

Sustainable Consumption in Vietnam

An examination of the behavior of young consumers through the Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability Model.

Author: Christel Rydström
Supervisor: Nicholas Loubere





SPONSORSHIP FROM Sida

This study has been carried out within the framework of the Minor Field Study (MFS) Scholarship Programme and are funded by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and administered by the Swedish Council for Higher Education.

The MFS Scholarship is for field studies in developing countries, or more specifically in the countries included on the DAC List of ODA. It is intended for students at universities and university colleges with an international interest, who wish to gather material for their Bachelor or Master dissertations for periods of 8-10 weeks. It aims to provide Swedish students with the opportunity to build up their knowledge of developing countries and development issues.

Sida's main purpose with the Scholarships is to stimulate the students' interest in, as well as increasing their knowledge and understanding of development issues. The Minor Field Studies provide the students with practical experience of fieldwork in developing settings. A further aim of Sida is to strengthen the cooperation between Swedish university departments and institutes and organisations in these countries.

The Department of External Relations at Lund University is one of the departments that administer MFS Programme funds.

SPONSORSHIP FROM International Chamber of Commerce

Sponsorship from

This study has been carried out within the framework of the Nicolinstiftelse CN-70 Scholarship.

ICC:s Nicolinstiftelse CN-70 bildades 1991 med anledning av tekn. dr. Curt Nicolins 70-årsdag. Stiftelsen har till huvudsakligt ändamål att främja tekniskt och ekonomiskt forsknings- och utvecklingsarbete om harmonisering av internationella regler för investeringar, kommunikationer, miljö och skatter eller därmed besläktad forskning som är av särskilt intresse för det svenska näringslivet och svenskt företagande internationellt.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the limited literature on sustainable consumption in Vietnam with a focus on the young urban consumer. Sustainable consumption is an important area to focus on as Vietnam is an emerging economy with a young population where consumption is increasing and where the young and fast-growing labor market underpins their economic prosperity. Vietnam is also emblematic of Asia where young, middle class consumers are changing consumption patterns globally. This qualitative research explores the perceptions among young consumers and local companies in Ho Chi Minh City with regard to sustainable consumption behavior. The research questions that guided this field research were; (1) How do young consumers perceive their behavior with regard to sustainable consumption in Vietnam? (2) How do local companies in Vietnam perceive young consumers behavior with regard to sustainable consumption?

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and used the framework Motivation, Ability, and Opportunity model (MOA-model) in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The model was useful to identify and organize the understanding of the participant's perceptions of sustainable consumption in Vietnam. The three components: Motivation, Ability, and Opportunity, enabled answers and illustrated constraints young consumers encounter buying sustainable products. The findings were able to show similarities and differences between the two research group's perceptions. The findings arrive at the following results; the general perception among the local companies on young consumers' behavior with regard to sustainable consumption, was that they lack sufficient knowledge and interest as well as the market is yet too expensive for them. The general perception among the young consumers were concentrated around plastic, rather than the actual food consumption. The young consumers in this research perceived the use of plastic around food as the primary concern. Additionally, a general distrust towards companies producing sustainability appeared among young consumers. The different components in the MOA model were able to demonstrate different perceptions with regard to sustainable consumption behavior.

Key words: Sustainable Consumption, Plastic, Perceptions, Vietnam, MOA-model, Young Consumers, Local Companies, Food.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all that work at Tundra Fonder for providing me an opportunity to do my fieldwork in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. A special thanks to Chau Le and Malin Almgren at Tundra Fonder that supported me throughout the process before, and in Vietnam.

This research would not have been possible without the enormous contribution of the participants and Christina Ameln that connected me with the local companies in Vietnam. Big thanks to everyone that has contributed and for taking the time and making this research possible.

Furthermore, I would like to extend my profound gratitude to my supervisor Nicholas Loubere, who provided me with deep and high-quality professional insights throughout the writing process. Furthermore, I am grateful for all the support and guidance in the field during a turbulent and uncertain time. Also, I would like to thank the teachers and the staff at the Centre for East and Southeast-Asian studies for the knowledge and recourse that helped me in my research.

Finally, I am grateful for the financial support from Sida and ICC that enabled me to conduct this study. Last but not least, thanks to my family and friends.

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	8
1.1 PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTION	8
1.2 Demarcations	9
1.3 Disposition.....	9
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.1 An overview of sustainable development and sustainable consumption.....	10
2.2 Sustainable Consumption in the Academic Context	11
2.3 Brief History of Sustainable Development in Vietnam	13
2.4 Previous Academic Literature on Sustainable Development in Vietnam.....	15
2.5 Key Segment - Young consumers and sustainable consumption	16
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK - THE MOA MODEL	19
3.1 The usage of the MOA.....	20
3.1.1 Motivation:.....	20
3.1.2 Opportunity:.....	21
3.1.3 Ability:	21
4. METHODOLOGY	23
4.1 Research approach.....	23
4.2 Key-informants interviews.....	24
4.3 Sampling – Local companies	25
4.4 Sampling – Young consumers.....	25
4.5 Data Analysis.....	26
4.6 Coding	26
4.7 Limitations.....	27
4.8 Positionality and Reflexivity	28
4.9. Ethical Considerations	29
5. FINDINGS.....	31
5.1 Motivation.....	31
5.3 Opportunity.....	36
5.2 Ability	39
6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	45
6.1 General view.....	45
6.2 Motivation.....	45
6.3 Opportunity	46
6.4 Ability	47
6.5 Conclusion	48
8. APPENDICES	50
Appendix 1. Interview Guide	50
Appendix 2. Interview Guide	51
Appendix 3. Record of Respondents.....	52
9. REFERENCES	53

Abbreviations

UN – The United Nations

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

MDGs – Millennium Development Goals

TA – Thematic analysis

UNESCO – The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNCED – The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

SCP – Sustainable consumption and production

1. Introduction

More than three decades have passed since Doi Moi, the economic and political reforms that transformed Vietnam from being one of the world's poorest nations into a low-to middle-income country (Hoon C. & Hyun Park J., 2017, p, 56). According to the World Bank, Vietnam has lifted more than 45 million people out of poverty, and the country's poverty rates declined from over 70 percent to below 6 percent by 2018. The shift from a central planned to a market economy has transformed Vietnam into an emerging market (World Bank, 2019). These progressive changes are making way for the emergence of consumer society with changes in the whole country. These changes have also created a new social class, consisting of young urban educated middle class, which have changed and increased Vietnam's consumption (Nguyen N.N., Özçaglar-Toulouse, N., Kjeldgaard, D., 2018, p, 490). Studies have examined the consumption practice in Vietnam, exploring the middle class consumption patterns (de Koning, J.I.J.C., Crul, M.R.M., Wever, R. and Brezet, J.C., 2015). However, little is known about the young urban consumer in Vietnam and their perceptions of sustainable consumption. The study, therefore, focuses on how young consumers perceive their behavior with regard to sustainable consumption behavior as well as how local companies perceives young consumers behavior as they have a direct correlation. The young urban consumer represents a key segment to investigate as Vietnam's economic prosperity is underpinned by the young and fast-growing labor market (Huong Pham T., 2018, p, 16). Vietnam is an emblematic new center of consumption in Asia. By examining Vietnam and particularly Ho Chi Minh City, which is one of the centers of new middle class consumers, Vietnam gives us a lens through which to view changing consumption patterns in Asia's emerging young middle class.

1.1 Purpose and research question

This study aims to explore the perceptions associated with sustainable consumption behavior among young consumer's perspectives and from the perspective of local companies that produce sustainably in Vietnam and how they perceive young consumer's perceptions. The object of study is the young consumer's perspective. This research is approaching it in two different ways. One is the young consumer's perspective themselves, and the other one is the local companies in Vietnam. Although young consumers are the object of study, but the purpose is also to contribute to the limited academic literature and to understand similarities and differences between the two groups.

The research questions guiding this study is the following:

- *How do young consumers perceive their behavior with regard to sustainable consumption in Vietnam?*
- *How do local companies in Vietnam perceive young consumers behavior with regard to sustainable consumption?*

1.2 Demarcations

Although the definition of sustainable consumption in this thesis covers a large segment of sustainable consumption, this study focuses on food in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. There has been relatively little attention paid to young urban consumers and local companies in Vietnam; hence, this study focuses on young consumer's perspectives from their perspective and local companies in an emerging market context.

The study is not attempting to provide any representable and generalizable answers regarding how consumption is taking place; instead, an in-depth understanding of the contextual explanations of sustainable consumption in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. This study is using a Motivation, Opportunity, Ability model (MOA-model) to get an in-depth understanding, which is useful to identify and organize the understanding of one's perception of sustainable consumption behavior.

1.3 Disposition

The thesis is organized as follows: chapter (1) provides an outline with a literature review to situate this study in the current research field. After that, a contextual insight is presented of the development of sustainable consumption within an international and national context as well as where this study place itself. Chapter (2) the theoretical chapter, discuss the outline of the Motivation, Ability, and Opportunity Model (MOA-model) and the usage of it. Chapter (3) discuss the methodological chapter and explains the research approach, the empirical data, participants, limitations, and ethical considerations, etc. In chapter (4), the analysis is presented through the MOA-model. After that chapter (5) discusses the findings, and lastly, the paper ends with a conclusion and points the way forward for further research.

2. Literature review

To deepen the understanding of young consumers perceptions with regard to sustainable consumption behavior it is important to gather insights and knowledge from previous research within the same field. This literature chapter aims to do that, and it is organized as follows: First, the relevant literature on sustainable development and consumption is mapped out. After that, an overview is provided on sustainable consumption in the academic context. Subsequently, a brief history of sustainable development in Vietnam is outlined, followed by previous academic literature on sustainable consumption in Vietnam, and were this study positions itself. Lastly, an overview of young consumers in the context of Vietnam is given.

2.1 An overview of sustainable development and sustainable consumption

According to the scholar's Justice Mensah and Sandra Ricart Casadevall, sustainable development has become the buzzword in development discourse associated with different definitions, meanings, and interpretations (Mensah, J., & Ricart Casadevall, S., 2019, p, 5). In 1972, the concept of sustainable development received its first significant international recognition at the UN Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden (*Ibid*). However, the term sustainable development was not referred to explicitly. Rather an agreed notion to sustainable development was created among the international community where both development and the environment previously addressed as separate issues could manage in a mutually beneficial way (*Ibid*, p, 5). However, it marked the beginning of environmental policies on sustainable consumption and production (Thongplew, N., Spaargaren, G., Koppen, K., 2017, p, 12). More than a decade later, the term sustainable development appeared in the 1980s on the publication of the report 'Our Common Future' by the Brundtland Commission (Barone, B. *et al.*, 2020, p, 44–45). In the report, sustainable development is defined as "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations, 1987, p. 37). This is similar to how sustainable development is defined today (United Nations - *The Sustainable Development Goal Agenda*). This definition has then become a starting point to build sustainability knowledge (Wenling, L., & Oosterveer, P., & Spaargaren, G., 2015, p, 14).

Some years later, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), known as the Rio Earth Summit (1992), world leaders from governments, businesses, and the civil society participated and recognized sustainable consumption and

production (SCP) as an overarching theme to link environmental and development challenges (Wenling, L., *et al.*, 2015, p, 14). The summit further agreed on a non-binding action plan to sustainable development (Local Governments for Sustainability USA). In 2012, it was the 20th anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit. During the summit, the United Nations adopted the Ten-Year Framework of Programmes on SCP to integrate policies and actions on SCP with different programs e.g., targeting consumer information and sustainable lifestyles as well as education (United Nations, UNEP).

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda includes 17 goals Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and applies to all countries. Whereas the previous goals, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted in the year 2000-2015, only intended action in developing countries (United Nations - The Sustainable Development Goal Agenda). Each of the 17 SDGs has specific targets to be achieved over the next decade. One of the SDGs that is relevant for this study is number 12 - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. Consumption and production patterns shape resources management and related social and environmental impacts, thereby affecting sustainability (United Nations, Goal 12).

