

SCHOOL OF
ECONOMICS AND
MANAGEMENT

How did the simple leather wallet end up as an activist tool for change?

*A qualitative study of young Swedish consumers boycott and buycott behavior of food and drink
brands*

by

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May 2021

Master's Programme in
International Marketing and Brand Management

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Abstract

Title: How did the simple leather wallet end up as an activist tool for change?

Date of the Seminar: 2021-06-04

Course: BUSN39 Degree Project in Global Marketing

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Keywords: Boycott, buycott, food and drink brands, FMCG industry

Thesis purpose: This thesis aims to discover young Swedish consumers' boycott and buycott behavior of food and drink brands by understanding their decisions and participation in these practices.

Methodology: This study is built upon a qualitative research design and adopts an abductive approach. A social constructionist viewpoint guides the research to help to get a deeper understanding of young Swedish consumer's behavior in boycotts and buycotts. A thematic analysis was further adopted to analyze and discuss the empirical findings.

Theoretical perspective: This thesis builds upon the theories of self-congruence and symbolic interactionism, which will work as a lens for the study. The concepts of social interaction, brand symbolism, and brand identification further derived from this theory and previously reviewed literature. These concepts resulted in a theoretical framework, which will guide the collection of the empirical findings and help approach the analysis and discussion.

Empirical data: The researchers conducted 11 semi-structured in-depth interviews with young Swedish consumers.

Conclusions: Several factors drive the boycott and buycott behavior of food and drink brands. In boycott and buycott decisions, the drivers are word-of-mouth, environmental consciousness, ethics, brand consistency of words and actions, and long-term thinking. In boycott decisions, the media is also a driver. Furthermore, what drives participation of boycotts and buycotts is word-of-mouth and values of environmental consciousness, ethics, brand consistency of words and actions, and long-term thinking.

Practical implications: This study contributes to consumer behavior literature with a more profound understanding of why young Swedish consumers engage in boycotts and buycotts of brands. It further contributes with insights for brands within the FMCG industry, food and drink brands in particular.

Acknowledgments

This thesis was written during the spring semester of 2021 as the final degree project of the Master of Science in International Marketing and Brand Management at the Lund University School of Economics and Management. We want to use this opportunity to express our appreciation and gratitude to all people around us who have given support and valuable guidance during this process. We would especially like to thank our supervisor Ekaterini Drosou for her outstanding commitment, thoughtful and helpful advice, and good feedback. Additionally, we would like to thank all respondents we had the pleasure of interviewing. Thank you for giving your time and for your valuable insights into our research. Finally, we would like to thank each other for the great collaboration and enjoyable thesis process. This thesis marks the last project for this Master's program. We now look forward to our next chapter in life!

Thank you!

Lund, Sweden, May 28th 2021

Jenny Sandström



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1. Introduction

This chapter provides background information regarding the topic of boycotts and buycotts in today's society, consumers' relation to food and drink brands, and what they value in their consumption. The chapter further presents the problematization, the purpose, and the research question, followed by the aimed contribution of this research paper.

1.1. Background

In 2012, the oat drink company Oatly changed their strategy from a functional brand, offering a substitute for cow milk, to a lifestyle and activist brand, communicating the importance of sustainability (Gutierrez, 2020; The Challenger Project, 2016). This was a great success, and Oatly won over many supporters, who spread the word about the brand and thus showed a high degree of engagement (Johnston & Cairns, 2012; see Mukherjee & Banet-Weiser, 2012). In September 2020, Oatly faced the greatest crisis in their history, a result of their decision to take funds from the private equity firm, Blackstone. Amongst various other controversial investments, Blackstone was most recently criticized for financing a company involved in deforestation (Helmore, 2020). Consequently, many of Oatly's consumers were frustrated since these investments did not align with Oatly being a brand that deeply cares for the environment, causing accusations of dishonesty (Sörbring, 2019). A mistrust of Oatly created a backlash, and many consumers decided not to purchase from the brand anymore (Chandler, 2020).

It is apparent that many consumers were highly involved in the Oatly brand by both boycotting and buycotting them. Boycotts and buycotts are two consumption practices increasing in today's society due to more engaged and demanding consumers. Boycotting is an act of anti-consumption to punish corporations for unfavorable and inappropriate behavior where the goal is to bring about change and blame abusive market behavior. (Lang & Gabriel, 2005) In contrast, buycotting is an act of consumption that consumers use to support corporations, using "their dollars to vote" for desirable and wanted behavior in the market (Nielson, 2010; Shaw, Newholm & Dickinson, 2006; Lang & Gabriel, 2005). The boycotts and buycotts of Oatly are interesting considering Oatly is a food and drink brand operating in the fast-moving consumer goods (onwards shortened as FMCG) industry. The reason is that this industry is characterized

by low involvement and frequently bought products, where consumers put minimal purchasing effort (Dibb et al., 2006; see Leahy, 2011). The FMCG industry is one of the largest in the world (KPMG, 2016), making it significantly contributing to increased consumption. Within the industry, particularly food products have a big environmental impact as food production stands for a quarter of the greenhouse gas emissions in the world (Stylianou, Guibourg & Briggs, 2019).

Today's consumers have come to realize that certain food brands contribute to global warming, resulting in concerns regarding those brands' production, labor, and ethics (Trienekens, Wognum, Beulens & Van Der Vorst, 2012). Consumers today also find it important to know where their food and drinks come from (Stylianou, Guibourg & Briggs, 2019). Further, Swedish consumers are highly aware of the environment, and consider environmentally friendly products to a large extent. This also affects their consumption habits, such as food and drink purchases (Felix, 2020; Svensk Handel, 2018). For instance, 80 percent of the Swedish population state that they are actively trying to eat and drink products that are good for the planet and the environment (Felix, 2020).

Young people tend to boycott companies they have previously purchased from to a greater extent than others for social or political reasons (5WPR, 2020). To a greater extent than others, they also value purchasing products that signify their social beliefs. It is crucial for this consumer group to make purchases from brands that symbolize something that aligns with their values (5WPR, 2020). Moreover, young consumers value ethical purchasing highly. A quarter of this consumer group has avoided purchasing products because of its production conditions (Duffy, Shrimpton, Clemence, Thomas, Whyte-Smith & Abboud, 2018). Thus, brands need to reflect on social issues in their business strategy since consumers tend to boycott brands that do not engage in social or political concerns (Copeland & Boulianne, 2020; Edelman, 2018; Klein, Smith & John, 2004). In order to evolve and stay relevant over time, brands also need to follow cultural changes, indicating the importance for brands to take action (Holt, 2004).

1.2. Problematization

Young consumers are born in a postmodern society, making them involved in many social and economic changes globally (Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry & Kemper, 2020). Young consumers are thus generally more worried about the future and demand more from brands in today's market (Merriman, 2020). For instance, they are increasingly expecting companies to be sustainable (Lacy, Long & Spindler, 2020). Furthermore, young consumers tend to be more self-aware and aim to change the world for the better (Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry & Kemper, 2020). As boycotts and buycotts increase in today's society (Lang & Gabriel, 2005), it becomes critical for brands to consider young consumers' high demands, given that they are a target group. This way, brands limit the risk of getting boycotted, and instead may benefit from buycotts. Since the young generation is a relatively new consumer group, literature is limited regarding their views on boycotts and buycotts of brands. This indicates a need for more research and empirical contribution regarding young consumers and their relation to these practices.

Furthermore, Swedish consumers have a high awareness of the environment, which affects their consumption behavior (Svensk Handel, 2018; Isenhour, 2010). In turn, they partly engage in boycotts and buycotts due to this (Isenhour, 2010). Accordingly, Swedish consumers consider sustainable products within the trading and commerce market of greater importance. For instance, working conditions, labels, origin, and emissions are factors that Swedish consumers consider when buying products (Svensk Handel, 2018).

Additionally, the FMCG industry, which food and drink brands are a part of, is characterized by low involvement and low purchasing effort. This influences Swedish consumers not to evaluate this industry's products in terms of social responsibility (Elg & Hultman, 2016). This can be seen as problematic since the FMCG industry has a negative impact on the environment (Stylianou, Guibourg & Briggs, 2019). Nevertheless, other research shows that Swedish consumers do evaluate these products in terms of ethics and sustainability, and even use their food consumption as a main action to be more sustainable (Isenhour, 2010; Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti, 2005). Thus, uncertainties remain regarding how Swedish consumers do evaluate food and drink brands in terms of, for instance, ethics and sustainability. Moreover, despite the FMCG industry being characterized by low involvement and low purchasing effort, consumers do still put effort into

boycotting and buycotting food and drink brands. The researchers find this interesting and thus want to explore this further.

1.3. Purpose and Research Question

This study will identify novel insights of young Swedish consumers' behavior in boycotts and buycotts in today's consumption society in regards to food and drink brands. By gathering data regarding this consumer group's reflections of their actions in this context, the researchers will fulfill the study's purpose. Thus, this study aims to discover young Swedish consumers' boycott and buycott behavior of food and drink brands by understanding their decisions and participation in these practices. To reach this aim, the goal is to answer the following research question:

What drives young Swedish consumers in their boycott and buycott behavior of food and drink brands?

1.4. Aimed Contribution

This study aims to contribute to consumer behavior research with empirical findings of how consumers behave in their boycotts and buycotts of food and drink brands. This study will focus on a specific sample of young consumers as this group is big and diversified. The focus will be on Generation Z's older consumers, namely men and women born between 1996 and 2000, since this consumer group is old enough to have their own shopping experiences. Further, due to cultural differences and their potential effect on boycott and buycott practices, the study will be limited to Swedish consumers. As a result, the chosen consumer group, Swedish consumers born between 1996 and 2000, will be the group referred to as *young Swedish consumers* throughout this study.

Young consumers are further interesting to discover since past literature suggests that this sample group is highly conscious of social issues which in turn affect their consumption habits (Lacy, Long & Spindler, 2020). Moreover, Swedish consumers are particularly interesting to discover due to their high awareness of the environment and their strong emphasis on individual

responsibility to act. In turn, this can also affect their boycott and buycott behavior (Isenhour, 2010). Simultaneously, there is limited research regarding this sample group together, young Swedish consumers, which is why the researchers want to know more about this group.

Understanding how the chosen sample group considers inappropriate and appropriate behavior when purchasing from brands within the FMCG industry will contribute to valuable information for brands operating in this industry. Further, food and drink brands are especially relevant, as this sample group is highly aware of their food and drink consumption (Stylianou, Guibourg & Briggs, 2019; Svensk Handel, 2018). At the same time, there is limited research investigating Swedish consumers' relation to food and drink brands. Therefore, the researchers found it interesting to see how this plans out in boycotts and buycotts of food and drink brands within the FMCG industry. Thus, this study will specifically contribute with knowledge of what drives the chosen sample group in their boycott and buycott decision of food and drink brands and their participation in these practices.

