because I think that while it is important to be responsible and to conserve resources, at the same time, you should be aware of how small your impact in reality is. That is why you shouldn't burden yourself too much with it while still doing as much as possible (Harry).*

Another participant mentions the capitalist and consumerist society in which we live. This consumerist society makes people want to consume more and more. It also drives consumers to want to buy things that they do not necessarily need. Additionally, this ambivalence towards mindful consumption also means that people do not always act in a caring way towards the community, the environment and themselves even if they are aware of the negative impacts of their actions. This goes against what has been found by Burroughs and Rindfleisch (2002) who state that individuals will often attempt to realign their values when they feel conflicted. For participants, even though the contradiction in their consumption patterns exists and they are aware of it, they still continue doing things that they know have negative consequences and will create a conflict in their minds. Oscar explains his conflicting thoughts and the ambivalence of the mindful mindset:

The system, in general, the whole structure in which we are inserted, industrial capitalism, is a big factor. It causes us to have all of these big impulses to consume and to always want more. Even though I am aware of it, I still fall for it. I still buy new things even if I did not need them. This whole system is encouraging us and forcing us to do all of the stuff that we would not necessarily have done, but then it is also too easy to blame everything on the system. Definitely, a big barrier to be caring is myself, I am definitely an egoistic person, also I have a lot of bad thoughts. I have a lot of unsympathetic impulses and I do stuff that is definitely only for my own winning and it is not even necessarily good for myself. I have this constant paradox about spending too much time on the phone, even though I do not want to. I am aware that I do not want to but I still do it and even while I am doing it I have kind of this meta-awareness that this is stupid, but I keep on doing it. It is the same with eating too much sugar or not being patient and kind with the people around me (Oscar).

Another participant mentions this ambivalence and the fact that she is aware of these contradictory actions. Sofia mentions questioning herself and self-reflecting which causes her to be in pain and feel guilty.

It has been fun to be part of this, all of the pictures show that I am such a good person, but I do stuff in my everyday life that is not good. If I know that it is bad somehow, then I always question myself: do I need this, do I need to do this? It kind of takes a lot of energy out of you because then you see people buying 10 different items in H&M and you are like: 'they obviously do not care, why do I have to care so much, why am I in this pain?' About the flying, last year I went by plane like four times, so I am not so good myself (Sofia).

This quote reflects another element of mindful consumption that has been explained in the previous theme and that is the feeling of guilt. The findings once again demonstrate that this mindful mindset can create pain and guilt for participants. They mention that sometimes they even wish they could switch their brain off and not feel the pain anymore.

To summarise, for many, mindful consumption is an ambivalent concept because they explain that they often have contradictory feelings towards the way that they act even when

they are aware of the negative consequences of their actions. The fact that they are conscious of their behaviour and that this ambivalence exists in their minds creates guilt and frustrations for participants. Nonetheless, many believe that you cannot burden yourself too much with being mindful all of the time but that individuals should still do as much as they can to take decisions that will have a positive impact on others, the environment and themselves.

5 Discussion and Conclusions

Following the analysis of the empirical data that has been gathered during the research process, the researchers were able to draw conclusions from the main findings to answer the following research question: *'What is the meaning of mindful consumption for Generation Y?'* The meaning that Generation Y attributes to mindful consumption, and more precisely to a mindful mindset and mindful behaviour, is very varied and complex. This is in line with the epistemology and ontology of the research. It has been found that there is not one single truth or one single meaning attributed to mindful consumption. Indeed, an important finding of this study is the multi-faceted nature of mindful consumption. For this reason, it is difficult to create a comprehensive model that would represent the meaning of this concept as a whole.

However, it was possible to uncover seven themes to understand the meaning of mindful consumption for Generation Y: 'caring for the environment', 'caring for the community', 'caring for the self', 'becoming mindful', 'being responsible', 'conscious decisions', and 'ambivalence'. The three initial themes that were identified reflect the three senses of caring of mindful consumers introduced by Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011). Although the testimonies of the participants are connected to some elements included in the initial theory regarding the sense of caring for the nature, the community and the self, it was possible to identify nuances in the meaning of each facet of their caring mindset.