According to the UN, if the global population reaches 9.6 billion by 2050, equivalent of almost three planets will be required to sustain the current lifestyles (United Nations, Responsible Consumption & Production: Why it Matters). Efforts to change and put the world on a sustainable and resilient development path is pressing. To achieve a sustainable future, we need to reduce our ecological footprint by improving the way we produce and consume goods and resources (United Nations Development Program). One region that needs special attention is Asia-Pacific, which is currently, according to one study, responsible for 53 percent of the global material consumption and home to 46 percent of the world's middle class in 2015 and will increase by 2030 to 65 percent (Hoon C. & Hyun Park J., 2017, p, 15).

2.2 Sustainable Consumption in the Academic Context

Given that this thesis is investigating sustainable consumption, it is important to review scholars' discussion about it. Studies have concluded that consumers lack high awareness or comprehension of real and sustainable characteristics of products (Vermeir, I., & Verbeke, W., 2006, p, 174). Despite the lack of real and sustainable characteristics, consumers around the world are becoming gradually aware and concerned about the negative consequences of

production and consumption. The responsibility consumers feel being sustainable are an important driver for change since people are the main driver for change (Vermeir, I., & Verbeke, W., 2006, p, 19). This concern provides a fruitful ground for growing market demand for certain products that are responsibly produced (Ingenbleek, P. T.M., 2015, p, 1428). Despite the growing awareness, scholars argue that everyday consumption practices are still driven by the value of money, convenience, habit, personal health concerns, and individual responses to social and institutional norms (Vermeir, I., & Verbeke, W., 2006, p, 179).

The concept of developing sustainable consumption practices has been part of the academic discussion and literature for nearly half a decade (Hume, M., 2010, p, 38). Various theories and approaches have been introduced in the debate on how to address sustainable consumption (Wenling. L., *et al.*, 2015, p, 13). The field of sustainable consumption research is still relatively young, multi-disciplinary, challenging, and has attracted scholars from different academic disciplines (Reisch, L.A. *et al.*, 2016, p, 10). Lucia A. Reisch *et al.*, (2016) outline the different angles and disciplines that have contributed to the field of sustainable consumption. For instance, “environmental sociology (particularly its perspectives pertaining to the social embeddedness of individual behaviour in social settings and contexts); behavioural economics (and its empirically based acknowledgment of consumers’ biases, heuristics and context dependencies); political science (and the view of the consumer as an active citizen-consumer); applied philosophy (particularly its theoretical insights regarding the ethical core of the concept)” (Reisch, L.A. *et al.*, 2016, p, 10), and the list of disciplines contributed to the field of sustainable consumption continues.

Other scholars have challenged the whole approach that assumes increased consumption is synonymous with improved well-being (Jackson, T., 2005, p, 9). While other scholars argue that “[...] sustainable consumption require governments and society to rethink the purpose of economies – is it to increase welfare, or to boost economic activity? – and design policies which achieve the underlying goals, rather than their proxies” (Seyfang, G., 2005, p, 299). Whereas other scholars have argued that sustainable de-growth is the essential factor for a sustainable future (de Koning *et al.*, 2015, p, 609). The wide range of different theoretical, behavioral, and social constructions of sustainable consumption has contributed to the advancement of the field over the years, it has created an extensive, but also complex literature on sustainable consumption involving multi-disciplinary areas (Wenling. L., *et al.*, 2015, p, 14). Due to the complexity of the concept, this study’s focus relates to the established understanding of

sustainable consumption of the SDGs 2030. The following quote is this study's focus and understanding as well as the grounding point of sustainable consumption:

“Since sustainable consumption and production aims at “doing more and better with less,” net welfare gains from economic activities can increase by reducing resource use, degradation and pollution along the whole life cycle, while increasing quality of life. There also needs to be significant focus on operating on supply chain, involving everyone from producer to final consumer. This includes educating consumers on sustainable consumption and lifestyles, providing them with adequate information through standards and labels and engaging in sustainable public procurement, among others” (United Nations, Goal 12).

This definition link sustainable consumption with limiting consumption and changing consumption patterns as well as involve producer to the final consumer. This understanding is useful as it is the most widely used definition, and it is the way in which many companies and consumers understand sustainable consumption.

2.3 Brief History of Sustainable Development in Vietnam

Sustainable development has become a key strategy for national governments as they seek to follow the guidelines of the SDGs and find ways to continue growth within natural resource constraints. In Vietnam, the guidance and objectives of sustainable development are marked with a wide range of implemented policies over the years (Hoon C. & Hyun Park J., 2017, p, 261). In the early 1990s, the Vietnamese government expressed its interest in environmental sustainability, which has been evident in the government's issuance of the National Action Plan on the environment and sustainable development in 1991 (*Ibid, p, 20*). When the MDGs were announced in 2000 by the UN, Vietnam expressed its strong will to implement the MDGs by nationalizing the goals and made it one of its national development priorities. Despite several challenges that Vietnam faced during the period 2001-2015, the transformation Vietnam went through, from being one of the poorest countries in the world to a low-to middle-income country by the year 2010, is notable (*Ibid, p, 23-24*).

In 2015, the UN launched a new set of partnership programs for the development goals, Agenda 2030, with 17 new SDGs. At the UN summit, Vietnam showed once again a strong will to implement the SDGs of the Agenda 2030 (Hoon C. & Hyun Park J., 2017, p, 24). In 2016, they started to incorporate Agenda 2030 goals into their national agenda. They created a national action plan where they integrated all the 17 SDGs except one (goal 11) and introduced 115 targets, which are fewer than the 169 targets set in UN Agenda 2030 (*Ibid, p, 25*). Nonetheless, the number of targets and goals Vietnam has incorporated into its national action plan is sign

of the country's interest in sustainable development. In addition to this, Vietnam has implemented other policies that further promote sustainability, such as The Vietnam Sustainable Development Strategy for 2011-2020, and the National Green Growth Strategy, 2011-2020 with a Vision to 2050 (Hoon C. & Hyun Park J., 2017, p, 261). The National Green Growth Strategy targets a green consumption and sustainable lifestyle. The strategy refers to the regular practice of consumption of only environmentally friendly products that do not cause any damage to human health or nature and its ecosystem (Thong N. T., *et al.*, 2017, p, 339). This strategy is closely linked to the UN's understanding of sustainable consumption by reducing resource use, degradation, and pollution along the whole life cycle, while increasing quality of life (United Nations, Goal 12).

Vietnam has shown high progressiveness in becoming a sustainable society. The willingness to change appears as strong and positive for the Vietnamese government as for its citizens. According to the two scholars Tri D. Le and Tai Anh Kieu, in a survey conducted by Nielsen in 2015, they concluded that Vietnamese consumers in Asia-Pacific region, have the highest socially conscious in stating a willingness to pay for products from companies that care for social and environmental values (Tri D., L., & Tai., K., 2019, p, 1). Despite the willingness, some scholars argue that Vietnam still lacks the awareness of environmental protection and has yet to become a part of Vietnamese citizens' daily lives (Hoon C. & Hyun Park J., 2017, p, 23). For instance, in Vietnam, the attitude about the personal responsibility of protecting the environment and conserve natural resources are still limited (*Ibid*). However, in 2019 the Vietnamese government announced its first national anti-plastic parade after acknowledging the harm such rubbish release cause to ecosystems, environment, and human habitats (Saigoneer, 2019). This announcement has further led to campaigns in Vietnam about plastic consumption promoting consumers' knowledge about the production behind it as well as how to treat plastic (*Ibid*).

Despite Vietnam's initiatives, growing population, and changing consumer behavior, there is still a lack of academic literature within the area of sustainability and especially among young consumers. The following section mapped out to provide a context within which this research positions itself.

2.4 Previous Academic Literature on Sustainable Development in Vietnam

More than 30 years have passed since *Doi Moi*, the economic and political reforms that transformed Vietnam into the emerging market we know today (Nguyen N.N., *et al.*, 2018). This reform turned Vietnam into a developing market and moved from being one of the world's poorest nations (World Bank, 2019). However, the transformation has brought about changes in several aspects of society, and one of them is consumption practices (Nguyen N.N., *et al.*, 2018, p, 490). The middle class in Vietnam is growing, and so is their consumption, especially in urban areas; despite its growth factor, there is still limited literature on this area (de Koning, 2015, p, 608). Victor King, Phuong An Nguyen, and Nguyen Hu Minh (2008) agree that there is little information or analysis on the urban youth middle class in Vietnam. The limited literature on urban youth middle class is explained by some scholars to depend on it being a relatively recent phenomenon in Vietnam. (King, V. *et al.*, 2008, p, 796). Despite the sparse literature, King *et al.*, characterize the young middle class as interested in consumption orientation and in accessing news and information with the ambition to improve (de Koning, 2015, p, 609). Another study that investigated consumers' purchase behavior of energy-efficient household appliances in Vietnam looked at motivational and cognitive approaches (Nguyen, T.N. *et al.*, 2017, p, 167). The scholars Nhat Nguyen Nguyena, Nil Özçaglar-Toulousea, and Dannie Kjeldgaard, focused on young consumers in Vietnam. They identified that young Vietnamese consumers regard consumption practices as a way to make sense of their self-identity in their daily life (Nguyen N.N., *et al.*, 2018, p, 498). However, a common feature of the sustainable consumption field and from the above mentioned was that it did either cover sustainability or consumers but rarely both.

Nonetheless, there have been few studies that have covered young consumers in Vietnam. For instance, Thu Huong Pham, The Ninh Nguyen, Thi Thu Hoai Phan and Nam Thanh Nguyen studied purchase behavior of organic food by young consumers in Vietnam with a focus on environmental sustainability (Pham, T.H., *et al.*, 2018, p, 1).

Charlotte de Koning, Jotte Ilbina Jozine, Marcel Rudolphus Maria Crul, Renee Wever, and Johannes Cornelis Brezet (2015) investigated sustainable consumption in Vietnam among the urban middle class in Hanoi. Their research focused on energy, transport, water, waste, and food, which this study will further draw on. Their study concluded that there is a need for further studies on sustainable food consumption in Vietnam. Furthermore, on how local businesses can

provide the right information, transparency, and incentives for Vietnamese consumers to get more involved in sustainable food consumption (de Koning, *et al.* 2015, p, 617).

From the above mentioned, it is clear that the area of academic literature on sustainability and especially on sustainable consumption and young urban consumers in Vietnam, is limited. There is very little research examining the perspectives of consumers and companies with regard to sustainable consumption. This study will, therefore, seek to contribute to the emerging body of literature on sustainable development and consumption in Vietnam. This study will not only add to the field of sustainable consumption in Vietnam but also focus on two different groups that have not been studied to a large extent, and which have a direct connection. This ties well with Charlotte de Koning *et al.*, who proposed that further studies should focus on the area of sustainable consumption and local businesses. By focusing on food, this study will draw on the exciting element from the study by Charlotte de Koning *et al.*

2.5 Key Segment - Young consumers and sustainable consumption in Vietnam

Most research has focused on young consumers and their perspective and their action, but it has not necessarily focused on how local companies perceive young consumers behavior with regard to sustainable consumption behavior. Hence, this research is approaching this study in two different ways. One is the young consumer's perspective themselves, and the other one is local companies in Vietnam. However, young consumers are the object of study.

Sustainable consumption is an important area to focus on since Vietnam is an emerging economy with a young population where consumption is increasing. People are the main driver for prosperity and especially young people, as they represent a large proportion of the total consumption expenditure in affluent societies (Fien J. *et al.* 2008, p, 56). Looking at Vietnam, in 2012, over 30% of the working population (65 % of the whole population) was between 15 and 30 years (de Koning, *et al.* 2015, p, 609). Vietnam's economic prosperity is underpinned by the young and fast-growing labor market and its rising middle class (PWC, 2018, p, 16). The middle class in Vietnam is growing, and so is their consumption, especially in urban areas, and despite its growth factor, there is still sparse literature on this area (de Koning, *et al.* 2015, p, 608). Hence, young urban consumers, therefore, represent a key segment to research in Vietnam.