In terms of academia, this research study will contribute to a better understanding of young Swedish consumers concerning their consumption practices in the FMCG industry and among food and drink brands. Moreover, greater insights into boycott and buycott behavior of food and drink brands will be offered, which is relevant when researching consumer behavior within the FMCG industry.

This study will benefit practitioners, brands, and brand managers within the FMCG industry, especially those focusing on food and drink brands. The reason is that they will get a greater knowledge of how to reach and understand young Swedish consumers in their consumption behavior. In turn, this can provide valuable tools for brands to prevent backlashes by possessing insights into how to avoid being boycotted by young Swedish consumers. Further, this will create opportunities for a continued strong brand of how to gain support from this consumer group, leading to potential buycotts and, thus, a successful brand.

2. Literature Review

This section will present relevant existing academic research on boycotts and buycotts, young and Swedish consumers, consumption practices, and the FMCG industry. By this, a better understanding will arise regarding why this study should be conducted within this field.

2.1. Boycotts and Buycotts

Throughout history, consumers have shown their impact in influencing society by driving a change in brands through boycotts and buycotts. Previous research presents different indicators and drivers of why consumers engage in those practices. Lang and Gabriel (2005) state that political, social, and environmental aspects drive boycott and buycott practices, whereas Roux and Izberk-Bilgin (2018) explain that social, ethical, and environmental reasons are central to why consumers choose to engage in these actions. Hoffmann, Balderjahn, Seegebarth, Mai, and Peyer (2018) further explain that significant drivers of boycotting and buycotting are universalism and social and environmental concerns. The extent to which these characteristics control the behavior of boycotts and buycotts depends on self-interest (Hoffmann et al., 2018). The literature in this research section indicates that social and environmental factors influence boycotts and buycotts. Nevertheless, there are divided opinions regarding which specific factors are crucial when consumers participate in these practices (Hoffmann et al., 2018; Roux & Izberk-Bilgin 2018; Lang & Gabriel, 2005). Additionally, Cissé-Depardon and N'Goala (2009) identified that neither satisfaction, trust, or brand commitment affect consumers' decision to boycott a brand. The authors also found that the brand message's credibility intensifies the boycott participation (Cissé-Depardon & N'Goala, 2009).

2.2. The Young and the Swedish Consumer

To better understand this study's sample group, the researchers have looked into literature about consumption, habits, and values related to young and Swedish consumers. Nonomura (2017) concluded that young adults and middle-aged people were more likely to participate in boycotts and buycotts than elderly and youths. Other studies show that young consumers are highly engaged in their consumption and expect companies to take a stand on social issues (Lacy, Long

& Spindler, 2020). Previous research states that Swedish consumers want to reduce the green footprint of their lifestyles and partly engage in boycotts and buycotts due to this (Isenhour, 2010).

Previous literature argues that young consumers increasingly expect companies to be sustainable. This leads them to choose smaller, more purpose-driven brands (Lacy, Long & Spindler, 2020). Quintelier (2014) further states that when young consumers have purchased sustainable products on multiple occasions, they are more likely to develop this into a long-term habit. Several authors have also investigated the relationship between sustainability and Swedish consumers and have shown that Swedish consumers consider the environment in their purchases. For instance, Isenhour (2010) and Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti (2005) argue that Swedish consumers are aware of the environmental issues going on in the world and also put a strong emphasis on the individual responsibility to act. This also translates to affect their consumption behavior where consumers' lifestyle and habits reflect how they act in their consumption (Isenhour, 2010; Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti, 2005). Moreover, Swedish consumers also consider ethical aspects when buying household goods and groceries and do so on a big scale (Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti, 2005). Isenhour (2010) partly strengthens this, emphasizing that food consumption is the number one action Swedish consumers take to be more sustainable in their consumption.

2.3. Consumers Consumption Practices in Relation to Brands

To better understand boycotts and buycotts, the researchers have chosen to look into more general research about consumption in relation to consumers and brands. Former studies have in different ways examined what factors that are of importance for consumers in regards to brands. In Hosany and Martin's (2012) research, they observed that what consumers purchase depends on what the specific product symbolizes to them, not only because it fulfills their basic needs. Elliot and Wattanasuwan (1998) and Belk (1988) have similar findings, stating that consumers usually purchase products because of their symbolic meaning instead of their physical and utilitarian attributes. Similarly, Bhat and Reddy (1998) explain the importance of brand symbolism, and Phillips (2009), Belk (1988), and Dichter (1985) state that consumers purchase goods for their symbolic meaning. Furthermore, Aaker (1997) and Sirgy (1982) found that

consumers can enhance their self-esteem by purchasing from symbolic brands, aligning with their self-concept. Self-concept describes a person's belief about oneself (Aaker, 1997; Sirgy, 1982). With this in regard, previous research agrees that brand symbolism affects the consumer's purchasing behavior. Although, there appears to be a lack of research concerning how brand symbolism, in turn, might affect young Swedish consumers' boycott and buycott behavior.

Blumer (1969) emphasizes that symbolic meaning is a social process where its social environment influences individual behavior. This means that consumers detach meaning to objects, partly derived from their social interactions (Blumer, 1969). When people interact with others, they define a specific situation by putting themselves in the shoes of others in that context (Oliver, 2012). For instance, this can be interaction with reference groups to which people belong or are a part. Reference groups tend to obtain shared symbolic meanings or a shared outlook on life. (Shibutani, 1955) Ekström, Ottosson, and Parment (2017) strengthen this, arguing that a reference group can be friends and family that share the same values or interests. It can also be opinion leaders like celebrities or politicians who influence people to, for example, take responsibility. These groups can, in turn, influence people's lifestyles and habits, as well as consumption patterns. This is usually visible within symbolic consumption (Ekström, Ottosson & Parment, 2017). Besides, Wallace, Buil, and De Chernatony (2017) states that consumers' opinion about brands is affected by word-of-mouth. Oliver's (2012) findings show that shared meanings with others result in human actions usually becoming coherent over time. Additionally, Choi, Lee, and Kim (2005) show that brand endorsers to a large extent affect consumers' attitudes towards the brand. An endorser tends to connect with the consumers' self-congruency, in other words, the congruence between the brand and the self, if showing links to appropriate symbols and values (Choi, Lee & Kim, 2005; Sirgy, 1982). Previous research indicates that consumer's social interactions affect their consumption. However, there is a gap in research regarding how young Swedish consumers are affected by their social interactions in their consumption behavior. Moreover, there remain uncertainties regarding how social interactions, in turn, affect boycott and buycott practices for this sample group.

Belk (1988) claims that individuals significantly create, maintain, and protect their identity and social meanings through consumption. Marketing scholars highlight the importance of brand

identification, which explains the personality connection between brands and consumers. For instance, Sung and Huddleston (2017) and Chon (1992) agree that consumers prefer brands they can identify with, with personality attributes corresponding to their personality. Moreover, Kressmann, Sirgy, Herrmann, Huber, Huber, and Lee (2006) found that consumers who purchase brands connected with their personalities drive social patterns. Additionally, Schallehn, Burman and Riley (2014) state that when a brand's values align with consumers' values, they tend to perceive the brand as transparent. Besides, Zarantonello, Romani, Grappi, and Fetscherinet (2018) and Hegner, Fetscherin, and van Delzen (2017) have found that brand hate is based on consumers' negative feelings towards specific brands. This is because of symbolic or functional incongruence between the brand and the consumer's personality, leading the consumer to not identify with the brand (Zarantonello et al., 2018; Hegner et al., 2017). With this in regards, previous literature indicates that brand identification tends to impact consumers' purchasing behavior. Although, there appears to be limited literature concerning how this, in turn, might affect young Swedish consumers' behavior in boycotts and buycotts.

2.4. Fast-moving Consumer Goods and Food and Drink Brands

To understand the FMCG industry better, food and drink brands in particular, the researchers have decided to look into previous literature within this research area more thoroughly. Bosselman, Kang, Tang, and Lee (2012) imply that consumer goods work as symbolic interactions between individuals as these goods communicate the individual meaning to its references. Food and drink brands operate within the FMCG industry. This industry is characterized by relatively cheap, rapidly and frequently bought, low involvement products, where consumers put minimal purchasing effort (Dibb et al., 2006; see Leahy, 2011). Former studies have examined the relationship between consumers and FMCG products. Jain (2019) argues that the individual's consumption process is usually quick and made on routine with these products. Kinley, Josaim, and Locket (2010) explain that low involvement products usually result in a low engaged consumer. This aligns with Leahy's (2011) research of relationship marketing within the FMCG industry, where the author concludes that consumers rarely build relationships with FMCG products due to their low involvement. Moreover, Ekström, Ottosson, and Parment (2017) explain that an uninvolved consumer is not intrigued to compare the positive and negative aspects of the products.

Conversely, high involvement products are, according to Jain (2019), usually evaluated more than low involvement products. Nevertheless, Kinley, Josaim, and Locket's (2010) findings show that there are different levels of involvement, even if it is generally defined as high or low. Involvement also links to both the product itself and the individual behind the purchase (Kinley, Josaim & Locket, 2010). Likewise, Elg and Hultman (2016) believe that the level of involvement depends on the individual since they argue that many consumers do not consider low-involvement products to relate to their self-image and social status. Ekström, Ottosson, and Parment (2017) have similar reasoning and states that the involvement depends on how relevant the product is for the consumer. Laaksonen (2010; see Ekström, Ottosson & Parment, 2017) further describes that involvement also is connected to the individual's curiosity about the products, where a high curiosity leads to a higher level of emotional connection and higher involvement.

Kinley, Josaim, and Locket (2010) describe that consumers who are highly involved in their purchases need to evaluate the product more before purchasing as the product gives the consumer a sense of meaning. Similarly, Ekström, Ottosson, and Parment (2017) states that if the product is perceived as coherent with the consumer's values, in other words, if the brand identification is high, this will lead to a higher level of involvement. Moreover, the ethics of a consumer is distinctly connected to the involvement in the purchase (Ekström, Ottosson & Parment, 2017). Tandon and Sethi (2017) elaborate on this and argue that consumers today want FMCG brands to be more socially responsible. They further state that consumers buy green FMCG products because it symbolizes environmental friendliness (Tandon & Sethi, 2017). Thus, Tandon and Sethi (2017) concludes that brands in the FMCG industry, as food and drink brands, need to adapt to this in their strategies. Similarly, Elg and Hultman (2016) believe that a way to go for FMCG brands, and thus food and drink brands, is to symbolize social responsibility. This way, their consumers can feel like having a self-image of being socially responsible when buying these brands, which, in turn, will create higher involvement and brand identification (Elg & Hultman, 2016). At last, Lacy, Long, and Spindler (2020) argue that the FMCG industry is already moving in this direction since brands within the industry are increasingly finding new ways to take social responsibility. Thereupon, previous research indicates divided opinions regarding consumer's involvement in FMCG brands (e.g., Ekström, Ottosson & Parment, 2017; Leahy, 2011; Kinley, Josaim & Locket, 2010).