In this study, the sense of care for the nature, as initially proposed by Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011), is called 'caring for the environment'. According to the authors, this first theme can be seen from three different views: preservationist, conservationism and human welfare ecology. In the research it was possible to identify that independently of these three perspectives, the Generation Y individuals are aware and concerned about the impact of humankind on nature and have a desire to take action in order to reduce their personal footprint. There were a number of behaviours that were cited by the participants that reflected their caring mindset towards the environment. Some can be related to anti-consumption, while others reflect temperance in consumption which, according to Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011), is the core attribute of the mindful behaviour. The findings can also be related to one of the mindful consumption categories identified in the study by Aktan and

Kaplan (2015), which is called "consuming in accordance with your needs". For example, some participants expressed that they care about the quantity of products that they buy. Others say that they try to reduce the acquisition and use of some products and even avoid them in order to decrease their environmental impact.

A dietary shift to a plant-based diet or the attempt to decrease the consumption of animal-derived products was frequently cited and highlighted by the participants as one of their main contributions to the environmental wellbeing. However, the reference to this consumption behaviour is neglected in Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas' (2011) work and posterior studies on mindful consumption. This dietary preference features as an interesting finding of this study, since it reflects that some Generation Y consumers with a mindful mindset engage in one of the practices which has the greatest positive impact on the environment. Indeed, scholars have identified that a dietary change can considerably reduce greenhouse emissions (Eshel et al., 2014; Hallström, Carlsson-Kanyama & Börjesson, 2015). Additionally, having a plant-based diet has been identified as one of the four most effective lifestyle choices that can reduce the personal carbon footprint (Wynes & Nicholas, 2017).

Regarding the sense of 'caring for the community', which is the second theme identified, it was possible to uncover that some mindful consumers from Generation Y feel that they have a responsibility towards the others and future generations. Besides expressing their concern for the community, some participants said that they felt the need to assume a more active role in society, which has motivated them to be volunteers and join NGO's. These findings bring more depth to Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas' (2011) work on the sense of care for the community by illustrating it with concrete examples.

'Caring for the self' is the last facet of the three senses of care by Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) and one of the seven themes that emerged in this study. The interviews with Generation Y consumers revealed that the things that they do in the pursuit of their individual wellbeing surpass the dimensions that are originally cited by the authors. Indeed, Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) mainly emphasise the link between materialism, emotional and financial well-being. However, the participants highlighted the importance of practices that contribute to their physical and emotional health, well-being and happiness. This was reflected in behaviours such as exercising, eating well, doing activities that they enjoyed, meditating, among others.

For many participants, all three types of sense of caring (self, community and environment) are connected and will have an impact on the other. For some, being mindful will be about caring for the environment more than caring for themselves or the community. For others, being mindful will be about caring for the community first and foremost and they will feel like they have a responsibility towards society to influence others to become more mindful. However, for some people, being mindful does not necessarily mean that they have a responsibility to share their mindset and to influence people around them. Indeed, it has been found that some people find it difficult to influence others in a non-intrusive way. This is an important finding of this study, as Pusaksrikit, Pongsakornrungsilp and Pongsakornrungsilp's (2013) framework on the 'development of mindful consumption' states that 'showing and sharing' is a significant stage of mindful consumption. However, participants are not always willing to share their experience and do not necessarily feel a responsibility to do so. This finding contradicts the authors' framework and demonstrates once again the complexity of the concept of mindful consumption.

Another theme that was uncovered in the study is 'becoming mindful'. During the interviews, many participants have described their personal journey. An important finding of the research is that knowledge, education and upbringing during childhood help to shape a caring mindset and a more mindful consumption. For some, their mindful mindset develops from a young age whereas, for others, it develops later on and is mainly influenced by friends, education and the media. Nonetheless, the development of the participants' mindful mindset appears to be an important aspect of the meaning that they attribute to mindful consumption. Indeed, for participants, it is not only about where they are now but how they got there in the first place.

One thing that every participant has in common is the importance that they attribute to making 'conscious decisions'. That is one of the facets of the meaning of mindful consumption for all participants of the study. Of course, many express the difficulty of being conscious at all times but believe that it is important to be as conscious as possible of all of their everyday decisions. Mindful consumption also means ambivalence for many people as this type of consumption usually creates contradictions and feelings of guilt and frustration. Nonetheless, participants still try to be as aware as possible of their decisions and the impacts of these on themselves, the community and the environment.