The scholar's John Fien, Camron Niel, and Matthew Bently showed that youth spending power in 11 major economies is around 750 billion US\$, which illustrates a substantial influence over the market. Despite this, some scholars argue that young people are often ignored and that they are a critical group to target in the drive for a sustainable future (Fien J. *et al.* 2008, p, 56). However, other scholars argue that young people have an impact and are leading movements for change of existing economic systems (Thoresen, V. *et al.*, 2015, p, 19). The fact that young consumer represents such a large volume of the consumer market has an impact on world societies and the environment. This study's focus ties well with a study performed by UNESCO– United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural that considered young people as an important target group since they will play a determinant role in future consumption patterns (UNESCO, 2001, p, 5). Therefore, this study's grounding point, group, country, and subject represents an important area to contribute to the field of academia.

A study performed by National Geographic partnered with GlobScan in 2008, investigated global consumers attitude to sustainability focusing on fourteen different countries (including Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Mexico, Russia, the UK, and the US), and found that “consumers feel empowered as individuals and are willing to make changes in their consumption habits [...]” (Greendex, 2008, p, 5). However, to change consumers’ habits, they need to feel empowered. A study on the middle class in Vietnam showed that the consumers need more information because they do not feel empowered to make the right decisions (de Koning, *et al.* 2015, p, 612).

UNESCO's study pointed at some significant findings. They identified that young consumers did not believe that the consumption of clothes and food had an environmental impact (UNESCO, 2001, p, 45). This is significant within the context of Vietnam, as another study identified that Vietnamese consumers seems to spend half of their income on food and beverages, which stress the importance of incorporating food into the perspective of sustainable consumption, and investigate how young consumers perceive their behavior on food consumption as well as how local companies perceives it (Pham, T.H., *et al.*, 2018, p, 7). de Koning *et al.* research found that sustainable food consumption was motivated with two primary motivators: health and future generations. Their study did also conclude a misuse of eco-labels and little transparency in Vietnam, which has created a distrust of large national businesses (de Koning, *et al.* 2015, p, 616). This study will follow up on this section's findings from a different

angle and see if this view is reflected among the young population. Hence, this research sub-question is: *how do young consumers perceive sustainable food consumption?*

3. Theoretical framework - The MOA model

This explorative research on sustainable consumption in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam will be presented in a Motivation, Opportunity and Ability Model (MOA). In this chapter, the theoretical framework presented and how this study usage it. The result of the study will be presented with the MOA model constructed by Folke Ölander and John Thøgersen in 1995. MOA model is used in this study, motivated by its frequent use in consumer studies and further useful to identify and organize the perception among the research groups (Jackson, T. 2005, p, 95). Additionally, the MOA model has developed from earlier theories on attitude models as, Theory of Planned Behavior and Theory of Reasoned Action. However, the MOA model designed as a more accessible and appropriate frame of reference for studies on consumer behavior with an impact on the environment, thus suitable for this study (Jackson, T. 2005, p, 48). Furthermore, the model is useful for this study as it can pick up possible constraints and opportunities expressed by young consumers to pursue a sustainable consumption practice.

Explaining individual behavior in all its complexity is a challenge in itself (Ajzen I., 1991, p, 179). There have been several attempts to develop attitude models that cover behaviors not entirely under the control of the individual's will, and the most common attempts have been made by the scholar Icek Ajzen's, Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Ölander, F., & Thøgersen, J., 1995, p, 360). The latter builds on TPB, which is a theory that links one's beliefs and behavior. The TRA will only be discussed as it is relevant to this study. However, the TRA differs from TPB with its additional concept of perceived behavioral control. Ajzen argues that “perceived behavioral control can, and usually does, vary across situations and actions” (Ajzen I., 1991, p, 183). The TRA includes three independent determinants of an individual's intention: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitudes refer to the extent to which an individual has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question. The subjective norm is a social factor and refers to the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior. Perceived behavioral control refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of acting in the desired behavior. (Ajzen I., 1991, p, 188). The TRA puts itself in a more general framework of the relations among beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior (Ajzen I., 1991, p, 185).

One of the models that build on the TRA is the MOA model that has been further developed to apply on data that aims to investigate individual consumer behavior (Jackson, T. 2005, p, 95). Ölander and Thøgersen argue that MOA model is “a more appropriate frame of reference for

the study of consumers behavior with an impact on the environment and should include three main determinants” motivation, opportunity, and ability (Ölander, F., & Thøgersen, J., 1995, p, 360). In consumers studies there are often two factors that play a role looking at purchase behavior, which are internal and external factors (Balau, M., 2013, p, 2). This is addressed by Ölander and Thøgersen, internal factors in the model are related to the two component's motivation and ability, and the external factor is related to the component opportunity that enables or prevents young consumers from being sustainable (Ölander, F., & Thøgersen, J., 1995. p, 362). The external factors are, e.g., the society, companies, or the government, which, to some extent, have control over the market and could enable or prevent the consumer from carrying out a sustainable consumption practice. Hence, making a sustainable choice is partly in control of the consumers. That means the MOA integrates an internal and external approach into the reference frame of motivation, opportunity, and ability.

3.1 The usage of the MOA

The model is useful in identifying and organizing an understanding of one’s perception of sustainable consumption behavior. In this way, the MOA will assist the researcher in identifying the perception given by the two groups. The model includes three different components motivation, opportunity, and ability, which usually is illustrated through a model and interlinked the different components. However, the model will be shown at the end of this chapter after the discussion on the components.

3.1.1 Motivation: Motivation is the first component in this model, and it makes the young consumer act sustainably and comprises both internal and external factors. However, Ölander and Thøgersen argue that motivation is a predominant part of an internal driver. For instance, if a young consumer in Vietnam perceives the environment as an important aspect for sustainable consumption, and hence one’s practice is both an internal and an external approach as the purchase decision concerns one’s own, other human beings, animals, and/or the environment (Ölander, F., & Thøgersen, J., 1995, p, 362). This could be translated into an intention that culminates into a behavior (Thøgersen, J., 1994, p, 147-9). This is only feasible if the consumers have the ability as well as the opportunity (Ölander, F., & Thøgersen, J., 1995, p, 364). Ölander and Thøgersen also argue that the motivation is affected by external factors e.g. social norms which leads to an internalized personal norm (Ölander, F., & Thøgersen, J., 1995, p, 362). Social norms are, therefore, observed to be internal, conditionally followed, and motivated by external (Farrow, K. & Grolleau, G. & Ibanez, L., 2017, p, 2). However,

Thøgersen does also points at three different factors that could play a role in motivating one to carry out a pro-environmental behavior. The first one is an instrumental reason and relates to the fear of pesticides. The second one refers to ethical reasons, where the consumer motivated by the concern about the welfare of farm animal. The third, and last one, is explained by Thøgersen as a social motivate and relates to consumers willing to show off (Thøgersen, J., 2010, p, 99). Thøgersen does also point at the lack of motivation could occur if the consumer does believe it does not make any difference making a sustainable consumption choice- an efficiency-related negative motivation, which could be caused by e.g., a mistrust in a company or in the product (*Ibid*, 99).

3.1.2 Opportunity: This is identified as external conditions; an opportunity is a precondition for the performance of behavior e.g., companies and society are the ones that provide sufficient and transparent information on how their services or products are produced. Furthermore, they show how these go in line with sustainability, which allows the young consumer to carry out a sustainable consumption behavior (Ölander, F., & Thøgersen, J., 1995, p, 365). Within opportunity, access and availability are two important factors that could lead to people to change in their behavior. Ölander and Thøgersen argue “that the opportunity for behaving in an environmentally friendly manner moderate the relationship between attitudes and behavior” (Ölander, F., & Thøgersen, J., 1995, p, 367).

3.1.3 Ability: In the MOA model, ability refers to the Pieters ability concept, where two factors are decisive for a consumer. First, the task knowledge required to perform the given task, which in this case refers to the knowledge to carry out a sustainable consumption behavior. The second one refers to consumers habits (Ölander, F., & Thøgersen, J., 1995, p, 364). To carry out a sustainable consumption behavior, the young consumer needs to know to command the required abilities to perform sustainably (Thøgersen, J., 1994, p, 147). Knowledge in the MOA model also observes if the consumers may lack sufficient information about sustainable consumption (Ölander, F., & Thøgersen, J., 1995, p, 365).

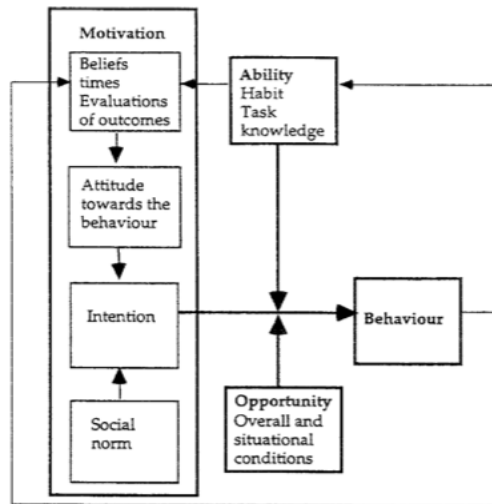


Figure 1. The motivation – opportunity – ability model.¹

The MOA model is applied to the empirical material to analyze how local companies perceive young consumers' consumption behavior as well as how young consumers perceive sustainable consumption behavior through the lens of Vietnam. Using the MOA model and its three components will enable the researcher to analyze perceptions based on external and internal factors. These three components: Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability, will allow the researcher to explore the individual level of it. The following chapter will outline this thesis method and approach.

¹ Ölander, F., & Thøgersen, J. (1995). p. 361.

4. Methodology

With the fundamentals of the MOA model in chapter 3, the methodology can be laid out. This chapter will elaborate on the research design. Followed by a discussion on the method and its limitations. Then the ethical considerations are outlined, and the researcher's positionality as well reflexivity is discussed.

4.1 Research approach

This research aims to understand current sustainable consumption perceptions among young consumers and how the local companies perceive young consumer's sustainable consumption behavior from the lens of Asia. This area of study is particularly important as the younger and well-educated elites of almost 40 percent (or 680 million) live in Asia (UNEP, 2015). Asia's middle classes are increasing, and Vietnam currently has the fastest-growing middle class population in Southeast-Asia (BCG, 2013) and believed to be the new tiger of Asia with its rapid economic growth (Barker, T. 2019, p, 96). The country will continue to develop, which, in the long-run, has a significant impact on the environment and society. Despite Vietnam's growth, it is still a relatively developing country in absolute terms (Barker, T. 2019, p, 96).

In 2012 over 30 percent of the working population (65% of the whole population) was between 15 and 30 years; in other words, Vietnam's economy is underpinned by young and fast-growing populations (de Koning, *et al.* 2015, p, 609). Despite the growing economy, consumption, and middle class in this country, there is still limited academic literature and analysis in this area. This stresses the importance of investigating how young consumers perceive their behavior with regard to sustainable consumption and how local companies perceive young consumers behavior with regard to sustainable consumption since they have a direct connection. This study places itself in a relatively unexplored field and will contribute to the field of sustainable consumption in an emerging market by focusing on two different groups – young urban consumers and local companies.

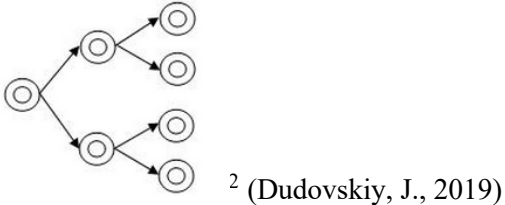
Given the explorative nature of the research questions, a qualitative study of sustainable consumption in Vietnam is performed, and it will use a thematic analysis as a method since it allows for an in-depth investigation of the perceptions. This study's thematic analysis entails a combination of two different ways of interpreting the data, which will be elaborated on further down in this chapter (Jacksson, T., 2005, p, 95). This research design is suitable for further

research as well as for this study since it can indicate how the field of sustainable consumption behavior is perceived by two different groups; young consumers and local companies in Vietnam. This study has interviewed five different local companies who produce sustainably in Vietnam and five younger consumers within the age of 24-31 years old (also considered to be so-called millennials), in Ho Chi Minh City.

4.2 Key-informants interviews

This thesis has two different groups of key-informants – young consumers and local companies in Vietnam, which has been approached with semi-structured interviews.