3. Theory

This chapter will present relevant theories for this research topic, which will be used as a lens for how the researchers approach the study. The study's theoretical framework will further be presented, deriving from the theories. This framework will include the concepts of social interaction, brand symbolism, and brand identification.

3.1. The Self-congruence Theory

The theory of self-congruence was identified as a relevant theory for this study. The theory proposes that consumers react more positively to brands that match their self-concept, in other words, a consumer's belief about oneself (Sirgy, 1982). The relevance of the theory lies in that the researchers want to know more about what makes young Swedish consumers think negatively of some brands and thus boycott them while thinking positively of other brands and, in turn, buycott them. Thus, the self-congruence theory is an appropriate approach to understand what drives young Swedish consumers to boycott and buycott food and drink brands. The theory has been extensively used in various consumption research and gives solid theoretical support to verify the critical determinants of boycotts and buycotts (Islam, Attiq, Hameed, Khokhar & Sheikh, 2019).

The self-congruence theory is widely accepted in the marketing and social-psychology literature (Sirgy et al., 2018; Heath & Scott 1998). The theory was initiated by Gardner and Levy (1955), resulting in a stream of literature examining self-congruence, the self-concept, and its influence on products and brands. Throughout literature, different interchangeable concepts have been used to describe this phenomenon: self-congruence, self-image congruence, self-congruity, and image congruence (Kressman et al., 2006). In this study, the researchers will use the word self-congruence, despite what the referred theories name the phenomenon, to simplify for the readers. The word self-congruence was selected because it is the most used term in research.

The self-congruence theory implies that individuals seek consistency in their behaviors and opinions. They believe that the opposite, inconsistent behaviors and opinions result in disagreement and tension with the self (Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer & Nyffenegger, 2011). A boycott

behavior may be seen as a result of this disagreement and tension. Consequently, the self-congruence theory is fundamental for the researchers to identify and understand the main reasons why brands fail, for example, through being boycotted. The theory believes that the purchase intention greatly depends on the consumers' self-concept and the congruence of this self-concept with the brand personality (Aaker, 1999; Sirgy, 1982). Thus, consumers tend to connect better with objects and people with personalities and traits that are alike (Sung & Huddleston, 2017). For instance, consumers may think of themselves as "socially conscious" and perceive Oatly and Oatly's users as "socially conscious." In this case there is a match between the consumer's self-concept and the brand image, resulting in high self-congruence. Conversely, if the consumer perceives themselves as "socially conscious" but thinks of Oatly or Oatly's users not to be "socially conscious," there is a mismatch between the consumer's self-concept and the brand image. In turn, this results in low self-congruence. Therefore, self-congruence theory exhibits to which extent consumers identify with brands and their users (Sirgy, 2018). Further, the theory implies that a favorable attitude towards a brand or product is partly a function of the match or mismatch between a brand's image and its own self-image (Parker, 2009; Sirgy, 1982;). According to self-congruence theory, consumers use brands to reveal themselves, emphasize certain aspects of their identity, express status, or exhibit group identification (Aaker, 1999).

The self-congruence theory consists of two parts, actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence (Aaker, 1999). When a brand's functional, utilitarian attributes match consumers' understanding of their actual self, actual self-congruence appears. This is connected to the self-consistency motive. Self-consistency is built upon the idea that people are protective of their own beliefs. The latter, ideal self-congruence, appears when a symbolic brand's values-based attributes match consumers' understanding of their ideal self (Aaker, 1999). This is connected to the self-esteem motive, which increases when consumers emphasize positive things in their lives through using specific brands. This can, for instance, be through conspicuous consumption, such as using a brand with symbolic meaning (Aaker, 1997). When consumers purchase goods, a usual driving force is the motivation to express their own self, which can be done by one of the self-concept motives; self-consistency or self-esteem (Parker, 2009).

3.2. Symbolic Interactionism

This thesis strives to discover young Swedish consumer's boycott and buycott behavior of food and drink brands by understanding their decisions and participation in these practices. Thus, the theory of symbolic interactionism was considered an appropriate approach to help discover this. The reason lies in that symbolic interactionism is based on social behavior and how people make meaning through their social surroundings and environment (Mead, 1934). Furthermore, the basis of this theory lies in the way people create meaning. According to this theory, facts are based on how people perceive and make sense of different definitions. (Aksan, Kisac, Aydin & Demirbuken, 2009).

Symbolic interactionism was initially conceived by George Herbert Mead in the 1920s, while it later, in 1937, was named and forwarded by his student Herbert Blumer (Oliver, 2012; Stryker & Vryan, 2003). Mead states that symbols act as a means for human thought and communication (Ashworth, 2000). Some scholars further argue that symbolic interactionism is one of the most durable theories in the past 20 years (Plummer, 2000). Symbolic interactionism builds on how people rely on symbols, which create the basis for communication, such as when constructing their social reality (Aksan et al., 2009). There is also an agreement that empathy and perspective help expand people's abilities, which is central in symbolic interactionism (Stryker & Vryan, 2003). Later theorists within symbolic interactionism investigated the relationship people have with objects more profoundly to depict how people create multiple social realities (Charon, 2007).

The basis of the theory stems from social behaviorism, where the focus is on the relationships among people within a given society (Mead, 1934). Symbolic interactionism further emphasizes the way people come to understand their social surroundings (Solomon, 1983) and perceive the concept of self as a driver of social behavior (Serpe & Stryker, 2011). The theory focuses on the meanings and symbols that emerge when people interact (Aksan et al., 2009) and argue for meaning-making being a social process (Blumer, 1969). Furthermore, symbolic interactions appear when people determine their actions after taking other people's actions into account (Charon, 2007). Additionally, symbolic interactionism supports the idea of self-concept, which mirrors a person's perception about how one may appear in other people's eyes (Blumer, 1969).

Interpretative actions are further central in symbolic interactions since, depending on the individual, symbolic meanings are perceived or formed differently (Aksan et al., 2009).

According to the theory, people interact with objects based on their meanings, which initially derives from human interactions (Blumer, 1969). Through social interactions, people make sense of who they are, which affects how they create meaning of, for instance, brands and, in turn, how they act (Mead, 1934). The researchers believe that social interactions are relevant when discovering what drives young Swedish consumers to boycott and buycott brands. Moreover, it is interesting to understand how human interactions affect how young Swedish consumers attach meanings to objects.

3.3. Theoretical Framework

The theories of self-congruence and symbolic interactionism presented in the chapter are believed to support the construction of the study's theoretical framework. This framework will guide the collection of the empirical findings and help approach the research. Thus, the framework will not serve as the base for analyzing the empirical findings. The framework includes the concepts of social interaction, brand symbolism, and brand identification, which the researchers believe influence boycott and buycott behavior (Figure 1). These concepts have been identified throughout previously reviewed literature and the theories of self-congruence and symbolic interactionism. The researchers believe that these concepts will influence young Swedish consumers when forming an opinion about a brand, which may lead to a boycott or buycott decision. Furthermore, the researchers believe that these concepts will influence consumers' participation in boycotts and buycotts of brands. Thus, this framework strives to help discover young Swedish consumers' boycott and buycott behavior of food and drink brands by understanding their decisions and participation in these practices.

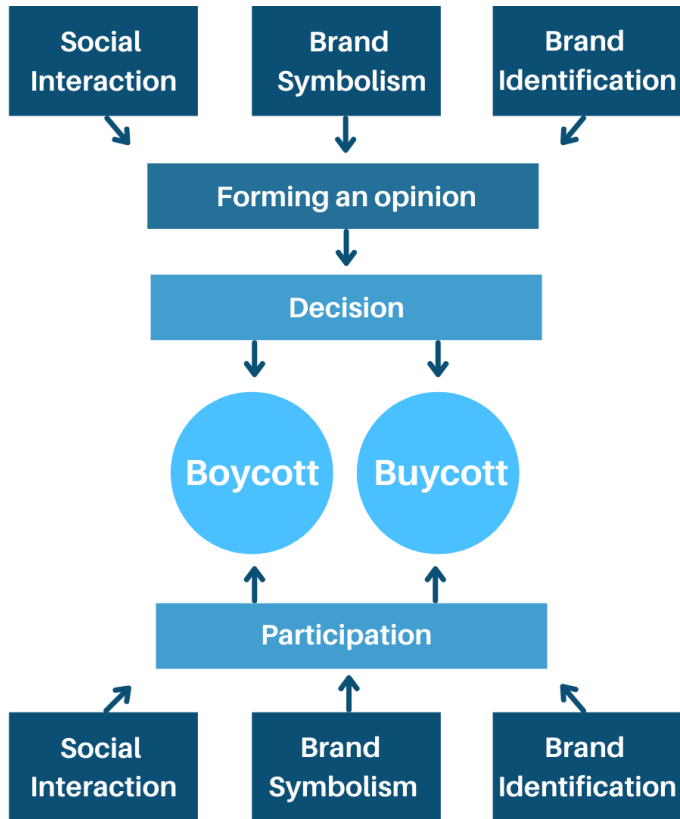


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

3.3.1. Social Interaction

Social interaction refers to interactions with other people and groups and is perceived to significantly impact an individual's social behavior (Mead, 1934). Social interaction also affects how people create meaning to objects and symbols, affecting how people act daily (Oliver, 2012). Accordingly, a person's social interaction can influence how people view and relate to brands and act towards them. Consequently, a consumer's social interactions might influence how they form an opinion towards brands, potentially leading to boycott or buycott decisions of a brand. Moreover, their social interaction might also influence consumers in their boycott and buycott participation.

3.3.2. Brand Symbolism

Based on social interactions, consumers can, in turn, attach meanings to brands. Depending on what meanings are attached, the brand can symbolize different things to the consumer. Furthermore, consumers can attach symbolic meanings to brands through symbolic consumption. Symbolic consumption occurs when consumers purchase brands to create, confirm, and express their identity (Belk, Bahn & Mayer, 1982) or avoid purchasing from specific brands due to what it symbolizes (Hogg, Banister, & Stephenson, 2009). When consumers choose to purchase a brand because of its symbolic meaning, they emphasize positive things in their lives, leading to increased self-esteem (Aaker, 1997). Thus, consumers form different opinions about brands depending on what the brand symbolizes for them. Brand symbolism may, in turn, influence a consumer's decision to boycott or buycott a brand. Moreover, consumers might also participate in boycotts and buycotts due to the influence of brand symbolism.