These two previous themes that emerged in the study can serve as an example of how challenging it is to formulate a comprehensive framework that serves to describe or classify mindful consumers. In their theoretical work Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) place consumers in different categories which classify them based on attitude and behaviour inclinations. In their model, the 'caring mindset-temperate consumption' category would group consumers that have a mindful mindset and that practice temperance in their consumption. With the aim of using those categories, it could be argued that the participants of this study could be part of this group, since they manifested that they have a caring mindset and that they try to be reflexive and conscious of their acts. However, the participants have expressed that they do not always have a caring mindset. Indeed, the interviewees said that sometimes they can have negative and selfish thoughts. Regarding their behaviour, the Generation Y consumers of this study mentioned that some of their practices do not reflect their caring mindset and that, in some cases, they are conscious about the negative outcomes of those specific decisions. This illustrates the difficulty of placing mindful consumers in groups and setting specific boundaries. The categories established by the different frameworks or models of mindful consumption thus overlook the complexity of the consumer's behaviour and mindset and how they are influenced by numerous factors. Nonetheless, the seven themes that have emerged in this study provide a good overview of the multi-faceted meaning of mindful consumption for Generation Y consumers with a caring mindset.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study on the meaning of mindful consumption contribute to the empirical and theoretical background of the under researched concept of mindful consumption. The aim of this thesis was to give meaning to the theoretical concept of mindful consumption of Generation Y in an empirical setting. Moreover, the thesis enabled the refinement of the theory on mindful consumption. Indeed, the findings of the study revealed the complexity of the concept and demonstrated that creating a simple and comprehensive model or framework to illustrate this complex concept would be a difficult task.

Additionally, the findings suggest that it is difficult to create different categories of mindful consumers like Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) did with their four consumer proclivities: (i) caring mindset-temperate consumption, (ii) caring mindset-excessive consumption, (iii) non-

caring mindset-temperate consumption and (iv) non-caring mindset-excessive consumption. Indeed, consumers are full of contradictions and will not always be caring or temperate in their consumption patterns. Nonetheless, the research findings enabled a deep exploration of the concept and helped to gain further understanding of what it means to Generation Y to be mindful consumers and how their mindset develops over time.

The findings show similarities with Pusaksrikit, Pongsakornrungsilp and Pongsakornrungsilp's (2013) framework on the 'development of mindful consumption'. The authors propose 'willingness' as the first stage of this process. However, they overlook factors such as education, upbringing and society, which can have an influence on the initial development of mindful consumption. Also, the last phase of their framework, 'showing and sharing', is not a part of everyone's development stages.

In addition, the theoretical framework that has been proposed by Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011) concerning the mindful mindset and behaviour, is partly supported by the findings of the study. Indeed, caring for the environment, the self and the community are all part of the meaning of mindful consumption for participants. However, other elements such as responsibility and ambivalence are missing from the authors' initial framework.

All of the findings of the study contribute to the theory on mindful consumption, mindful behaviour and mindful mindset. They also contribute to the theory on the consumption patterns of Generation Y, which suggests that the members of this generational group are more responsible and aware of the reality of the world (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011; Fromm & Garton, 2013; Hill & Lee, 2012; Jayson, 2006; Nayyar, 2001; Williams & Page, 2011). The findings also contribute to the theory on attitude-behaviour gaps and demonstrates once more the complexity of this subject.

5.2 Practical Implications

The practical implications of the findings of the study essentially benefit the governmental bodies as well as the educational system and parents. Indeed, the findings of the thesis suggest that knowledge, education and influence enable the development of a caring mindset. In turn, this caring mindset can evolve into caring behaviour towards the self, the society and the environment.

For governments, it is crucial to have as many healthy people as possible and to have a population that takes care of the environment that they live in. This, for example, would reduce the public spending that is utilised for healthcare or reduce the cost of trash removal in public spaces and recycling facilities. For this reason, it is important to find ways to help the population develop a caring mindset from a young age.

For governments, the findings of the study can help them craft programmes aimed at citizens. These programmes would provide them with knowledge about the impact of modern consumption on society, the environment and themselves. Additionally, governmental bodies could provide incentives to people for them to buy less or buy locally produced goods, use public transportation, bikes and recycle. Finally, programmes aimed at raising awareness about the dangers of certain foods and helping citizens to start healthier diets could be put into place. This could prevent the population from getting certain diseases related to bad diets and could improve the well-being and health of the citizens in the long run.

For schools, the findings of this study suggest that education from a young age about one's responsibility in today's society is primordial if a mindful mindset is to develop in the future. Educational programmes could be put into place at schools or in other locations to educate students on the impact of over-consumption on society, the environment and themselves. Also, schools could introduce meditation classes in order to help young kids develop mindfulness early on in their life. In the United Kingdom, for example, there is a programme which is called 'Mindfulness in Schools Project', it aims to train thousands of teachers on this practice in order to promote the well-being and self-support of children (Walker, 2016).

Finally, the findings of the study suggest that parents play an important role in the development of a more caring mindset. For this reason, early on in their children's lives, parents could put emphasis on resource management, recycling and on the importance of caring for the people around them. In addition, they could educate their children about the importance of not wasting food and eating nourishing meals that will contribute to their good health.