The study has conducted five semi-structured interviews with young consumers working in different sectors in Vietnam between February 2020 and March 2020 with a timeframe of 4 weeks. Three of the interviewees worked in a non-governmental organization, and the other two worked in the consumer's goods industry and one in the IT sector (see Appendix 1), which has enabled different understandings and perceptions of sustainable consumption through the lens of Vietnam. The interviews were conducted at various cafés around Ho Chi Minh City, except for one that was held over Skype. One of the interviews used an interpreter translating from Vietnamese to English. The sampling technique that was used was an exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling (see model below). Considering the research method used and obstacles finding participants in the field during the outbreak of a pandemic, Coronavirus, Covid-19 (WHO, 2019), such a technique was necessary for sustainable review consumption among young consumers. The model below is illustrating the sampling technique that was used. The single circle is explaining the contact person in Vietnam that introduced the researcher to two different participants, who later introduced the other two etc.



The second sample was local or registered companies in Vietnam and was conducted in English using semi-structured interviews. The researcher was able to get in contact with local companies in Vietnam through Tundra Fonder’s contact person Christina Ameln. The study

² Exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling.

conducted five semi-structured interviews in March 2020 at different cafés around Ho Chi Minh City and one over Skype.

Using semi-structured interviews as a method, it enabled an in-depth knowledge about the topic from two different groups. The semi-structured approach further allowed some control of the interviews. It made sure that the respondents answered within a specific framework but enabled the possibility to ask questions beyond the interview guide (Bourgeault, I., *et al.*, 2010). By using open-ended questions, the study has been able to collect meaningful answers as they were designed to encourage elaborated responses from the participants individual experience and knowledge.

The researcher allowed both research groups to decide where and what time the interview should take place. The two research groups were informed about the timeframe and research questions before the interview. The interviews with the young consumer and local companies ranged from 35-45 minutes.

4.3 Sampling – Local companies

The first sample relates to a purposive and non-random sample. Purposive sample refers to an expert sample (Lavrakas, P. J., 2008). The expert sample in this study refers to the five participants from the local companies in Vietnam who were strategically chosen. The researcher had the opportunity to decide from a wide range of local companies in Vietnam with various knowledge on sustainable consumption in Vietnam with help from Tundra Fonder. The researcher's selection criteria were based on the study's key theme, food, which was identified in the literature as an important theme.

4.4 Sampling – Young consumers

The second sample related to a non-probability and a non-random sample and was also strategically chosen by the researcher (Bryman, A., 2015, p, 174). The researcher decided to investigate young consumers with an academic background. According to Nguyen, Dong Duy Lam & Tran, Quan (2016), education has a positive impact on individuals' consumption patterns within sustainability. Thus, the researcher qualified participants that held an academic background (Nguyen, Dong Duy Lam & Tran, Quan., 2016, p, 164).

4.5 Data Analysis

The researcher only used a translator for one of the interviews translating the respondent's answer during the interview from Vietnamese to English. All the participants were recoded after given consent. The researcher transcribed the recorded interviews word by word the same day or a few days after. This thesis approach has not sought to opt for a naturalized transcript, one that includes many details as hesitation and notes on non-verbal details such as body language (Hammett, D., Twyman, C., Graham, M., 2015, p, 159). Instead, this thesis has opted for a denaturalized transcript, one that focuses solely on the spoken words and provides a clear, coherent account of these without the inclusion of pauses, which is a faster way of transcribing and relevant for this thesis research questions. (*Ibid, p,159*). The transcripts have been slightly revised.

To answer the research questions, how young consumers perceive their behavior with regard to sustainable consumption and how local companies perceive young consumer's behavior with regard to sustainable consumption in Vietnam, a thematic analysis (TA) was used to identify similarities and differences across the data (Bryman, A., 2015, p, 586). The codes to interpret the explorative data have emerged differently and will be elaborated upon below.

4.6 Coding

Coding in this qualitative research relates to a process whereby data are broken down into quotes, where the researcher has found patterns in the empirical data, such as similarities and differences and are given names (Bryman, A., 2015, p, 689). In other words, the researcher has interviewed consumers and local companies in Vietnam and went through the transcripts and identified themes that the participants talked about.

The codes that emerge from the transcripts derived from the use of NVivo. This software tool assisted the researcher in undertaking the analysis of the empirical data and to further ensure reliability since the codes were checked doing several rounds of coding (Bryman, A., 2015, p, 585). NVivo and the TA assisted the researcher in the findings of latent meanings and assumptions as well as ideas that lie behind what is explicitly stated in the data (Braun, V. & Clarke, V., 2012, p, 2). The coding technique was a combination of three different ways to interpret the data; first, the study has used the predetermined key theme, food (see literature review). Second, the other codes have derived from the MOA-model and have created themes

to interpret the explorative data. The third and last approach, the codes have emerged based on similarities and differences, which derived mainly from the data based on the participant's perceptions. This approach was also used to get a more in-depth understanding of the data. Therefore, the TA was a suitable method as it allowed the researcher to be flexible and find themes as well as guided in the finding implicit meanings (Braun, V. & Clarke, V., 2012, p, 3). When the coding was done, the researcher clustered the codes into themes (Bryman, A., 2015, p, 585).

Ten themes have emerged from the analysis of the explorative data on from consumers and companies. The themes relate to the research focus that builds on codes identified in the transcripts, which have provided the researcher with the basis the participants perceptions that can contribute to the limited literature on sustainable consumption (Bryman, A., 2015, p, 584). The themes presented in the findings section in accordance with the MOA model's different components of motivation, opportunity, and ability, which have emerged from the analysis of the empirical data.

The TA can entail both predetermined codes as well as codes deriving from the data. Coding in qualitative studies is, according to Alan Bryman (2015), not solely inductive. In other words, there are elements in qualitative studies that are predetermined. This study's predetermined elements were the MOA-model and the study's key theme food, which have been pulled out from the literature review (see Appendix 1 & 2).

The literature review also provided an overview of the field of sustainable consumption in Vietnam. This gave a useful entry point into the field of perception on sustainable consumption and further allowed the researcher to in-depth study the data collection (Bryman, A., 2015, p, 23). The more explorative approach that was used to get a more in-depth analytical approach came from NVivo and thorough reading and rereading of the transcripts in the software tool (Bryman, A., 2015, p, 585).

4.7 Limitations

This study uses a purposive, non-probability, and non-random sample, which entails certain issues concerning sample biases. Since this thesis sample is not random, the human judgment could likely affect the selection process and making more members of the population more likely to be selected (Bryman, A., 2015, p, 174). It should be mentioned that the researcher has

looked into the feasibility of collecting a random sample. The researcher, along with the contact person in Vietnam, considered it to be too difficult, especially during the outbreak of Covid-19.

The sample of this study cannot be generalized or compared since it's not representative from the perspective of sample size and participants (Bryman, A., 2015, p, 173). Nonetheless, the study's purpose lies within the contribution to the limited academic literature on the topic and to further show an incentive to future studies within this field.

Thematic analysis is often subjective and relies on the researchers' judgment, which means that the researcher needs to be careful with one's own choices and interpretations (Caulfield, J., 2019). Hence, the researcher is using both exploratory and predetermined elements to interpret the empirical data. And according to Braun and Clarke, a strength the TA has is that it is a method of data analysis rather than being an approach to conduct qualitative research. This is a strength in their views as it ensures the accessibility and flexibility of the approach (Braun, V. & Clarke, V., 2012, p, 3).

4.8 Positionality and Reflexivity

Positionality concerns personal awareness of the researcher's position. For instance, how can the researcher's characteristics of being a young, urban, white, female, western master student, influence the research when conducting interviews on sustainable consumption with young Vietnamese consumers and local companies as participants? The position of the researcher could potentially affect the interpretation of the empirical material: however, the time spent in Asia and Vietnam before the fieldwork has increased the researcher's understanding of the setting, hence the quality of the study is not considered to be affected by the researcher's characteristics in this regard. Furthermore, can the position in regard to the researcher's immediate family member who is a partner at Tundra Fonder influence the research? Moreover, is it suitable given the researcher's position to interview Tundra Fonder's investment portfolio companies about their experience on how young consumers perceive sustainable consumption, and how could that affect the data collection? Due to the complex and conflicting situation, the researcher did not interview Tundra Fonder's portfolio companies. As mentioned earlier, the researcher was able to interview other local companies through Tundra Fonder's contact person Christina Ameln. The position of the researcher has been disclosed to all the participants before conducting the interview (see Appendix 1 & 2). These questions are highly relevant to reflect

about since the researcher's positionality could be limited, inappropriate, or affect the data in other ways.

Apart from the researcher's positionality, the aim of this study requires some reflection about reflexivity on the data collection that may be embedded in unequal power relations (Farhana, S., 2007, p, 375.). Fieldwork is complex and bound up in different power relations, which is important to highlight conducting fieldwork (Crawford, G., *et al.* 2017, p, 5). The sample of this research has been carefully selected to avoid trenchant markers of differences that are visible from class and educational differences. Therefore, this study focuses on targeting young consumers with an academic background. Even if the author and the participants share a similarity of holding an academic background, there will still be a distance of material and social differences that remains apparent.

The commonalities this study refers to are the respondent's concern regarding sustainability and the awareness of protecting the planet. The terminology care and sustainability are considered as common ground by the participants and the researcher. However, even if the young consumers and researcher share commonalities, such as the interest in sustainability issues, there is still a difference in the dynamic doing research in the field and at home relations (Farhana, S., 2007, p, 377). Coming from a different country, ethnic group, and speaking another language in relation to the participants in the study, the researcher is observed as an outsider. Nonetheless, the commonalities shared may bridge the differences.

4.9. Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns involve several dimensions and different principles as well as aspects that need to be considered depending on the research question and aim. This study does not investigate any delicate subject, and therefore, two principles mentioned by Mark Israel and Iain Hay guide this research. First is increasing the benefits, and the second one is, minimizing harm for those participants who participate anonymously (Israel, M., & Hay, I., 2006, p, 12). The researcher decided beforehand to use pseudonyms and has left out details about the participant regarding the principle of increasing benefits and minimizing the harm of participants. The idea is that, by understanding how the young consumers perceive their behavior with regard to sustainable consumption, and how local companies in Vietnam perceive young consumer's consumption practice, this could show an incentive to further research that could contribute to a more sustainable future in Vietnam. In addition to the two principals, there are other ethical

guidelines considered in this thesis from The Swedish Research Council guidelines Good Research Practice (2017).

All the participants in this study were informed about the research question, purpose, and timeframe by email before the interview (Bryman, A., 2015, p, 131). Before the researcher conducted the interview, participants got informed of their rights, the use of the data, where the research is published, etc. (see Appendix 1 & 2). The following section will outline the thesis findings from the empirical data.

5. Findings

This thesis focuses on two different research groups and investigates sustainable consumption from young consumers and the local companies' perception with regard to young consumers sustainable consumption behavior in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. In this chapter, the researcher will present the empirical data from the two research groups. The outline of this chapter will compare the consumers and the local company's perspective as well as implicit and explicit meanings expressed by the participants. The researcher will refer to previous research in this chapter but will leave substantial engagement with the literature and theory for the discussion chapter. Further, the study's key theme, food, which was identified in the literature review as an important theme, will be discussed in this section. The model below is illustrating ten different themes that have emerged from the analysis and are placed under the MOA model three different components: Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability, which will be discussed in this section.



5.1 Motivation

A key theme highlighted by all participants throughout the analysis was their social circle's or social media as something influencing their behavior of becoming more sustainable. The participants considered themselves as more sustainable than others in their surroundings. For instance, one participant, Vy, who works in the consumer goods industry, believed that she is a little above average when it comes to making sustainable consumption choices compared to her friends (Interview 2, consumers). This goes in line with the previous study on the findings on the middle class in Hanoi that considered themselves to have a higher consciousness within sustainability than others (de Koning, *et al.*, 2015, p, 611).