3.3.3. Brand Identification

Brand identification refers to the extent to which consumers identify with brands and their users. The congruence between the consumer's self-concept and the brand's personality affects how well the consumer identifies with the brand (Sirgy, 2018). Moreover, consumers can feel like having a self-image of being socially responsible when purchasing brands they perceive as socially responsible. This, in turn, will create a high level of brand identification (Elg & Hultman, 2016). Consumers use brands to reveal themselves, emphasize certain aspects of their identity, or exhibit group identification (Aaker, 1999). Thus, consumers can form opinions about brands depending on how they identify with them. Consequently, brand identification could influence the consumer's decision to boycott or buycott a brand. Also, consumers may participate in boycotts and buycotts due to the influence of brand identification.

4. Method

In this chapter, the study's method will be presented. Firstly, the research design and approach will be discussed, followed by the data collection and the data analysis process. Further, a presentation of the study's research philosophy and the quality of the study will be introduced. Lastly follows the ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

4.1. Research Design and Research Approach

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson (2018) explain that qualitative research is exploratory. The ambition tends to be getting a deeper understanding of an individual's attitudes, feelings, and motivation in a specific context. Thus, qualitative research was considered particularly appropriate for this study to get a deeper understanding of young Swedish consumers' behavior in boycotts and buycotts.

Literature refers to three approaches concerning the nature of the connection between research and theory: deductive, inductive, and abductive (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Whereas a deductive approach tests theoretical assumptions, an inductive approach instead generates theories from data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). An abductive approach combines the other two approaches' components, which gives the possibility to go back and forth between literature, theory, and empirical findings. Using an abductive approach enables the researchers to confirm the existing theory and suggest new theoretical perspectives (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In this study, an abductive approach was chosen as it was considered suitable for what the researchers strived to obtain.

An abductive approach can be beneficial since it, for instance, can result in novel insights (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). The researchers strive to obtain this by staying open to possible new findings. Dubois and Gadde (2002) further explain that an abductive approach helps develop theories that can be seen as lacking in certain aspects. This involves refining current theories through matching, directing, and redirecting instead of considering completely new ones. The abductive approach can further include a continuous modification of the initial

framework, primarily based on unexpected empirical findings and further learnings obtained from the research process (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). The researchers thus tried to stay open to the possibility of discovering something unexpected, leading to intriguing results. The researchers adopted an abductive approach since they believed that their theoretical framework would help them understand the empirical material better. Further, they also wanted to go back and forth between theory, literature, and empirical findings in case needed.

4.2. Data Collection

The researchers chose to conduct interviews to get a deeper understanding of young Swedish consumers' behavior in boycotts and buycotts. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson (2018) explain that interviews are a qualitative research method that usually revolves around the in-depth exploration of a specific topic or experience. Moreover, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) state that conducting individual interviews enables the respondents to analyze and answer the questions individually without letting other respondents affect their opinions. As a result, potential obstacles and inconsistency in opinions and answers can be reduced (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Since the study strives to discover relevant knowledge and views from each respondent, the researchers did not want the respondents' opinions to get influenced by others. This resulted in individual interviews being chosen as an appropriate approach.

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson (2018) suggest semi-structured interviews as an interview option. These interviews are openly guided and based on a list of questions. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer can be flexible and add or develop secondary questions during the course (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2018). Additionally, this type of interview allows a fruitful discussion with the respondents to fully express their thoughts by explaining and building on their responses (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Since discovering what drives young Swedish consumers to engage in boycotts and buycotts, the researchers strived for a fruitful discussion. This led to the choice of semi-structured interviews, as they were believed to be the most suitable option to reach this. Moreover, follow-up questions were believed to be helpful when determining the respondents' underlying reasons, thoughts, and behaviors of boycotts and buycotts.

4.2.1. Sampling

In this study, the researchers chose the respondents through a combination of two sample approaches, namely purposive sampling and snowball sampling. In purposive sampling, specific criteria for being part of the sample is created, where only individuals who fit the established criteria are included (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2018). A purposive sampling approach was chosen since the study participants were purposely selected based on the criteria of nationality, age, and experiences concerning the research area. The researchers chose to study young Swedish consumers of both sexes, born between 1996 and 2000, with experiences in boycotts and buycotts of food and drink brands. The researchers also included respondents from different parts of Sweden to allow potential differences among cities (see more information of the respondents in Appendix). Utilizing purposive sampling made it more accessible and efficient to acquire respondents who fit within the research study's overall purpose. This way, the researchers could ensure that the respondents had insight into the field and provide fruitful answers.

Moreover, a snowball sampling approach was used, meaning that already selected respondents were asked to provide names of future respondents suitable to partake in the study (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2018). Since the study was conducted during spring 2021, in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, this complicated finding suitable respondents. Using snowball sampling made it possible to get in touch with a broader range of relevant respondents sufficiently and was thus considered convenient. Also, the researchers were confident that the respondent came from a reliable source. A combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling resulted in the researchers choosing five respondents by purposive sampling. To ensure both sexes were included, as this study did not aim to investigate specific sex, the researchers chose to include both sexes in the sampling. Further, the five respondents were asked to provide names of other potential participants, meeting the study's criteria. This led to six additional interviews, chosen by a snowball sampling. After conducting 11 interviews, clear patterns derived from the materials resulted in the researchers feeling satisfied and confident that the number of interviews was sufficient.

The researchers are aware that it is not possible to generalize the study's findings to all young Swedish consumers solely based on this study. In other words, the researchers contribute with insights from a specific sample, but that does not mean that the sample is representative. The reason is that those sampling approaches do not enable statistically representative results of the total population (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Further, the researchers are aware that snowball sampling may provide partial answers since there is a possibility that the respondents share similar traits and habits. Due to this, the respondents were asked not to suggest their close friends since they potentially share similar experiences and views.

4.2.2. Interview Guide

Following Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson's (2018) recommendations, the researchers created an interview guide before conducting the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix). The interview guide was structured to support and guide the interview, making it easy to ask follow-up questions and encourage an honest and in-depth discussion. The interview guide was structured with the theoretical framework as a base, consisting of the key concepts: social interaction, brand symbolism, and brand identification. The framework was thus only used in how the researchers approached the research. Additionally, considering the researchers are using an abductive approach, they wanted to stay open to new findings. Therefore, the researchers also asked questions that were not based on these concepts specifically (see Appendix).

Moreover, the researchers performed a pilot study to test the interview guide before collecting the data for this study, aligning with Bryman and Bell's (2015) suggestions. This allows the researcher to test the questions beforehand to see which are appropriate and not (Bryman & Bell, 2015). After completing the pilot study, the researchers agreed on removing, adding, and rephrasing some of the questions. By this, it was ensured that the questions would better work to answer the aim of this thesis study.

4.2.3. Conducting the Interviews

This study intended to carry out physical interviews since it tends to benefit the result (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2018). However, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic impacted how the data could be collected and made physical interviews inappropriate. Thus, for this study,

remote interviews became the most suitable method. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson (2018) explain that remote interviews can be completed over the telephone or the internet and argue that this may also entail benefits. For instance, it offers more flexibility for both parties and is usually time-efficient (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2018). Moreover, Salmons (2014) states that electronic interviews are the data collection method most similar to face-to-face interviews since they allow the interviewer and the respondent to share actual visual artifacts. A problematic aspect of conducting electronic interviews is that technology plays a role, which can be unpredictable. For instance, the internet connection can be inadequate, leading the interviewer to miss relevant viewpoints that the respondent expresses (Salmons, 2014). The researchers were more cautious when asking the questions to avoid these difficulties and were also repetitive in the questions if necessary.

This resulted in 11 remote interviews via the Internet through Zoom being conducted. The researchers decided that only one of the researchers should be present during the interviews since they partly agreed with Bryman and Bell's (2015) reasoning that it could be intimidating for the respondents to talk to two persons. Moreover, the researchers believed this would decrease the risk of software and connection problems and save valuable time. Despite Bryman and Bell (2015) also arguing that two interviewers could be advantageous since it might create a more relaxed atmosphere, it was believed that having one interviewer present had more advantages.

All interviews were further recorded by both phone and computer to ensure a backup of the interview material. The interviews started with a quick overall discussion to exhibit a relaxed atmosphere between the respondent and the interviewer. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) highlight this importance since it proves friendliness and reliability. Further, all interviews were confidential and anonymous, which the respondent was informed about both before and during the interview. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012), reminding the respondents about this during the interview will allow them to be more comfortable and confident throughout the conversation.

4.3. Data Analysis Process

After conducting the interviews, they were further transcribed. As the interviews were recorded, it enabled the researchers to transcribe the material easily. Further, the researchers went through the transcriptions, reading each interview with the respondents carefully. According to Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018), spending time with the empirical material is important when handling it. In this process, the researcher also wrote down and discussed their initial thoughts that emerged from the material. This further allowed to detect repetitive information in the answers early on.

Moreover, the researchers followed Rennstam and Wästerfors's (2018) suggestions of sorting and reducing the material before the analysis. The authors state that sorting helps address the disorder of the material that derives after it has been transcribed (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Thus, after the empirical material was transcribed, the researchers started sorting it to get a better overview of the large amount of data from the interviews. This further allowed the researchers to identify recurring patterns in the respondents' answers during the interviews.

The noted recurring patterns were then coded based on common keywords. This is a process Alvehus (2013) calls thematization, which helps form a thematic analysis. During the coding process, the researchers started by reading the material and noting down quotes that were perceived relevant for answering the aim of the study. These quotes were further discussed more thoroughly. Moreover, the researchers carefully went through the material again and coded it in different colors based on common keywords and quotes the respondents mentioned. These keywords and quotes, in turn, allowed the researchers to successfully find six themes in the material. These themes were identified as the *influences of media*, *the influences of word-of-mouth*, *environmental consciousness*, *ethics of animal- and human rights*, *brand consistency of words and actions*, and *long-term thinking*. The themes further helped form the analysis and discussion, where the themes were structured under different categories to allow a clearer overview. During the thematization process, it also became apparent that the material needed to be reduced. Therefore, parts considered irrelevant were removed and shortened, which according to Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018), is called reduction. However, the researcher made sure not to exclude information considered necessary for answering the

research question. According to Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018), it is important not to reduce the material too much in order not to risk losing parts that contribute to the broader context.

4.4. Research Philosophy

4.4.1. Epistemology and Ontology

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson (2018) describe that epistemology consists of two opposite interpretations. These are positivism and social constructionism. In social constructionism, researchers can discover how consumer's experiences can affect how they behave and act (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2018). As the purpose of the study is to get a deeper understanding of what drives consumers to engage in boycotts and buycotts, a social epistemology was considered appropriate.