5.3 Limitations

The results of this study offer valuable insights that contribute to the exploration of the concept of mindful consumption, however, there are some limitations that are necessary to mention. These are mainly related with the sample of the study.

As mentioned in the methodology section, the sampling of the research used a purposive sampling strategy in order to ensure that specific characteristics of a segment of population could be considered. The sampling strategy of the research was based on three main criteria: age (Generation Y), education (higher education) and theory (mindful consumption). Regarding the age of the participants, the aim was to recruit individuals from the Generation Y segment who are currently aged between 22 and 38 years old. Although the researchers were able to recruit participants with a wide age range among them (between 22 and 36 years old), it is notable that the sample was mainly dominated by students under the age of 30. This limitation reflects the particular time and convenience constraints of the empirical research. Indeed, the researchers had to find participants in a limited period of time to ensure that the data could be analysed properly after the collection.

The time constraints also limited the flexibility of adding new participants to the study along the way. Since the empirical research included a seven-day period for the collection of participant-produced photographs before the interview, it was not possible to include more individuals at the later stage of the research.

5.4 Future Research

The previously mentioned limitations of the study call for a more extent and deep research of Generation Y consumers that could enabled the recruitment of more varied participants and would allow a wider representation of all ages with different occupations. The possibility of having a more diverse and bigger sample could offer deeper conclusions and allow the identification of patterns that are specific to a certain age group or profession.

Moreover, it would be interesting to investigate the meaning of mindful consumption for other generations such as consumers from Generation Z and Generation X. In turn, the results from the different generational studies could be compared and further explored if needed.

This would allow researchers to understand the different meanings that are attributed to mindful consumption by distinct generational groups.

Also, it could be interesting to conduct a study which would compare men and women's approach to care and which would uncover how they consume mindfully. Indeed, the present study did not differentiate the meaning of mindful consumption based on the participants' gender. Additionally, to gain even further insights into the mindset and behaviour of mindful consumers, a longitudinal study could be undertaken over a period of several months. This study could include diary methods in addition to the participant-produced photographs and semi-structured interview methods that have been used in this research project. A longitudinal study would allow researchers to immerse themselves even further into the lives of the participants and uncover the true meaning they attribute to mindful consumption. Finally, as a way to generalise the findings on mindful consumption, a quantitative study could be performed to gain statistical insight into the population and to test the different themes that have been uncovered in this study.

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Appendix A

Dear participant,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. Our research aims to understand your mindset and consumption patterns. To do this, we are going to ask you to complete a task for seven days. After this period, we will arrange an individual interview to have a discussion about the topic.

What to do:

- On a daily basis, for seven days, we want you to take a picture of the all the things that you do in a day that you consider are caring for the environment, the community and yourself.
- This includes all the practices that you have adopted in your routine that you consider are caring, or things that you happen to do in a specific day, even the smallest thing.
- After you take the pictures, send them to the researchers via WhatsApp, Facebook or Email. This can be either right after you take the picture or at the end of every day. There is no need to add text or explain why you took that picture. We just want to see the images.
- Through your pictures, we are aiming to understand what you consider to be caring in your everyday life, so there is no need to do things that you do not usually do.
- After the seven-day period we would meet either face-to-face or on Skype to conduct an interview. We will then ask you questions about the pictures you took.

Appendix B

<u>Topic Guide of Semi-Structured Interviews</u>

<u>Photo elicitations: the caring mindset in pictures</u>

→ Always keep in mind caring for: environment, oneself and the community
- Ask about the seven-day task of taking pictures of things. We would aim to obtain a description of how they felt performing the task and how it fit in their everyday life.
- Ask the participants to explain each picture, the context, and the reason why they took it
- Ask clarifications about elements of the picture we do not understand to minimise bias.

<u>The development of the caring mindset</u>
- Willingness
- The development of the caring mindset: explanation of their journey

→ When did they start developing this mindset, for which reasons?

<u>The evolution of the mindset</u>
- Training and Practice
- How this mindful mindset has evolved since the moment they say they started to have a caring mindset until now.
    - How this caring mindset has been reflected in their behaviour (concrete actions)
- Showing and Sharing
- Ask about how they feel about sharing their lifestyle with other people
    - If they like to talk about it: what would they do to influence other people?

<u>Barriers to mindful behaviour</u>
- Is there anything else you think you can do?
    - What is stopping you?

→ Are you aware/conscious about the impacts of your acts?