5.1.1 Social Media/Trends

The MOA model recognizes the social norms as something that influences the consumer's environment and can, therefore, have a positive spillover effect carrying out sustainable consumption. Ölander and Thøgersen explained social norms as something affected by external factors e.g., social norms which leads to an internalized personal norm, and this ties well with how one of the young consumers Thu expressed it:

” ...have met people that have similar values and they were people who inspired me and I’m sure they have people that have inspired them before...”

Interview 1, consumer.

The quote above illustrates how the social norm leads to an internalized personal norm. Another consumer further communicated this. Ha expressed her change of carrying out a sustainable consumption behavior:

“...I have obtained this knowledge on social networks, people have raised concerns on these platforms about the pollution in the ocean, climate change and a lot of it is because of our consumption. So, because of that, I’m more aware of my behavior and my consumption.”

Interview 4, consumer.

What the quotes above illustrate is how motivation and knowledge from the component ability are intersecting. The young consumers have gained their knowledge in their social circle, which has led to a more aware consumption practice. Below is an illustrative example of a changed consumption practice by the consumer Thao:

“...For instance, the image of the sea turtle with a straw in its nose, I think about that picture especially when I’m using a plastic straw. And I see people around me also is changing.”

Interview 3, consumer.

It is evident from the quotes above that the participants are aware of environmental issues and are connecting their consumption practice and motivation awareness-based of the social network and platforms. The responsibility consumers feel there is an essential driver for a sustainable future since people are the main driver for change. For instance, the young consumers’ concern about plastic have created a behavior trend in Vietnam and a positive spillover effect which have motivated others along the line which was expressed by Ha:

“Vietnam have used a lot of plastic over the years, for instance, my mom when she went to the market, she bought a lot of groceries but a lot of them were put into separate plastic bags. But this trend has been going on for a while and people are more aware of how plastic affect the environment and people are starting to change their behavior, but this trend started with the young people. We use fabric bag to buy groceries and my mom was asking me why I’m so obsessed with the environment, but I’ve been nagging her about her behavior, and she has kept herself update following things on the TV and have changed her behavior as well.”

Interview 3, consumer.

The quote above from consumer Ha goes in line with scholars who argue that young people have an impact and are leading movements for change (Thoresen, V., *et al.*, 2015, p, 19). Across the data regarding food, the young consumers were motivated to carry out a sustainable consumption behavior. Still, their motivational grounds were subjective to some extent but generally driven by the non-plastic. The following quote by consumer Trang is illustrating the use of one’s social circle to promote the use of non-plastic:

“...I was not aware of my own actions until I joined plastic camping and then I realized that, okay, so, even if my own actions like using the straw to drink juice for example, is it necessary? [...] I encourage people in my family and my friends to do the same. I post a lot on Facebook and videoclips about information about individual actions I share my own examples of doing this and that. So just motivate people around me and we cannot expect too much of people around, but I can see a change around me, little by little.”

Interview 5, consumer.

The quote from Trang above illustrates how influential social platforms may be and how receptive young consumers can be by trends and particularly the plastic trend. This ties well with Ölander and Thøgersen regarding social norms. A local company partly expressed the social platforms and trends as something motivating young consumers to buy sustainable products:

“...I would say its 50 percent good reasons and 50 percent bad reasons. Good reasons being: care about the environment, they come from the generation of Greta Thunberg and I think that strongly resonates with the younger consumers that have enough money to spend on things, teenagers are tuned to the whole environmental aspects because it’s cool they will do it...”

Interview 6, local company.

From the quote above by Nguyen, it is evident that he perceives the young consumers’ motivation as something that derives from their social platforms and a trend. The following theme, health, is also expressed by consumers and local companies as something motivating young consumers purchasing sustainable products.

5.1.2 Health

The theme of health is considered as motivation expressed by local companies and consumers.

For instance, consumer Vy expressed:

“The number one concern of Vietnamese consumers is health, according to a Nielsen research, when it comes to things you are putting in your body I think most of us are highly concerned, people would always go for the organic things, like the no harm, no nasty thing that they could find.”

Interview 2, consumer.

From the quote above by Vy, she is mentioning harm and nasty, which is difficult to interpret in this context, as the two terms could be understood as harm for oneself, animal or the environment, and as for nasty, which could be construed as not ethically produced or nasty for oneself. This goes in line with a local company who expressed the predominant factor for young consumers buying sustainable products as motivated by one's health:

“First, the health is the predominate factor motivating young consumers to buy sustainable food. Health is the most vulnerable thing for themselves. Organic food perceived as something linked to health, actually its without GMO and no Chinese products. If you go deep down in the conversation with the young consumers, they think that China tries to poison us. [...] Then the environment, maybe you start of being selfish and protect your health and then the future, environment, the plastic we moved all the plastic from the store.”

Interview 7, local company.

The quote above by Iam ties well with Thøgersen's understanding of the underlying motivation carrying out a sustainable consumption practice because of fear of pesticides and further as the local company stated it, the fear of China. Iam did also mention plastic as a concern for health. However, the fear of pesticides and products from China was mention by another young consumer, Trang:

“...in Vietnam we have a bit concern about food contamination, here we use a lot of fertilizer and we don't trust our people; we are so close to China where they are infamous for using a lot of chemicals in the food. To make it last longer and we suffer a lot harm from that and that make people causes about or worried about what we are consuming every day, we don't trust what we eat but we still have to buy the products is we don't do it we will die...”

Interview 5, consumer.

The motivation by the quote above ties to health, which draws on previous studies that stated that personal health is one of the determining factors for people's everyday consumption practice (Vermeir, I., & Verbeke, W., 2006, p, 19). Also, the quote above is intersecting with another theme and component from the MOA-model. For instance, consumer Trang expressed a distrust of products, which ties to the theme skepticism and the component ability. However, trust was an aspect further discussed by Iam from a local company in Vietnam:

“...in Vietnam where people eat a lot of street food all the time and when you go to a restaurants, ingrediencies matters especially in Vietnam there is data on how often they get sick, like food poison, when they go to street food it’s all related...”

Interview 7, local company.

From the quote above, the underlying motivation expressed by Iam consuming sustainable food is people’s health. By the consumer, Thu, it explicitly stated that she prioritizes her safety or personal health when she’s buying a particular food:

“... if it comes to meat, I would prioritize to buy in the supermarket because of safety-issue but other products I would buy at the local market, I think that they offer the flexibility of not using plastic and it’s important to support the local community which is one way of being sustainable.”

Interview 1, consumer.

5.1.3 Plastic

Consumer Thu motivates and perceives her food consumption from the quote above as sustainable as she purchases food from the local market. Thu is also mentioning plastic as a concern for her purchasing of sustainable food, which is further mentioned by her in another quote:

“...Usually, when I go to the supermarket if I come across something that have more plastic cover than necessary, I usually do not purchase that if I have other options...”

Interview 1, consumer.

The quote from Thu illustrates the perception to carry out a sustainable consumption behavior among young consumers that revolves in an excessive way around the use of plastic and this is further highlighted as a concern by a local food company:

“...The thing is that, organic products must be wrapped in plastic to be organic. This is a constrain with the organization’s certification. There is a lot of regulation about it. Perception on plastic by the consumers on organic products is difficult, I’ve been attacked my times to combining these two things...”

Interview 7, local company.

From the quote above by Iam, she points at the difficulty of combining plastic with organic products, which could be interpreted as an issue based on the answers form the participants that seem to be more concerned about the plastic, rather than by the product they are buying, which the following quote goes in line with:

“...the use of plastic is everywhere, it’s a lot even when you don’t ask for plastic you get it from the seller, especially when you buy fish or meat, they give you more plastic. So that’s the situation in Vietnam, we still have a lot of things to do.”

Interview 5, consumer.

From the following quote by consumer Trang, it can be interpreted; what you consume is not the issue here. Rather, the plastic you get around the product, which ties well with consumer Thu, who avoids buying food products with un-necessary plastic. The quote above ties well with one of Thøgersen's motivation factors of being sustainable, that the motivation could interpret more a showoff – a social motive more than a genuine pro-environmentally outcome. Nonetheless, the underlying motivation by the two consumers is, however, to protect the environment by cutting down on the plastic. Looking at motivation from one local company's perspective who refers to plastic as well and as a trend that young consumers are motivated by:

“There are a few percent that kind of movement or propaganda, even in the supermarket there is a short leave it’s about three months and then its dead, they tried to change plastic into banana leaf, but it was ongoing for three months and then everything came back to normal.[...] It’s not a deep impact, I mean it’s not a long standing things, it is just effectible...”

Interview 9, local company.

Tuan explicitly perceives young consumer's motivation as something effected by trends and something that does not have a more prolonged impact as they are influenced and motivated by trends. It is evident that motivation is affected by both external and internal factors; however, to carry out a sustainable consumption practice, consumers need to have the opportunity. The following subsection will analyze the empirical data on the perceptions in regard to opportunity.

5.3 Opportunity

Within opportunity, access and availability are two important factors that could lead people to change their behavior. In this subsection, as the other components in the MOA model, they are intersecting. For instance, companies provide consumers with transparent information that illustrates their sustainability practice. Still, the consumer may have an underlying skepticism, which is part of the component ability, and that could constrain consumers to carry out sustainable consumption. Consumer Tho expressed this perception in the following quote presented below.

5.1.3 Transparent/ Information

The quote by Thao could interpret an implicit skepticism against companies information as she suggests how to communicate and to recreate the trust between the young consumers and the companies:

“For example, a company gives out information on how they manage their waste and some people do not need much information and thinks it enough. Some people need more information and then some companies will be transparent and let people visit the factory and show how they produce thing. This will promote trust in the brand and its reputation.”

Interview 3, consumer.

The quote above from Tho illustrates that there are opportunities for consumers to learn about companies transparency. However, there is an implicit skepticism interpreted from the quote where Tho suggests company visits as a way to recreate the trust and to get an insight into how sustainably products produced. This opportunity was also mentioned by a local food company that believed young consumers want to be involved:

“I think they want to be more active, if you ask them to come to the farm or [...] they don't only want to give you the money, they want to be active and involved, the more you get them involved the more they understand they feel useful and helpful and see their impact. When they get more involved, they understand the constraints for the business. When we ask them to come to the field the impact was very positive.”

Interview 7, local company.

The quote above by Iam illustrates how companies in Vietnam can recreate the trust by inviting young consumers to the farm or factory instead of providing transparent information they can read, and further demonstrates the importance of opportunity as a precondition for the performance of sustainable consumption behavior. This opportunity may change and promote sustainable consumption practices and recreate trust. This ties well with previous research that recommended businesses to provide opportunities for consumers to be more involved in sustainable food consumption, a bottom-up approach (de Koning, *et al.*, 2015, p, 617). Another consumer also expressed the importance of transparent information enabled by companies:

“There is this coffee chain, that I'm quite satisfied with when it comes to buying their coffee. I kind of know that their coffee is organic made, they have this whole farm, everything is laid out for you to read up on...”

Interview 2, consumer.

From the quote above by Vy, it can be interpreted that transparency impacts her purchasing behavior, it further illustrates the theme of transparent information as an essential factor for carrying out a sustainable consumption behavior. Vy did also express that she believes transparency is an important factor for Vietnamese consumers and is gradually getting more critical as the food market is getting more modernized:

“We used to have the traditional channel of buying groceries at the wet market, but then the wet market is getting less, and less attention and people are turning into the more modern channel to buy groceries. So, I think within that shift all the suppliers have to be a lot more transparent and a lot more professional if they want to serve to growing demands of the consumers. Especially in food”

Interview 2, consumer.

The quote from Vy above illustrates how the Vietnamese food market is changing and that consumers desire more information and opportunities around products and services. The implicit interpretation from the quote is that the food market is still lacking transparent information.

5.1.4 Enable sustainable consumption

Consumer Ha expressed that the environment around her have not empowered her to make sustainable consumption choices:

“...Even though my will is to have a sustainable consumption, but in fact my environment makes me not pursue sustainable consumption...”

Interview 4, consumer.

Further, the quote below, regarding plastic, exemplifies how Ha’s demand is not met yet:

“But also, cafes and chains like this one, if they provide paper straw or a cup instead of plastic if they would change the supply it would change people behavior.”