Bryman (2018) describes that humans continuously create and interpret social reality, which is constantly changing. With this in regard, the researchers took the approach of understanding the social context in which the respondents found themselves. The study's ontological positioning will further take a relativist viewpoint. A relativist viewpoint claims that the world is incapable of existing independently from people's perceptions and states that there is not one truth but many (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2018). This approach is suitable for answering the aim of the study: to discover young Swedish consumers' boycott and buycott behavior of food and drink brands by understanding their decisions and participation in these practices. The reason is that the researchers believe that there is not a single truth, but rather many, which are constructed and held individually.

According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012), relativistic ontology argues that reality is socially constructed where people see life variously depending on their unique world views. Thus, this study wants to discover diverse viewpoints depending on who is interviewed, as the researchers believe that the respondents have different experiences and opinions. The belief is that the respondent's answers will vary depending on their exact worldview, which will impact their answers and the empirical material's outcome.

4.5. The Quality of the Study

Since this study takes an ontological and epistemological position, reliability and validity can be explored in various ways. Criteria as trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, see Bryman, 2018) will further be used, considering that there can be many perspectives and truths (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, see Bryman, 2018), which is relevant when studying qualitative research.

The term trustworthiness is built on four components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Bryman, 2018). This study demonstrates credibility since the researchers followed the set rules and guidelines recommended for qualitative studies. All respondents had a relevant background and had experiences from boycott and buycott practices of food and drink brands. Thus, all respondents came from the specific context studied, which according to Tobin and Begley (2004) and Lincoln and Guba (1985, see Bryman, 2018), also strengthens the study's credibility. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, see Nowell, Norris, White & Moules (2017), transferability is reached when the study results remain, despite being transferred to other contexts. To ensure transferability, the researchers gave thick and detailed descriptions of the research context and sample and gathered thick and detailed descriptions of the empirical material. This will ease the future process of being transferred to another context, with results remaining (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; see Nowell et al., 2017). However, the researchers are aware that this study is highly context-based, resulting in difficulties for transferability within another context.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985; see Nowell et al., 2017) and Tobin and Begley (2004), to ensure dependability, the researchers need to describe the research process and its different phases carefully. The study gives detailed information on, for instance, the aim of the study, the empirical context, how it was conducted as well as data analysis to reach dependability. Bryman (2018) further explains that it can be hard to stay objective when reaching confirmability. This makes it essential not to let personal interests or values intentionally affect the study (Bryman, 2018; Tobin & Begley, 2004). The researchers tried to remain reflexive and were careful not to include their biased opinions and personal interests to reach confirmability. The researchers further made sure not to ask leading questions during the interviews. Lastly, according to

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson (2018) and Lincoln and Guba (1985, see Bryman, 2018), authenticity is reached when the study provides a just picture of the specific research context. Thus, to ensure authenticity, the study was conducted and developed based on the research question, which helped shape and guide the data collection. All interviews were further transcribed and coded, allowing for new potential findings (Bryman, 2018).

4.6. Ethical Considerations

According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012), it is crucial to consider ethical aspects when interviewing respondents of a study. Since the respondents in this study shared personal opinions and beliefs during the interviews, ethical considerations were critical. Thus, before conducting the interviews, the researchers gave brief information about the research aim to make the respondents aware of the process. Moreover, a consent form was assigned to all respondents (see Appendix). Through the consent form, the respondents were told that the interviews would be recorded and transcribed. The respondents were also informed about their anonymity. Therefore, the respondent's real names were exchanged by fictive names to protect their anonymity.

4.7. Limitations and Reflexivity

Qualitative research also has its limitations. For example, the generalization of the sampling is limited due to a small sampling group (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2018). Other researchers may come up with other results at a different time from other respondents. A bigger sample or a quantitative study would be better suited for more generalized research (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2018). Furthermore, an additional limitation the researchers encountered was the limitation of time. The limited-time did, to some extent, affect, for instance, the data collection process. That the researchers needed to find respondents that met the criteria for the study's purpose, which in turn were asked to give suggestions for additional respondents, was proven to be more time-consuming than initially predicted. Moreover, as this study was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, the researchers encountered further limitations. For instance, the researchers would have preferred doing physical interviews with the respondents as they believed this would be most beneficial for the study's outcome. However, due to Covid-19

remote interviews over Zoom were conducted, which as earlier mentioned, also proved to be a good approach to go. Further, due to Covid-19, the researchers could not find respondents physically, which would have eased the data collection process.

According to Alvesson (2003), reflexivity is highly beneficial for the researcher since it avoids a naive ground and results in the empirical material's potential richness. Reflexivity includes exploring the phenomenon by taking a step back, adopting a critical standpoint, and challenging taken-for-granted assumptions (Alvesson, 2003). Accordingly, to find credible findings, the researchers have attempted to be reflexive throughout the study. This has been argued for in the methodology. The empirical material is further analyzed through a reflexive approach, as the researchers have tried to be critical in their reasoning of the material.

5. Analysis and Discussion

The following section will present the empirical findings conducted from the interviews. These findings will, in turn, be analyzed and discussed. In order to present an in-depth analysis and discussion, the theory and previous relevant literature within the field will be connected to these findings. From the empirical findings, six themes emerged. These were identified as the influences of media, the influences of word-of-mouth, environmental consciousness, ethics of animal- and human rights, brand consistency of words and actions, and long-term thinking. These themes will further be presented under the categories *social environment*, *personal values*, and *a bigger purpose* to help structure the chapter. The analysis and discussion will, in turn, serve as a base to answer the aim of the study: to discover young Swedish consumers' boycott and buycott behavior of food and drink brands by understanding their decisions and participation in these practices. When the researchers mention *decision*, they refer to what influences the respondents to make a decision to boycott or buycott a brand. Further, when the researchers mention *participation*, they refer to why and how the respondents choose to engage in boycotts and buycotts, after the decision is made.

5.1. Social Environment

During the interviews, it became apparent that the social environment influences all respondent's boycott and buycott behavior. Media and word-of-mouth are the main drivers in the social environment affecting the respondent's boycott and buycott practices.

5.1.1. The Influences of Media

In the social environment, it is apparent that the media influence the respondents. The factors within the media that the respondents mentioned concerning their boycott and buycott behavior are *social media*, *news*, and *documentaries*.

An interesting finding is that social media influences all respondents in their boycott decisions. However, social media does not seem to play a determinant role in the respondent's buycott decisions.

A lot with social media gives you an eyeopener. I don't think I would have known this much if it was not for social media and people sharing. - Elin

Regarding the respondent's boycotts, they mention that they, for instance, follow Instagram accounts and influencers they look up to. Ekström, Ottosson, and Parment (2017) explain that reference groups, like opinion leaders, can influence people to take action and responsibility. Additionally, they state that reference groups can change consumers' consumption behavior (Ekström, Ottosson & Parment, 2017). Further, Choi, Lee, and Kim (2005) explain that brand endorsers affect consumer's attitudes towards brands since those endorsers can connect with the consumers' self-congruency. Thus, it may be argued that opinion leaders or brand endorsers that the respondents see on, for instance, Instagram impact the way they form opinions about brands and thus take a stand against them. It further seems like opinion leaders and brand endorsers have a bigger effect on respondents' negative attitudes towards brands. They appear to be more affected by social media in their boycotts than within their buycotts.

I follow some accounts and influencers who are outspoken on many of these things. (...) for instance, TänkVärt, Earthlings, and animals rights activists. - Carl

Moreover, the findings suggest that news plays a role within the respondent's boycotts. Nevertheless, it does not seem to be a determinant factor within their buycotts. A majority of the respondents believe that news influences their boycott decision. Similarly, documentaries appear to play a role in the respondent's decision to boycott brands, while it only affects the respondents' buycotts' decisions on rare occasions. August and Carl resonates on ways they got

influenced to boycott brands;

I see it on the news and documentaries. It has forced me to think more critically what I should not buy and why. - August

I saw the documentary Seaspiracy and I think it is so fake what they are trying to put out. But, after that documentary I have actually stopped eating fish completely. - Carl

Since news and documentaries affect the respondents' boycott decisions, it becomes apparent that opinion leaders and brand endorsers within these media also affect them in their boycott decisions.

Thus, media factors deriving from the social environment seem to play a role when the respondents decide to boycott a brand. The media's effect on the respondents can be seen as their social interaction, through opinion leaders and brand endorsers in media, influence their opinions and thus their boycott decisions. Blumer (1969) and Mead (1934) state that in such an environment, people can create meaning and in turn attach meaning to objects. This is apparent for the respondents as they decide to boycott brands, partly due to the meanings created through the interactions with opinion leaders and brand endorsers. Further, it seems like the respondents form opinions about brands through the facts they get from their social interaction, which potentially result in a decision to boycott brands. This aligns with Aksan et al. (2009), who argue that people's social interactions create meaning and, in turn, creates facts for that person.

Another important dimension deriving from the findings is that media does not play a vital role when the respondents participate in boycotts or buycotts. Only a few respondents have participated by sharing their thoughts about brands in this context online, and they do not consider it to occur regularly. The main reason why the respondents do not want to share their

thoughts regarding their boycotts or buycotts on social media is that they do not want to talk about these sensitive topics in public;

I have not posted stuff on social media, I don't want to talk about things that are so complex, at least not in public. And people sometimes get the wrong impression and feel offended. - August

I don't usually share these kinds of things on social media, because it is such sensitive subjects. - Carl

To conclude, the findings suggest that the media highly influences the respondents' boycott decisions. Interestingly, the media does not play a vital role when the respondents decide to boycott or participate in either boycotts or buycotts.

5.1.2. The Influences of Word-of-Mouth

It is apparent that word-of-mouth from friends and family greatly impacts the respondents' boycott and buycott behavior. This is similar to what Wallace, Buil, and De Chernatony (2017) found: word-of-mouth impacts brand attitude. According to Ekström, Ottosson, and Parment (2017) and Shibutani (1955), an individual's reference group, as friends and family, can affect the individual's consumption patterns. Similarly, the respondents partly seem to make decisions to boycott and buycott brands and participate in these practices due to what their friends and family tell them about these brands.

An intriguing finding is that friends play a significant role when the respondents decide to boycott a brand. For instance, the respondents mentioned that their friends have tried to inform them about brands they dislike. Elliot's explanation showcase this;

For example my best friend, he is studying environmental studies, so he knows a lot of things that he often tells me about. - Elliot

Similarly, friends also seem to play a vital role in how the respondents get influenced in their boycott decisions. The findings suggest that friends are the primary driver deriving from the social environment, influencing the respondents' boycott decisions. For instance, some respondents stated that they had gotten tips about specific products and brands where friends told them the story behind them. Emil describes;

Actually, I have a vegan guy in my corridor, and he always gives me tips of good brands and products within that to try. He was actually the one who told me to try Frankful. - Emil

Charon (2007) explains that individuals consider others feelings and actions, which in turn help them determine and make sense of their own actions, which is reflected in Emil's statement. Deciding to start buying a brand regularly and supporting it due to friends' influence also appears to be the case for many other respondents. Accordingly, Aksan et al. (2009) and Blumer (1969) state that people create meaning to objects when interacting with others. In turn, people make sense of their surroundings differently, depending on how they interpret them (Aksan et al., 2009). This may also be the case for the respondents. The reason is that the way they perceive the information they get from friends, in turn, seems to affect their boycott and boycott decisions. With this in regard, it may be argued that the respondents' social interactions with friends are critical for their boycott and boycott decisions. The reason may be that friends' advice and conversations about brands result in the respondents considering their own consumption habits and actions. This is apparent in Ebba's answer;

My circle of friends. And my roommate try a lot of these products. So I have tried them and talked to her. - Ebba

An interesting finding is that the respondents' families do not seem to have as big of an impact as their friends in their boycott and buycott decisions. As earlier mentioned, Ekström, Ottosson, and Parment (2017) state that consumers can be influenced by their reference groups who share similar values. In turn, a consumer's reference group can affect their consumption patterns, especially regarding symbolic consumption (Ekström, Ottosson & Parment, 2017). Concerning this, friends might have a more significant influence on the respondents than their families since they may share more similar values with their friends.

Despite the respondents being influenced by word-of-mouth, the findings also indicate that social interaction plays a role when influencing others. Many of the respondents mentioned friends and family as people they want to influence when participating in boycotts and buycotts. All respondents, except one, participate in boycotts by talking to their friends and families about what they are boycotting and why;

I obviously spoke a lot to my friends, particularly about meat producing companies (...). And when Nestlé hit the fan, so to speak, me and my friends talked about it. I think that we had a common agreement that we shouldn't buy things from Nestlé, which I have also tried to say to my parents. - Anna

Moreover, most respondents also stated that they participated in buycotts by talking positively to friends and family about the brands. Some further mentioned that they serve the food and drink brands they buycott to their friends and family at dinners to show the benefits and value of the brands;

I buy it and try to spread the word in the corridor and talk about it with others. We cook a lot of dinners together in the corridor so then I have, for example, recommended that we try products or brands that I like. That is often

appreciated also actually. - Emil

The way the respondents interact with brands as symbols in their boycott participation aligns with Bosselman et al.'s (2012) statement that consumer goods work as symbolic interactions between individuals. Further, the consumer can communicate meaning to its references with this particular product (Bosselman et al., 2012). Following Bosselman's argument, in the respondent's social environment, the symbolic meaning seems to be more visible in the brands they boycott. Since the respondents participate by serving their boycotted brands to friends and family, it appears like they strive to highlight the symbolic meaning behind these brands. Consequently, this indicates that the respondents are highly involved in their boycott participation. Kinley, Josaim, and Locket (2010) explain that high involvement occurs when a product gives the consumer a sense of meaning. Carl's argument reflects the respondent's high involvement in their boycott participation and that brands they boycott work as symbols;

Buy it, share it with my friends, if someone likes it, then I talk a lot about the new things I find out if people are interested, but I do not force it upon someone, anymore. I did that a bit before and it did not work. - Carl

An additional interesting finding, which is also apparent in Carl's quote above, is that when some of the respondents participate in boycotts and buycotts, they do not want to push others too hard. The reason mainly lies in that the respondents do not want to be annoying and push others into doing something. This aligns with Blumer (1969), who argues that people consider how they appear and are interpreted by others, which is central in symbolic interactionism. Thus, this indicates that the respondents are concerned about how to participate in their boycotts and buycotts since they do not know how it will be received from their friends and family. Sofie's reasoning illustrates this;

Yeah, before I could mention that my parents, for example, should not buy Oatly and got mad at them about that and tried to push them into not buying

Nestlé. But today, I feel like there's no point really, they just got mad at me and thought I was annoying. So now I never mention it. - Sofie

In brief, it appears that friends affect both the respondents' boycott and buycott decisions in word-of-mouth. Moreover, the respondents participate in boycotts and buycotts by word-of-mouth by trying to influence friends and family. Thus, if the respondents buycott food and drink brands, it will create opportunities and advantages for the brand since the consumers will share those buycotts by word-of-mouth. This positive word-of-mouth will, in turn, likely benefit the brand.

5.1.3. Summary of Social Environment

To conclude, it is apparent that what drives the respondent's decision to boycott in the social environment is media and word-of-mouth. In their decision to buycott, the main driver in the social environment is word-of-mouth. Further, the findings suggest that word-of-mouth drives the respondents to participate in both boycotts and buycotts in the social environment. Moreover, the symbolic meaning seems to be visible in their participation in buycotts. This aligns with Oliver (2012), Belk (1988), and Blumer (1969), stating that the social environment influences consumer behavior. Thus, the findings suggest that the respondents' social interactions affect their boycott and buycott behavior in the social environment.

5.2. Personal Values

The empirical findings suggest that the respondent's personal values affect their boycott and buycott behavior. These personal values are environmental consciousness, ethics of animal- and human rights, and brand consistency of words and actions.

5.2.1. Environmental Consciousness

The respondents' main argument for why they boycott and buycott food and drink brands is due to environmental consciousness. The respondents express that they boycott brands that do not consider the environment while buycotting brands that do. In accordance with Isenhour (2010), Swedish consumers boycott and buycott intentions are partly to reduce their carbon footprint.

This is further followed by Lacy, Long, and Spindler (2020), stating that young consumers, to a great extent, expect companies to take a stand regarding the environment.

Moreover, Ebba argues that boycotting is the easiest way of trying to make a positive impact on the planet. Isenhour (2010) and Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti (2005) argue that concerns regarding the climate are common for Swedish consumers since they generally are environmentally conscious and feel a strong responsibility to act. This is further illustrated in Elin's and Carl's explanations of why they boycott and buycott food and drink brands;

Mostly because I care for the environment and because I feel like I want to take my own responsibility and punish brands that do wrong. - Elin

I choose to buycott several brands that are thinking about the future, the environment and are very aware. - Carl

Additionally, many respondents mention that they boycott big brands that do not seem to care about the environment. As a consequence of this boycott behavior, the respondents look to buycott brands that stand for the opposite, brands that care about the environment. This is brands such as Anammas and Frankful, which are small, local, or vegan brands since the respondents perceive these kinds of brands as more sustainable. For instance, the respondents consider local brands to have greener production chains and lower carbon emissions. According to August, the best way to shop sustainably is to shop from smaller and more local brands. August's argument co-relates to Lacy, Long, and Spindler's (2020) findings, that young consumers consider environmental aspects and increasingly choose smaller brands that are more purpose-driven. Similarly, Elin explain;

I know that with locally produced food, transportation is decreased and it is also better for the climate. And also that jobs are produced locally. - Elin

Thus, it may be argued that the respondents, to a large extent, are environmentally conscious and consider this in their boycotts and buycotts of food and drink brands. This aligns with Isenhour (2010), who states that young consumers' awareness of the environment, in turn, can affect their consumption practices and habits. Moreover, Hosany and Martin (2012), Elliot and Wattanasuwan (1998), and Belk (1988) state that consumers buy products due to what it symbolizes to them, which further seems to be the case for the respondents. Thus, it appears that the respondents boycott brands that do not symbolize environmental consciousness and, as a consequence, buycott brands that do. Moreover, Aaker (1997) states that a consumer's self-esteem increases when using a brand with symbolic meaning. However, this is not apparent in the findings.

To sum, the findings show that the respondent's values of environmental consciousness affect their boycott and buycott behavior to a large extent. It appears that their care for the environment plays a role in their decision to boycott and buycott brands and the way they participate in these practices. Following Ekström, Ottosson, and Parment (2017), this may be because a brand's values align or misalign with the consumer's values, which leads to different degrees of brand identification.

5.2.2. Ethics of Animal- and Human Rights

From the empirical findings, the role of ethics' appeared as a strong determinant in the respondents' boycott and buycott behavior of food and drinks brands. Within ethics, it became apparent that the respondents value animal rights and human rights. This aligns with Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti (2005), who express that Swedish consumers tend to consider ethical aspects when purchasing groceries and household goods. The reasons for why the respondents consider animal rights when boycotting and buycotting brands is mainly due to slaughter and treatment of animals;

I don't want to kill animals. And I feel like those brands have the same view as me. So the reasons why I buycott these brands would be that I feel like they resonate with my way of reasoning in the world, what is good at what is bad.

- Anna

Valuing animal rights in purchases, as Anna, can depend on one's self-concept and its congruence with the brand personality, according to Aaker (1999) and Sirgy (1982). Further, since many respondents value animal rights, they boycott several brands that produce animal products. Consequently, they boycott vegan food and drink brands that do not harm animals or the climate. Phillips (2009), Belk (1988), and Dichter (1985) explain that consumers often buy products based on the symbolic meaning attached to them. With this in regard, it can be argued that vegan brands symbolize something positive for the respondents, making them want to support these brands;

I buy a lot from Hälsans Kök (...). They have great vegetarian and vegan stuff. (...). I don't think that I need to think as much when I buy it because they usually have a good approach to animals and general treatment of human beings. - Elin

In addition, the respondents seem to consider different aspects regarding human rights in their boycott and buycott behavior of food and drink brands. The most common aspects mentioned are working conditions, child labor, poverty, and LGBTQ rights. Interestingly, around half of the respondents mentioned that they decided to boycott the Nestlé brand and participate in this boycott due to human rights. According to Anna, the reason is that they capitalize on poverty, which is something she does not want to support. Ebba and Oskar boycott the brand because they do not care about fundamental human rights, such as clean drinking water. Elliot is further boycotting Nestlé because;

They are making life for a lot of small farmers very difficult because they are taking over so much. They have also been known for child labor, not really

regulating their supply chain and not really caring about it that much, even not when they have been called out. - Elliot

A reason for the respondents' negative feelings towards Nestlé may be a result of symbolic incongruence between their personalities in relation to the brand, according to Zarantonello et al. (2018) and Hegner et al. (2017). The authors further state that as a consequence of this incongruence, the consumer will not identify with the brand (Zarantonello et al., 2018; Hegner et al., 2017). Thus, it may be stated that the respondents' negative feelings towards Nestlé result in low brand identification.

Furthermore, some respondents mentioning human rights as crucial in their boycotts stated that those issues are important because they care for people being treated equally. For instance, Sara explained that she boycotts Ben & Jerry's since they stand up for the LGBTQ community and Tony's Chocolate because they give good wages to their employees. In Sung and Huddleston's (2017) and Chon's (1992) view, consumers usually choose brands they can identify with, which symbolizes aspects related to the consumer's personality. This may explain why Sara boycotts these brands: it seems like the brand identification is high when the brand considers human rights. This also appears to be the case for many other respondents. With this in regards, it is apparent that the respondents, by valuing ethics, are highly involved in their boycotts and boycotts within this area. This aligns with Ekström, Ottosson, and Parment (2017), arguing that a consumer's ethics directly connects to the level of involvement in the purchase.