Interview 4, consumer.

The quote above also indicates that plastic has a significant impact on how to perceive one's sustainable consumption behavior and the opportunities there are in not consuming it. The plastic straw was, however, addressed by a local food company that tried to change their products and use an environmentally friendly straw:

“So I can give you one example, the plastic straw on the side of a tetra pack it cost you nothing but if you change it do an environmentally friendly straw you can bring up your products with 25 percent on that, and everyone want to pay for 7000 Vietnamese dong if you are selling for like 8000 Vietnamese dong you are out of the market. Nobody will buy from you.”

Interview 9, local company.

The quote above by Tuan illustrates a local company’s effort to meet the demand of the consumers targeting plastic straws, which is highly relevant and discussed by the Vietnamese consumers. However, from the local company's understanding, the market is not ready to pay an extra 1000 Vietnamese Dong (0,043 US dollars). Despite the enabled opportunity to consume more sustainable, there are still some consumers who believe that there are not enough services or products around her to make a suitable choice. Consumer Ha expressed:

“...the services around me provide for me that demand, but they provide it in a way that I have to accept the convivence but also accept the unsustainability of that consumption. I don't think I have been doing very great in this.”

Interview 4, consumer.

The quote from Ha illustrates the external factors influencing her decisions, and from her perception, the market has not enabled opportunities to carry out a sustainable consumption practice. However, this was not perceived by consumer Thao who expressed the contrary about the sustainable opportunities enabled by companies:

“In Vietnam there are some famous brands, known for their organic food as Vietfarm. I go to the supermarket rather than the wet market; I feel that the products sold in supermarket the origins of that product are often clearer and that is more trustworthy clearer origins.”

Interview 3, consumer.

The interpretation that can be made by the quote from consumer Thao is that she perceives opportunities made by local companies, whom she also believes are more reliable than the traditional market since the origin of the product is clearer. Viewing Thao's and Ha's answer, their perceptions are quite subjective regarding opportunities by companies in Vietnam. In addition to those subjective perceptions, the general understanding that can be interpreted from the opportunity in the MOA model is that the sustainable consumption market is not accessible to the larger group. However, it is evident that motivation and opportunity is affected by both external and internal factors, but, to carry out a sustainable consumption practice, consumers need to have the opportunity as well as the ability. The following subsection will analyze the empirical data on the perceptions in regard to ability.

5.2 Ability

In the MOA model, ability refers to the task knowledge required to perform the given task and refers to the knowledge to carry out a sustainable consumption behavior. To carry out a sustainable consumption behavior, the young consumers need to know to command the required abilities to perform sustainably. Carrying out sustainable consumption practice was highlighted by all participants throughout the analysis as something limited based on several factors.

5.2.1 Skepticism and knowledge

The young consumers expressed overall a willingness to pay more for sustainable products and services if they were able to have more insight into the company's activities. Whereas a local

company were not convinced that transparency is something that affects young consumers purchasing decision, and one local food company stated:

“If I’m being cynical, the only people that care about it are other chocolate makers that are likeminded, I’ve never met a customer who came to us because of our CSR-policy is great, they might like the product and then find out that the CSR is great and that reinforce the good opinion about the company but it works the other way around.”

Interview 6, local company.

The quote from Nguyen above illustrates the level of skepticism he perceives on consumers inclined to seek products with more company transparency. One can do the reading from the quote above that transparency is seen as secondary when purchasing a product. Nguyen’s perception goes in line with consumer Thu, who expressed that she had never thought about a company’s transparency before:

“I have never paid attention to that before. Usually we pay attention to the things right in front of us, for instance if we see a product, with non-plastic packaging we know it might be a little more friendly but usually we don’t have that type of information.”

Interview 1, consumer.

The quote from Thu above ties well with Nguyen's perception of young consumers interest regarding transparency, Thu did also express that transparency is uncommon in the context of Vietnam. However, it is difficult to interpret that transparency could be unusual in Vietnam, as the following quote by the same consumer expressed that knowledge about a company's transparency is not of interest:

“...is it just in Vietnam or are we not as enthusiastic learning about companies? They tried to do that, but we did not learn about or trying to have that, I’m not sure.”

Interview 1, consumer.

The quote above from consumer Thu illustrates Nguyen's cynical understanding of young consumers interest in transparent information. However, another aspect that can be interpreted from the quote above is an underlying skepticism by consumer Thu. For instance, she has noted a change by the local companies, but in her perspective, they have failed to communicate, which may create skepticism and a lack of interest for transparency. A local food company expressed this interpretation of skepticism from consumer Thu:

“...Even if they are willing to, most of the time they don't know how to spend or where to spend or which business, the lack of transparency, the lack of communication education, and business difficult to communicate and on where to put their money on. Most of the social enterprises fail to communicate, and say you give me the money here is the social impact, they lose the demand, because the younger generation they gave money and then they don't really understand the result or what's happening. This is the first constrain, the accesses, the lack of communication and transparency.”

Interview 7, local company.

The quote from Iam above illustrates how one local company perceives different aspects constraining young consumers to carry out a sustainable consumption practice, e.g., the lack of knowledge and accesses. This ties well with Thøgersen's pro-environmental behavior factors, the lack of motivation caused by the consumer not feeling able to make a difference – an efficiency-related negative motivation. However, Iam did also mention trust as a constrain to carry out a sustainable consumption practice which further expressed by consumer Thu:

“...when I first learned about sustainability, I was happy about these labels, but the more I learned about them, well it's a complicated thing. I'm not sure what label that are actually sustainable anymore.”

Interview 1, consumer.

The quote from Thu above illustrates a skepticism and a lack of knowledge to perform the given task, which implies sustainable consumption behavior. Iam, from the local company, could further explain this in the following quote:

“... Just because you show that you have an organic certification, they won't trust you. Why, because the young consumers understand that people with certification can still buy their diploma, cups, institutions, it's a lot of corruption in Vietnam. So, if you think about it that you are a social enterprise and showing your organic certification, most of the time they don't care about it, they don't trust you. Even if they understand the value of it, like they will trust 50 percent of it, they will always think how they got their certification...”

Interview 7, local company.

The quote from Iam above illustrates not only the skepticism that could pose an obstacle to young consumers carrying out a sustainable consumption practice, but it also illustrates why young consumers feel skeptical regarding the information about sustainable products. Iam's understanding does also intersect with another component in the MOA model, opportunity, as it does not enable consumers to carry out a sustainable consumption due to mistrust. However, the skepticism is expressed by another consumer:

“The fact that they are certified to have that laid out on their product I think it signals the effort to be more sustainable. I know there is a lot of contrivance around the certification really make a difference.”

Interview 2, consumer.

The quote from Vy above illustrates a doubt on sustainable products in Vietnam, which goes in line with Thu and Iam perceptions. This ties well with previous research on Vietnam, which concluded the misuse of eco-labels and little transparency had created a distrust of large national businesses (de Koning, *et al.* 2015, p, 616). The following quote, from another local food company's perception, could be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, young consumers underlying skepticism makes the consumer reluctant to purchase greener products, or on the other hand, they do not have sufficient knowledge about these products to justify the cost:

"...you want to go for a greener opportunity whatever it is you want to buy, does it exist, is it really greener or that much greener than the normal thing and is the price difference you are going to pay is it reasonable compare to the benefit you contribute to the environment? So, alternative products I see them in niche product..."

Interview 6, local company.

5.2.2 Time-consuming and knowledge

The quote from Nguyen above illustrates not only knowledge as a challenge for young consumers, but it also indicates that it is time-consuming to read about sustainable products and where to find them in Vietnam. The following quote, expressed by Ha, considered this as an issue:

"You need more effort finding sustainable products. For instance, if you going to the grocery store doesn't have a shelf of just sustainable products but if you search online you have to search 'eco-friendly' and then find a specific store, so basically it causes you more effort in daily life."

Interview 4, consumer.

The quote from Ha above illustrates that she perceives sustainable consumption practice as time-consuming and not convenient. However, by interpreting the following quote from consumer Ha it can be linked to Thøgersen's - lack of motivation, which is caused if the consumer not feeling able to make a difference – an efficiency-related negative motivation:

"I have no idea about the food market in Vietnam is actually doing. Of course, in the media they have a fancy image of it. Because the food is your demand. If I go to the market, I have no idea where it comes from, I don't have a clear idea of the food industry of the process of production..."

Interview 4, consumer.

The quote above indicates that knowledge could be interpreted as a key factor to carry out sustainable consumption practice. This type of knowledge could also be interpreted as a status thing which was expressed by a local food company:

“The level of snobbery, there is always spending on socially or environmental products, it’s a reflection on a point, either of an advanced social environmental awareness that usually comes with social status. Consciousness and impact are completely separate and reconciling both is really a case of effort.”

Interview 6, local company.

The quote from Nguyen above goes in line with one of Thøgersen's pro-environmental behavior, purchasing sustainable products is more a show-off – a social motive. The social motive is a part of the component motivation in the MOA model but intersecting with the component ability from the quote above. Consumers knowledge seems to be one of the significant factors to carry out a sustainable consumption practice, but it is also a factor of enough financial means.

5.2.3 *Enough financial means*

Financial means seems to be a constrain perceived by young consumers as well as local companies in Vietnam. Drawing on Nguyen’s quote above under the component ability to purchase sustainable products central to a specific group as Nguyen expressed it “The level of snobbery”, correlates with the young consumer Thu’s perception of one’s ability:

“Mostly from what I have heard that, when it comes to consumerism within the above average vague group could afford living sustainable in a way, but it is difficult for people that are below average. Because they have not the option to buy or consume, for example, things with plastic are usually much cheaper than other sustainable options. Consider the population of Vietnam is not rich, so I find it difficult to have a majority of Vietnamese having a sustainable way of consuming and live.”

Interview 1, consumer.

Consumer Ha also expressed the limited ability to carry out a sustainable consumption, and her quote eliminates the same things as other consumers such as, Trang and Vy that expressed financial means as a constrain:

“I have the intention to protect the environment, but I don’t have the means or actual understanding of what this business actually are doing...”

Interview 4, consumer.

The quote above illustrates the desired intention to protect the environment among young consumers and to carry out a sustainable consumption practice. Still, they are unable due to external factors as financial means. The quotes from Ha intersect with other levels in the MOA model. For instance, for one’s intention to be carried out, the consumer needs both abilities as well as opportunities, which the quote illustrates a lack of (Ölander, F., & Thøgersen, J., 1995, p, 364.). The young consumers intention of purchasing sustainable products does not correlate

with what a local company in Vietnam believe, who expressed that kind of demand is not part of the Vietnamese market yet:

“...I think the market or the consumer of such kind of thing you are mention to me is not ready yet...”

Interview 9, local company.

The quote from Tuan above was illustrated with an example by him following:

“...I don't think that you can put 30 percent on top of the products with the label, environmentally friendly and they are ready to pay. I tried my organic chocolate; of course, organic you have to increase the price because the production is much lower than the normal production and the result is, we can't sell...”

Interview 9, local company.

The quote from Tuan above could be interpreted in two ways. First, young consumers may not have the financial means to be able to purchase sustainable products. Second, it could be a factor of underlying skepticism, which has been communicated as a constrain by young consumers as well as the local companies. However, it illustrates that one need the both the ability as well as opportunity.

Whether or not the Vietnamese market is yet not accessible to a bigger audience to purchase sustainably due to external factors is not an adequate answer. As mentioned before, to achieve a sustainable future, we need to reduce our ecological footprint by changing the way we produce and consume goods and recourses (United Nations Development Program). The Asia- Pacific region is currently responsible for more than half of the global material consumption and Vietnam is emblematic of Asia where the young middle class consumers are changing the consumption patterns (Hoon C. & Hyun Park J., 2017, p, 15). This tells us, without improved sustainable consumption patterns, a resilient future is further from reach, and efforts to improve is pressing (United Nations, Responsible Consumption & Production: Why it Matters).

In this chapter, the researcher has outlined the empirical data and investigated the perception of sustainable consumption behavior in the framework of the MOA model from young consumers and local companies perspectives. The chapter has compared the consumers and the companies perspectives and tied back to some previous research. As we have seen in the outlined chapter, the perceptions among the two research groups show both similarities and differences as well as explicit and implicit meanings, which will be discussed and elaborated on in the discussion and conclusion chapter.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The research question in this study was designed to understand the perception on sustainable consumption behavior through the lens of young consumers and local companies in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Throughout this chapter the researcher will discuss the findings of the empirical data in relation to the theory and previous literature.

6.1 General view

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the limited literature on sustainable consumption in Vietnam with a focus on the young urban consumer. The data that has emerged from this fieldwork is pulling out to a new field of what young consumers perceive as sustainable food consumption. The young consumers could not separate their food consumption from plastic. The assumption this study can draw with the implicit and explicit answers derived from the findings with the method TA and MOA model - is that young consumers perceive their consumption practice as sustainable if the plastic is not involved in the purchase. The unexpected findings regarding plastic use connected to food led this research into a slightly different direction, which will be elaborated upon below.

6.2 Motivation

The young consumers motivation had primarily emerged from their social circle or social platforms that had promoted their intention, which has culminated in sustainable behavior. It is evident from the findings that the participants are aware of environmental issues and connecting their consumption practice and motivation awareness based on the social network and platforms. For instance, the young consumers connected their plastic use based on what was evident on their social platforms, or what is perceived as unsustainable on their social platforms. In general, according to the young consumers this have later culminated into a reduced plastic use.

As mentioned earlier in the section of findings, the issue that occurred was that the young consumers from this study seem to be more concerned about the plastic, rather than the actual product they are buying. This ties well with a previous study that have concluded that in terms of protecting the environment and conserving natural resources, personal responsibility is still limited, which this part is an example of (Hoon C. & Hyun Park J., 2017, p, 23). The concern about plastic can be connected to the influence from plastic reduce campaigns, which have been

a hot topic after the Vietnamese government announced its first national anti-plastic parade in 2019 (Saigoneer, 2019). This announcement has further led to campaigns on different social platforms in Vietnam about plastic consumption and promoting consumers knowledge hereby.

From a theoretical point of view, and specifically with regard to the MOA framework, it is uncertain what all this boils down to when perceptions are all covered in plastic. The issue here is not per se the plastic, rather the simplified way consumers motivating and trying to do the right thing but within limits, making the justification for themselves. An alarming aspect of this is what previous research has shown - that Vietnamese consumers seem to spend half of their income on food and beverages (Pham, T.H., *et al.*, 2019, p, 7). If the young consumers in Ho Chi Minh City are, to some extent, unaware of their environmental impact and perceiving plastic as the primary concern while consuming food instead of the actual product, there is a need for a significant focus on educating consumers on sustainable consumption and lifestyles, which goes in line with the UNs SDG 12 that have emphasized knowledge, or education as a target to reach a more sustainable consumption and production.

6.3 Opportunity

This component is more challenging to connect with previous research as the objective of this study was to explore how young consumers and local companies perceive young consumers behavior with regard to sustainable consumption and how local companies perceive young consumer's behavior with regard to sustainable consumption. Thus, there is not much previous research to engage with the local companies perspective, and therefore, this part will link back to the theoretical literature.

Ölander and Thøgersen argue that: within the component opportunity, access and availability are two important factors that could lead to people to change their behavior. Based on the young consumers answers, they seem willing to pursue a sustainable consumption practice. Still, external factors, as distrust in information, as well as the lack of enabling sustainable opportunities, are preventing the consumers from making a sustainable choice even if they want to carry it out. According to Ölander and Thøgersen, the component opportunity is a precondition for the performance of a behavior. Companies and society are the ones that provide opportunities for consumers and the indicated insufficient supply of sustainable opportunities could be a reason to why young consumers do not yet perceive their behavior as sustainable. This ties back to the study on the middle class in Hanoi in Vietnam that indicated a lack of

opportunity as one of the reasons for not living a sustainable life (de Koning, *et al.*, 2015, p, 611).

Overall, the opportunity is based on situational conditions, and by looking at Vietnam, and from the perspective of young consumers, the general perception was that the society and companies had not enabled them to carry out a sustainable consumption practice. This perception was not in line with the local companies who perceived the market as not ready for sustainable products yet. One can assume that the local companies are right on this point. If plastic seems to be the primary concern that determines a purchase decision, the question that arises is, where is the incentive for companies that produce sustainably and provide sustainable consumption is if it comes down to the choice of plastic, rather than the actual product. From this point, the market may not be mature enough, but from a broader perspective, the market may not be ready due to the lack of ability. This was illustrated by the component ability, and further attention needs to be pointed at the knowledge to avoid making substituting decisions based on plastic. Companies or society need to educate young consumers further, and this is particularly important for Vietnam as an emerging market with its fast-growing young urban middle class.

6.4 Ability

The key theme across the component ability was skepticism and knowledge. From a theoretical point regarding knowledge, if consumers do not understand all the complexity underlying sustainable food and substitute how much plastic it is - what kind of ability do young consumers have to make an informed decision if much of the decisions are based on plastic? This goes in line with previous research, where scholars have argued that Vietnam still lacks the awareness of environmental protection and has yet to become a part of Vietnamese citizens' daily lives (Hoon C. & Hyun Park J., 2017, p, 23). However, it is evident that consumers in Vietnam need more information and knowledge on this topic. This was illustrated in another previous study on Vietnam, which emphasized that Vietnamese people need more information and knowledge to make an informed purchase decision, and to feel empowered to do so (de Koning, *et al.* 2015, p, 612). The ability in the MOA model was able to shed light on this question and illustrate the importance of knowledge and the right information to pursue a sustainable consumption practice, which goes in line with Thøgersen – a negative motivation could occur if the consumers do not feel able to make a difference. Based on the participants answer, their ability was constrained due to external factors such as financial means and limited information. It could create a negative motivation as they do not feel able to make a difference.

The component ability was also able to demonstrate skepticism, which was prominent within the two research groups, local companies and young consumers. For instance, skepticism was connected to corruption and was raised as an issue concerning young consumers purchase decisions by consumers and by companies. The theme of transparent information derived from different answers from the two groups, where young consumers desired more information or to be involved in the process. In contrast, local companies did not find this as something promoting their decision. The different constraints mentioned by the two groups are important to reflect on. In sum, consumers can have plenty of motivation and ability as well as opportunities to do certain things, but does this reality reflect the broader complex issue of sustainability from the perspective of the young urban consumer in Vietnam? This is something that needs to be further investigated in future studies.

6.5 Conclusion

The MOA model was able to demonstrate sustainable consumption behavior, and for instance, opportunities based on perceptions of external factors, etc. However, the model had some limitations. As de Koning et al. (2015) also considered as a limitation - the contextual opportunity factors are subjective and cannot be influenced and are not distinguished. Furthermore, the component ability involved the theme knowledge. This study found that knowledge often linked to the component motivation. For instance, the social networks were used as an information and knowledge base where young consumers got inspired as well as informed each other, which later culminated into a behavior change. For further research, a more apparent distinction of the components should be made using the MOA model in a similar setting as this study. This limitation ties well with de Koning et al. (2015) research on the middle class in Hanoi. Their study found that the component ability, could not separate knowledge and habits, which is slightly different from this study's findings, for example, habits did not derive as a theme in the results of this study's empirical data. Consumer's habits were, however, a concept in the component ability in the MOA model, which omitted in this study due to the empirical data. However, de Koning et al. did also find knowledge connected to motivation and habit more to contextual opportunity.

From the findings of the empirical data and all the perceptions that are covered by plastic, there might not be one clear cut answer for how young consumers and local companies perceive young consumers behavior with regard to sustainable consumption. However, the conclusion that can be made based on the findings from the data - is that young consumers perceive their

behavior as un-sustainable if the product contains plastic. Plastic is closely connected to waste and, therefore, a topic to pay attention to in further research. There is no question of the social movement and progressiveness in Vietnam based on the plastic movement - the interaction between the young consumers and the willingness is valuable, and initiatives from companies to increase trust and transparency could promote a further sustainable consumption behavior in the future.

As mentioned at the beginning of this research, the definition of sustainable consumption covers a large segment of sustainable consumption and this study was guided by the empirical data, as well as previous studies into the element of food in Vietnam. Further research should look into other segments of sustainable consumption, such as energy, which this research was not able to include due to word limit; however, the researcher found a lack of knowledge and understanding between a local energy company and young consumers. Thus, further research calls for investigation and more in-depth perceptions of sustainable energy consumption in Vietnam since energy covers several aspects of sustainable consumption. Furthermore, it is recommended to include young male participants since this thesis sample only covered young female consumers and to investigate how male participants perceive sustainable consumption behavior in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Additionally, the object of this study was the young consumers, and further studies should explore local companies as the object of study.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Guide

Interview guide – Young consumers

I, Christel Rydström, I am a master student in Asian Studies at Lund University in Sweden. For my master thesis, I have been granted two scholarships. The first one is from Lund University called *Minor field studies*. The scholarship is financed by the Swedish governmental agency Sida. The second one is from the International Chamber of Commerce, (ICC). Apart from the scholarships, my father is a partner of Tundra Fonder and, therefore, I also have their administrative support conducting the thesis.

Explain the purpose of the study: The study investigates how young consumers perceive their behavior with regard to sustainable consumption and how companies perceive young consumers consumption in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

I'm conducting the thesis by interviews and I would like to get your approval to record the interview. (If yes) I will store the data on my phone and computer and will not be handed to a third person. After the thesis is submitted, I will erase the recording from my devices.

This study is anonymous, which means that I will not display personal details. This will approximately take an hour. You have the right to withdrawal at any time and if you don't want to answer the question.

Do you have any questions before we start?

BACKGROUND

- Can you tell me a bit about yourself? (age, and what your work with etc.)

CORE QUESTIONS

- What does the term sustainable consumption mean to you?
- Whose responsibility is it to achieve a sustainable future?
- Do you believe your purchase decisions have an impact?
- The way you consume today, do you perceive it as sustainable and how?
- Do you believe you make more effort to protect the environment than you did 1-3 years ago?
- Where have you obtained your knowledge?
- Do you think the Vietnamese society enables the ability to consume sustainable?
- What about the companies in Vietnam, do they enable the opportunity for sustainable consumption?
- Do you think of company transparency as an important factor for you consuming sustainable?
- How do you believe food consumption have an environmental impact on the society?
- What do you usually base your purchase decision on regarding food?
- Could you elaborate on what products that comes to mind thinking of sustainable and un-sustainable within the food segment?
- Would you pay more for certain food if you had more insight in the company's activity?
- Do labels effect your motivation?

Appendix 2. Interview Guide

Interview guide – Local companies

I, Christel Rydström, I am a master's student in Asian Studies at Lund University in Sweden. For my master thesis, I have been granted two scholarships. The first one is from Lund University called *Minor field studies*. The scholarship is financed by the Swedish governmental agency Sida. The second one is from the International Chamber of Commerce, (ICC). Apart from the scholarships, my father is a partner of Tundra Fonder and, therefore, I also have their administrative support conducting the thesis.

Explain the purpose of the study: The study investigates how young consumers perceive their behavior with regard to sustainable consumption and how companies perceive young consumers consumption in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

I'm conducting the thesis by interviews and I would like to get your approval to record the interview. (yes) I will store the data on my phone and computer and will not be handed to a third person. After the thesis is submitted, I will erase the recording from my devices.

This study is anonymous, which means that I will not display personal details. This will approximately take an hour. You have the right to withdrawal at any time and if you don't want to answer the question.

Do you have any questions before we start?

CORE QUESTIONS

- Can you tell me a bit about yourself? (For example, what sector are you involved and what it's your perspective on the market?)
- *In a survey from 2015, concluded that Vietnamese consumers in Asia-Pacific region have the highest socially conscious in stating a willingness to pay for products from companies that care for social and environmental values.* What is your perspective on this?
- What do you think motivates young people buying sustainable products and services?
- What are the challenges that constrain young consumers buying sustainable products and services?
- Do you provide any information about your product and how do you communicate this to you audience?
- **Food:** Regarding sustainable food related products and services, what are the predominate factors motivating young consumers to buy?
- **Energy:** What is the general knowledge among young consumers regarding sustainable energy consumption? Do you think young consumer are aware of energy efficient product?