To conclude, it is apparent that the respondent's ethical values of animal- and human rights greatly impact their boycott and boycott decisions of food and drink brands. Additionally, animal- and human rights ethics also seem to play a determinant role in the way the respondents participate in these practices. This is in accordance with Sung and Huddleston (2017) and Chon (1992), stating that consumers prefer to purchase brands they can identify with, with personal attributes that align with their own personality.

5.2.3. Brand Consistency of Words and Actions

Brand consistency of words and actions appear to be vital in the respondent's boycott and buycott behavior. It seems that a crucial factor within the respondent's boycotts, is that they perceive brands as dishonest or obscure in the way they operate. For instance, these brands state that they are doing something when this does not fully appear to be the case.

Inconsistency of words and actions is apparent in the case of Oatly. Many respondents state that they boycott or have boycotted the brand since they collaborate with Blackstone, going against Oatly's primary focus to care about the environment. In other words, according to the respondents, Oatly is not consistent with their promises and actions of a sustainable world.

I boycott Oatly for saying one thing and doing another. - Elin

However, today, there are divided opinions regarding Oatly. Some respondents, such as Elin, boycott them. Others have boycotted the brand but are now supporting them again, while some have always buycotted Oatly. The respondents who have started repurchasing Oatly and thus decided to buycott the brand again explain that the main reason is that they perceive Oatly as the most consistent brand option of oat milk on the market. This also seems to be the case for the respondents who have always participated in the buycott of Oatly. These respondents believe that Oatly is consistent by having a business idea of only selling vegan products, which resonates with themselves. This indicates that the respondents' relation to Oatly supports the fact that brand identification affects the respondent's boycott and buycott behavior. Carl and Ebba elaborates on this;

Yes, I have always buycotted them, but then for a while I boycotted them with the whole Blackstone thing. But now, I have come to terms with that this is the best brand out there. All other brands still produce animal products, so I rather support Oatly's idea with oat milk. - Carl

I still purchase Oatly, it feels like they are the best of a bad bunch. - Ebba

Additionally, Carl brings up that he boycotts brands that want to adapt to the trend to do vegan and sustainable products but still sell meat since he believes this makes the brand obscure in the way they operate. Elin further explains that she partly boycotts Arla because of their inconsistency of words and actions;

It is mostly with their marketing, they are green washing a lot. It is so fake. They say they have zero carbon print and throw trash at the plant based industry, they are making their industry look better than it really is. - Elin

Elin's argument for boycotting Arla may have to do with her trust in the brand, as Cissé-Depardon and N'Goala (2009) state that a brand message's credibility affects boycotts. Moreover, a reason for why the respondents do not want to support these types of brands can be because their inconsistent behaviors and opinions result in disagreement and tension with themselves, following Malär et al. (2011). Besides, it appears that the respondents decide to boycott and participate in boycotts with brands that keep their promises and are consistent in their words and actions. Many mention that transparency is crucial for brands they boycott. They argue that this makes it easy to confirm that the brand really is doing what they say they are doing. Further, a few respondents elaborated on this, expressing that they like the idea of having insight into the way the brands operate. This makes them perceive the brand as more trustworthy since it is easier to keep track of their working conditions and production than bigger global brands. Elin and Sofie's statements illustrate this;

Also, when you know where the food is from and how it is done, that is nice. (...). Like, then you can almost go look at where it is produced, and I like that. - Elin

I follow them on Instagram and there you can see the whole production, and it feels genuine. - Sofie

This way of seeking transparency of brands can be viewed by Schallehn, Burman, and Riley's (2014) statements, that when brands identity align with consumers' values and promises, they usually perceive the brand as transparent. Thus, it is unclear whether the boycotted brands, in fact, are transparent or if the respondents only perceive them this way because their values align with the brand. According to many respondents, brands can be consistent with their actions by only producing products related to the respondent's values. This is because the respondents then can support the whole brand and not just the product they purchase. Ebba and Josefine express the reasoning behind this;

I would definitely buy from a brand that only produces vegan and vegetarian since it is more authentic. For example, I would not buy the vegetarian version of Karins lasagne. You can find the same products but from a better brand than Dafgård. - Ebba

I don't eat meat. So for example when I buy vegetarian meatballs I don't want to buy Felix because I know that they are in the meat industry. Also Arla, they are in the dairy. I never buy their products. - Josefine

Ebba's and Josefine's arguments for boycotting Arla, Dafgård, and Felix imply that they boycott brands that are not consistent with their range of products.

In brief, the findings show that the respondents value brands that are consistent with their actions, which in turn affect their decision to boycott and buycott brands. This aligns with Ekström, Ottosson, and Parment (2017), arguing that if a brand's values align with the consumer's values, this leads to brand identification. Further, brand consistency of words and

actions also seem to be determinant for the respondents' participation in boycott and buycott of food and drink brands.

5.2.4. Summary of Personal Values

To conclude, it is apparent that the respondent's values affect both their boycott and buycott decision and their participation in these practices. Further, the respondents are not boycotting and buycotting due to the brand's functional and utilitarian attributes, but rather for the brand's symbolic and value-based attributes. The findings suggest that it is crucial for the respondents that their values correlate with the brand's values. If they do not correlate, this can lead to a boycott of the brand. Contrary, if the respondent's values correlate with the brand, this can result in a buycott. The respondent's reasoning around this may potentially have to do with what Sirgy (1982) states: consumers react more positively to brands if they match their self-concept. This indicates that the respondent's self-concept mainly consists of valuing the environment, ethics, and brand consistency of words and actions. This is in accordance with Ekström, Ottosson, and Parment (2017), Sung and Huddleston (2017), and Chon (1992), stating that if a brand's personality and values align with the consumer's values, this leads to brand identification. In addition, the respondents seem to be highly involved when they boycott and buycott brands since they put much effort in evaluating the products in how well they match their identity and values. This resonates with Ekström, Ottosson, and Parment (2017), stating that the level of involvement depends on how well the consumer identifies with the brand's product and how well it correlates with the consumer's values and life goals.

5.3. A Bigger Purpose

The empirical findings suggest that the respondents have a bigger purpose with their boycotting and buycotting of food and drink brands. The reason is that they believe that their boycotts and buycotts can have a long-term effect both on the brand and on the world as a whole. This leads the respondents to have long-term thinking with their actions as they believe in the individual's capability to influence and take responsibility.

5.3.1. Long-term Thinking

The findings suggest that the respondents believe that brands cannot repair their damage. Damage can only be repaired when the alternatives are considered worse. Many respondents stated that they generally do not forgive brands they once have boycotted and still do not purchase from those brands. The reason is that they believe that the damage is already done for these brands. Instead, they think there are many other alternatives to purchase from in the market;

When a brand fails it is very hard for them to get back again, since you can easily switch to another brand instead. At least I am privileged and can do this. (...). I feel like companies usually can't make up for who they are or what they have done. - Anna

The respondent's reasoning implies that they do not trust the brands and that there are many options to choose from within this market. That the respondents seem to boycott brands they do not trust, goes against Cissé-Depardon and N'Goalas's (2009) statement that trust does not affect consumers' decision to boycott a brand. This leads it to be unnecessary to spend time evaluating brands they have already boycotted. Further, all respondents who boycott Arla or Nestlé agree that they will never forgive them as the brands are not trustworthy;

I will definitely never forgive Arla either, because of their whole industry with animals. As long as they do that, no. And that is also their only income so I don't think they will change. - Sofie

Especially not Nestlé because it is so big and I have a hard time seeing that they are going to make all changes necessary, to be green and do the changes in their value chain. So that will probably be a forever boycott. - Oskar

Yet, many respondents mentioned that Nestlé is tricky to boycott due to the brand owning many brands. In other words, it is hard for the respondents to keep track of which brands they should boycott;

But it is very difficult because there are so many brands underneath Nestlé that you don't know about, and they are constantly changing and constantly adding new brands. But I am now and then looking up which brands belong to Nestlé. - Elliot

This indicates that the respondents are highly involved when boycotting brands. The reason is that after the respondent's boycott decision, they put effort into actively taking a stand against their products. The respondents' high involvement in boycotts is especially apparent among corporate brands, such as Nestlé, since the respondents actively need to keep track of those brands and look up information about them. This further implies that the respondents are highly involved when boycotting brands as they are not coherent with their values. This reasoning goes against many marketing scholars, such as Ekström, Ottosson, and Parment (2017), arguing that consumers are only highly involved when their values align with the brand's values. Furthermore, many respondents argue that they do not consider forgiving brands they once have boycotted, partly since there are so many other brand options in the market to purchase from instead;

I don't see the purpose of buying from them when I can just buy from another brand instead. - Josefine

The respondent's reasoning indicates that many brand options on the market can enhance boycotting. On another note, all respondents who boycott Oatly mention that they would forgive them if they go back to the brand they were before and stop collaborating with Blackstone. The reason lies in that the respondents believe that Oatly, at its core, has values coherent with their own.

Additionally, all respondents argued for still having a positive idea about the brands they once have boycotted. To a large extent, they still boycott the mentioned brands by sharing them with friends and consume them regularly. This implies that they are highly involved in their boycotts, which aligns with Ekström, Ottosson, and Parment (2017), who state that a product aligning with the consumer's values will lead to a higher level of involvement. Moreover, that the respondents still seem to boycott brands they once have boycotted is in accordance with Oliver (2012). The author argues that actions usually become coherent over time when individuals have shared meaning and values. This may be the case for the respondents because, as mentioned earlier, it appears that they share similar values as their friends. Further, this also aligns with Quintelier (2014), who argue that young consumers who have purchased sustainable products on several occasions are likely to develop this into a long-term habit. Yet, a majority of the respondent's state that what they boycott today possibly could change in the future if the brand does something that does not resonate with the respondents;

I think that if I boycott something right now, it can change later. If they do something bad, the world should know. - August

I love them. They make me happy and, you know, they do something good and then I do something good by supporting them. I have not seen that they have been doing something bad or been involved in scandals either. So, as long as they are not, and keep supporting women, I will buy from them. - Sara

August's and Sara's reasoning strengthens the argument that the respondents are highly involved in their boycotts, since they continuously evaluate the brands. This relates to Ekström, Ottosson, and Parment (2017) stating that an involved customer is intrigued to compare a product's positive and negative aspects and its relevance.