Appendix 3. Record of Respondents

Record of respondents – young consumers

Number	Date	Name (Pseudonym)	M/F	Working / Company	Type of interview w/ translator
1	20/2-2020	Thu	F	NGO	Semi-structured
2	23/2-2020	Vy	F	Consumers goods industry	Semi-structured
3	26/2-2020	Thao	F	NGO	Semi-structured (translator)
4	1/3-2020	Ha	F	IT-company	Semi-structured
5	9/3-2020	Trang	F	NGO	Semi-structured

Record of respondents - local companies

Number	Date	Name (Pseudonym)	M/F	Company/ sector	Type of interview w/ translator
6	3/3-2020	Nguyen	M	Food	Semi-structured
7	4/3-2020	lam	F	Food	Semi-structured
8	5/3-2020	Minh	F	Energy	Semi-structured
9	6/3-2020	Tuan	M	Food	Semi-structured
10	9/3-2020	Anh	F	Waste	Semi-structured

9. References

- Ajzen I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Volume 50, Issue 2, Pages 179-211, ISSN 0749-5978, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978\(91\)90020-T](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T).
- Balau, M. (2013) A Theoretical Framework for Integrating Symbolic and Affective Motivations in the Purchase Decisions of Romanian Car Consumers”, *EuroEconomia*, issue 2 (32), ISSN: 1582–885
- Bharadwaj, A., Jackson, D., Rastogi, V., & Rinne, T. (2013). *Vietnam and Myanmar: Southeast Asia's New Growth Frontiers*. Boston Consulting Group. <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2013/globalization-vietnam-myanmar-southeast-asia-new-growth-frontiers.aspx> [2020-04-12]
- Barker, T. and Ungör M. (2019). Vietnam: The next asian Tiger?”, *The North American Journal of Economics and Finance*, Vol 47, pages, 96-118. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.najef.2018.11.010>
- Bourgeault, I, L., Dingwall, R. & De Vries, R. G. (red.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative methods in health research* [Electronic resource], SAGE, London, 2010.
- Barone, B, Rodrigues, H, Nogueira, RM, Guimarães, KRLSLDQ, Behrens, JH. What about sustainability? Understanding consumers' conceptual representations through free word association. *Int J Consum Stud*. 2020; 44: 44–52. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12543>
- Bryman, A. (2015). *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V., 2012, Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol. 2: Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (pp. 57-71). Access, Research Gate.
- Crawford, G., Kruckenberg, L., Loubere, N., & Morgan, R. (2017). *Understanding global development research*. 55 City Road, London: SAGE Publications Ltd doi: 10.4135/9781473983236
- Caulfield., J. (2019). How to do thematic analysis. *Scribbr*, September 6. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/> [2020-04-10]
- de Koning, J.I.J.C., Crul, M.R.M., Wever, R. and Brezet, J.C. (2015), Sustainable consumption in Vietnam: an explorative study among the urban middle class. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 39: 608-618. doi:[10.1111/ijcs.12235](https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12235)

- Dudovskiy, J., (2019). *Snowball sample*. Research Methodology. <https://research-methodology.net/sampling-in-primary-data-collection/snowball-sampling/> [2020-04-12]
- Farrow, K. & Grolleau, G. & Ibanez, L. (2017). Social Norms and Pro-environmental Behavior: A Review of the Evidence. *Ecological Economics*. 140. 1-13. 10.1016/j.ecolecon.2017.04.017.
- Fien J. & Neil C. & Bentley M. (2008) Youth Can Lead the Way to Sustainable Consumption”, *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development*, vol. 2(1), pages 51-60.
- Fudge, S. & Peters, M. & Hoffman, S.M. & Wehrmeyer, Walter. (2013). *The global challenge of encouraging sustainable living: Opportunities, barriers, policy and practice*. 10.4337/9781781003756.
- Greendex (2008) *Consumer Choice and the Environment – A Worldwide Tracking Survey*. A research project by National Geographic and GlobeScan.
- Hume, M. (2010) Compassion without action: Examining the young consumers consumption and attitude to sustainable consumption, *Journal of World Business*, Volume 45, Issue 4, Pages 385-394, ISSN 1090-9516, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2009.08.007>.
- Hammett, D., Twyman, C., Graham, M. (2015). *Research and Fieldwork in Development*. London: Routledge, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203649107>
- Hoon, C., & Hyun Park J. KEI 2017. *Environmental Sustainability in Asia: Progress, Challenges and Opportunities in the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, Series 1 - Vietnam*. Korea Environment Institute, Sejong, Korea. ISSN 2586-4416
- Israel, M., & Hay, I. (2006). *Research ethics for social scientists*. London, : SAGE Publications, Ltd doi: 10.4135/9781849209779
- Ingenbleek, P. T.M. & Meulenbergh, M. T.G. & Van Trijp, H. C.M. (2015) Buyer social responsibility: a general concept and its implications for marketing management, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 31:13–14, 1428–1448, DOI: [10.1080/0267257X.2015.1058848](https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2015.1058848)
- Jackson, T. (2005), Live Better by Consuming Less?: Is There a “Double Dividend” in Sustainable Consumption?. *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 9: 19-36. doi:[10.1162/1088198054084734](https://doi.org/10.1162/1088198054084734)
- Jackson, T. (2005). *Motivating Sustainable Consumption: A Review of Evidence on Consumer Behaviour and Behavioural Change*. Sustainable Development Research Network. 15.

King, V. & Nguyen, P. & Minh, N. (2008). Professional Middle Class Youth in Post-Reform Vietnam: Identity, Continuity and Change. *Modern Asian Studies*. 42. 10.1017/S0026749X06002551.

Lavrakas, P. J. (2008). *Encyclopedia of survey research methods* (Vols. 1-0). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412963947

Local Governments for Sustainability USA (2020-04-09) *ICLEI, the United Nations, and Agenda 21*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20121212203307/http://www.icleiusa.org/about-iclei/faqs/faq-iclei-the-united-nations-and-agenda-21#what-is-agenda-21> [2020-04-09]

Le, Tri D. & Kieu, Tai. (2019). Ethically minded consumer behaviour in Vietnam: An analysis of cultural values, personal values, attitudinal factors and demographics. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*. 31. 10.1108/APJML-12-2017-0344.

Mensah, J, & S., Ricart Casadevall (Reviewing editor) (2019) Sustainable development: Meaning, history, principles, pillars, and implications for human action: Literature review, *Cogent Social Sciences*, 5:1, DOI: [10.1080/23311886.2019.1653531](https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2019.1653531)

Nguyen Nguyen, N., Özçaglar-Toulouse, N., Kjeldgaard, D. (2018), Toward an understanding of young consumers' daily consumption practices in post-Doi Moi Vietnam, *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 86, Pages 490-500, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.10.002>.

Nguyen, T.N., Lobo, A. & Greenland, S. (2017), Energy efficient household appliances in emerging markets: the influence of consumers' values and knowledge on their attitudes and purchase behaviour. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 41: 167-177. doi:[10.1111/ijcs.12323](https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12323)

Nguyen, Dong Duy Lam & Tran, Quan. (2016). Working Adults and Personal Business Ethics in South East Asia: a Comparative Study in Thailand and Vietnam. *Public Organization Review*. 18. 10.1007/s11115-016-0370-2.

PWC (2018) *The Future of ASEAN: Viet Nam Perspective*. <https://www.pwc.com/vn/en/publications/2018/future-of-asean-vietnam-perspective.pdf> [2020-04-09]

Pham, T.H., Phan, T.T., & Nguyen, N.T. (2019). Evaluating the purchase behaviour of organic food by young consumers in an emerging market economy. DOI:10.1080/0965254X.2018.1447984

Reisch, L.A., Cohen M.J., Thøgersen, J.B., Tukker A. K. Krause, (2016), Sustainable Consumption: Research Challenges, MISTRA - Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research <https://www.mistra.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Sustainable-Consumption-Research-Challenges.pdf>

Saigoneer, (2019) Vietnam's PM Endorses National Campaign to Eliminate Single-Use Plastics. *Saigoneer* 10 June. <https://saigoneer.com/vietnam-news/16685-vietnam-pm-endorses-national-campaign-to-eliminate-single-use-plastic> [Download 2020-03-03]

Sultana, F. (2007). Reflexivity, positionality and participatory ethics: Negotiating fieldwork dilemmas in international research. *ACME*. 6. 374-385.

Seyfang, G. (2005) Shopping for Sustainability: Can Sustainable Consumption Promote Ecological Citizenship?, *Environmental Politics*, 14:2, 290-306, DOI: [10.1080/09644010500055209](https://doi.org/10.1080/09644010500055209)

Thong, N. T. Nguyen, D. H., Bich P. T. N, and Huong, L. T. M. (2017), Sustainable Consumption and Production in Vietnam in (ed.) *Sustainable Asia: Supporting The Transition To Sustainable Consumption And Production In Asian Developing Countries [Elektronisk resurs]*

Thongplew, N., Spaargaren, G., Koppen, K., (2017). Companies in search of the green consumer: Sustainable consumption and production strategies of companies and intermediary organizations in Thailand. *NJAS- Wagening Journal of Life Sciences*. Vol, 83, p, 12-21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.njas.2017.10.004>

Thoresen, Victoria W., Doyle, Declan., Klein, Jorgen. & Didham, Robert J. (2015). *Responsible Living [Elektronisk resurs] Concepts, Education and Future Perspectives*. Cham: Springer International Publishing

Thøgersen, J. (1994). A model of recycling behaviour, with evidence from Danish source separation programmes. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 11(2), Pages 145-163.

Thøgersen, J. (2010). Pro-environmental consumption. In K. M. Ekström (Ed.), *Consumer Behaviour. A Nordic Perspective*. Lund: Studentlitteratur AB.

UNESCO (2001) *Youth, sustainable consumption patterns and life styles*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000124238> [2020-04-09]

UNEP (2015) *Sustainable Consumption and Production Global edition*. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1951Sustainable%20Consumption.pdf> [2020-04-12]

United Nations (202-04-09) *Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-consumption-production/> [2020-04-09]

United Nations (2020-04-09) *The Sustainable Development Goal Agenda*.
<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/> [2020-04-09]

United Nations, UNEP, (2020-04-09) *THE 10 YEAR FRAMEWORK OF PROGRAMMES ON SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION*.
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/944brochure10yfp.pdf> [2020-04-09]

United Nations (2020-04-09) *Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2017/goal-12/> [2020-04-09]

United Nations (2020-04-09) *Responsible Consumption & Production: Why it Matters*.
[un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/12.pdf](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/12.pdf) [2020-04-09]

United Nations Development Program (2020-04-09) *Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production*. <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-12-responsible-consumption-and-production.html>

Vermeir, I. & Verbeke, W. (2006). Sustainable Food Consumption: Exploring the Consumer “Attitude – Behavioral Intention” Gap. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*. 19. 169-194. 10.1007/s10806-005-5485-3.

Vetenskapsrådet. The Swedish Research Council. (2017). *Good Research Practice*
https://www.vr.se/download/18.5639980c162791bbfe697882/1555334908942/Good-Research-Practice_VR_2017.pdf

Vietnam News (2018) Improving public transport tops HCM City efforts to unclog roads. Vietnam News 16 June. <https://vietnamnews.vn/society/450006/improving-public-transport-tops-hcm-city-efforts-to-unclog-roads.html> [Download 2020-03-03]

Wenling, L., & Oosterveer, P., & Spaargaren, G., (2015). Promoting sustainable consumption in China: A conceptual framework and research review. *Journal of Cleaner Production*. 134. 10.1016/j.jclepro.2015.10.124.

World Bank. (2019). *Vietnam – Country overview*. Washington. Washington Group.

World Health Organization. (2020). *Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Pandemic*.
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019> [2020-04-10]

Ölander, F., & Thøgersen, J. (1995). Understanding of consumer behaviour as a prerequisite for environmental protection. *Journal of Consumer Policy*.