Moreover, the general idea of the respondent's boycotts is that it makes them feel proud and responsible because they are doing something good for the world. This implies that they believe in the individual's ability to influence. The respondents' reasoning around this aligns with Isenhour (2010) and Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti (2005), stating that Swedish consumers feel

an individual responsibility to act, affecting their consumption practices. Furthermore, Oskar believes that his boycotts can lead to something even bigger;

What I go and buy everyday will not have a huge impact. But if there are a lot of me, then we can have an impact on the industry and that is what I feel is cool: what an impact people can have together. - Oskar

To sum, it may be argued that the respondents have long-term thinking regarding their boycotts and buycotts where they make decisions and participate in ways that also can have effects in the long run. Further, it appears that the respondents are highly involved in their boycotts and buycotts of brands.

6. Conclusion

In the final chapter of this thesis, the researchers will summarize the findings deriving from the analysis and discussion. Further, the researchers will discuss the theoretical and managerial contributions. Finally, an outline of the study's limitations will be presented, followed by suggestions for potential and interesting future research.

6.1. Aim of Study and Main Findings

This study aimed to discover young Swedish consumer's boycott and buycott behavior of food and drink brands by understanding their decisions and participation in these practices. The researchers found it intriguing to study this topic since they found young Swedish consumers' behavior in relation to food and drink brands interesting and that there was a lack of research within this field.

The study's findings suggest that several drivers influence this study's respondent's boycott and buycott decisions within the social environment. The main drivers for their boycott decisions in this context are the media, mainly social media, and also social interactions with friends through word-of-mouth. Moreover, their social interactions with friends through word-of-mouth are the primary driver deriving from the social environment in their buycott decisions. By their social interactions with friends, they create meanings to brands through word-of-mouth, resulting in a boycott or buycott. This indicates that social interactions and brand symbolism influence their boycott and buycott behavior. The findings further indicate that what drives the respondents in the social environment, regarding their boycott and buycott participation, are similar. The respondents are driven by word-of-mouth when participating in boycotts and buycotts by influencing friends and family. Further, brand symbolism plays a role when the respondents try to influence others with their buycotts.

Additionally, the findings suggest that their values drive the respondent's decision and participation in boycotts and buycotts of food and drink brands. Primarily, it appears that environmental aspects are highly valuable in their boycott and buycott behavior. Further, the findings suggest that the study's respondents boycott and buycott brands due to valuing ethics as

human rights and animal rights and brand consistency of words and actions. It further implies that a value match between the respondents and the brand results in a boycott whereas the opposite results in a buycott. Bigger brands or corporations tend to be boycotted due to misaligning with the participants' values. On the other hand, vegan, small, and local brands tend to be buycotted as they align with the participants' values. Moreover, the findings suggest that in the case of environmental consciousness and animal rights, the boycott of a brand is primarily a result of boycotting another brand. This indicates that brand identification is vital for boycotts and buycotts.

Moreover, the findings indicate that the respondents have a bigger purpose with their boycotts and buycotts, leading them to be driven by long-term thinking. The findings suggest that boycotted brands cannot repair their damage, as there exist many alternatives and trust is broken. With many alternatives on the market, boycotts are enhanced as the switching cost is low. Thus, the damage can be repaired when no other alternatives exist or if the brand's core values still align with the consumer's values. In this context, aligning core values may even result in a buycott. The findings further suggest that the participants are driven by the individual's responsibility to act and thus buycott brands to drive change. This indicates that the respondents are more driven by long-term thinking in the way they participate in boycotts and buycotts, as they believe their participation can contribute to change. The study further suggests that the respondents of this study are highly involved in their boycott- and buycott behavior of food and drink brands, even if the industry is generally characterized by low involvement

The researchers discovered that the study's findings align with the framework, as the concepts of social interaction, brand symbolism, and brand identification influence boycott and buycott behavior. In relation to the theoretical framework, the researchers have discovered that brand consistency of words and actions also plays a key role in boycott and buycott behavior of food and drink brands for the study's respondents

6.2. Theoretical and Managerial Contribution

In terms of academia, this research study contributed to the field of consumer behavior theory. Past literature suggests that young consumers and Swedish consumers are highly conscious of

their consumption practices (e.g., Lacy, Long & Spindler, 2020; Isenhour, 2010), while there is a lack of research regarding this. The researchers contributed with valuable insights within the sample of young Swedish consumers' consumption behavior. In addition, this study contributes to new insight within the FMCG industry by investigating brands in relation to consumer behavior. This study has further contributed to insightful findings of boycotts and buycotts of food and drink brands. Thus, this will be valuable for academics within consumer behavior to better understand why young Swedish consumers, born between 1996 and 2000, engage in boycott and buycott practices of food and drink brands. Further, the study's findings will also be of value for academics for future studies regarding the involvement young Swedish consumers attach to FMCG brands.

Despite this study taking a consumer behavior perspective, this research has also contributed to valuable insights for brands and brand managers. First and foremost, managers will benefit from this research by better knowing what drives young Swedish consumers to boycott and buycott brands. This is relevant since previous literature indicates that young consumers are highly conscious of social issues which affect their consumption behavior (Lacy, Long & Spindler, 2020; Nonomura, 2017). Further, Swedish consumers are particularly engaged in the environment and believe in individual responsibility (Isenhour, 2010 & Stolle, Hooghe; Micheletti, 2005). Additionally, managers will benefit from this research by better understanding what makes this sample group highly involved in food and drink brands. This is relevant considering previous research has stated that this sample group is highly aware of their food and drink consumption (Stylianou, Guibourg & Briggs, 2019; Svensk Handel, 2018), while research in this field is limited.

Hence, this study will help managers better reach young Swedish consumers by improving their branding and business approach. This study will also present new challenges food and drink brands need to encounter. Therefore, it could be valuable for practitioners to be aware and pay attention to these challenges in order to stay relevant in the market. Consequently, this can form better relationships with young Swedish consumers, which can potentially help them stay socially and culturally relevant, resulting in potential buycotts. Furthermore, this will also provide valuable tools for FMCG brands to prevent being boycotted, thus preventing them from

losing the young Swedish consumer group. Especially, brands within the FMCG industry will benefit from this research since they will get valuable insights into what makes young Swedish consumers highly involved in FMCG brands.

Moreover, this research study can help food and drink brands be successful and form significant advantages, as the study's insights help them understand that young Swedish consumers value business ideas that correlate with their own values. This research is most valuable for local food and drink brands or food and drink brands that recently entered or are planning to enter this market. The reason is that those brands can adapt or meet young Swedish consumers' demands and values at their core.

6.3. Limitations and Future Research

Despite contributing to insightful findings for both academics and practitioners, this study also has limitations that need to be addressed. This study has focused on boycotts and buycotts of food and drink brands, a relatively niche industry on the market. For further research within this research phenomenon, it would therefore be interesting to investigate how consumers behave with boycotts and buycotts of brands within another industry.

Additionally, as this research study is conducted on Swedish consumers and solely considers this context, it could be argued that demographics and cultural aspects could vary if studying another population. Thus, it would further be relevant to explore another consumer group. The researchers also believe that it would be interesting to study the boycott and buycott phenomena from a corporate perspective to see how those practices affect companies' performance. This could potentially result in other intriguing findings and thus contribute to further managerial insights.

The emergence of boycotts and buycotts of brands resulting from increasing demands from consumers results in marketing and branding facing new challenges. This has put more extensive pressure on brands to consider upcoming demands from today's consumers. Nevertheless, academic research regarding those topics is still limited since this is a relatively new phenomenon for marketers to adapt to. With this in regards, the researchers stress the importance

and relevance of more academic research within boycotts and buycotts in relation to young Swedish consumers since there is a lack of literature regarding this.

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8. Appendix

8.1. Interview Topic Guide

- Before we start, do you have any questions?
- What year are you born?
- What is your occupation?
- What is your educational level?

*The interviewer ask the respondent about their experiences in boycotts

- Please tell me about food and drink brands you have boycotted
- What are the reasons why you boycott those brands?
- What were your boycotts of these brands influenced by?
- How did you engage in your boycotts?
- What is your idea about those brands today?
- Do you think you boycott food and drink brands more, less or the same as brands in other industries?

*The interviewer ask the respondent about their experiences in buycotts

- Please tell me about food and drink brands you have buycotted
- What are the reasons why you buycott those brands?
- What were your buycotts of these brands influenced by?
- How did you engage in your buycotts?
- What is your idea about those brands today?
- Do you think you buycott food and drink brands more, less or the same as brands in other industries?

*The interviewer asks questions regarding both boycott and buycotts and their relation to each other)

- Do you think that you engage in boycotts and buycotts for similar reasons?

- Do some of them occur as often?
- Do you have any other thoughts that you want to share?

8.2. Information About the Respondents

Name	Year of Birth	City	Educational level	Occupation	Date of interview	Duration of interview
Anna	1996	Stockholm	Enrolled in a master program	University Studies	28-04-2021	29 minutes
August	1996	Göteborg	Bachelor degree	Working	27-04-2021	39 minutes
Carl	2000	Malmö	High school	Working	28-04-2021	38 minutes
Ebba	1996	Stockholm	High school	Working	29-04-2021	22 minutes
Elin	1998	Göteborg	Enrolled in a bachelor program	University Studies	27-04-2021	33 minutes
Elliot	1999	Halmstad	High school	Working	29-04-2021	28 minutes
Emil	1998	Göteborg	Enrolled in a bachelor program	University Studies	28-04-2021	25 minutes
Josefine	1999	Kalmar	Enrolled in a bachelor program	University Studies	04-05-2021	32 minutes
Oskar	1996	Lund	Master degree	Working	02-05-2021	45 minutes
Sara	1997	Stockholm	Enrolled in a bachelor program	University Studies	03-05-2021	33 minutes
Sofie	1998	Göteborg	High school	Working	28-04-2021	26 minutes

Figure 2: Information about the respondents and the interviews

8.3. Consent Forms

8.3.1. Consent Form 1

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick the appropriate box):

1.	I understand the information about the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	If applicable, separate terms of consent for interviews, audio, video or other forms of data collection have been explained and provided to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Select only one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● I would like my name used and understand what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised.● I do not want my name used in this project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Participant:

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher:

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

8.3.2. Consent Form 2

Interview Consent Form.

I have been given information about the study: *How did the simple leather wallet end up as an activist tool for change? A qualitative study of young Swedish consumers boycott and buycott behavior of food and drink brands* and discussed the research project with *Jenny Sandström and Veronica Ågren* who are conducting this research as a part of a Master's in *International Marketing & Brand Management* supervised by *Ekaterini Drosou*.

I understand that, if I consent to participate in this project I will be asked to give the researcher a duration of approximately *45 minutes* of my time to participate in the process.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, I am free to refuse to participate and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time.

By signing below I am indicating my consent to participate in the research as it has been described to me. I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for thesis and journal publications, and I consent for it to be used in that manner.

Name:

Email:

Signed: