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Life Events and Sustainable Consumption:

How does parenthood impact the consumption of sustainable products?

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ABSTRACT

In today's society, the concern for the environment is increasing and consumption is one of the biggest distresses. At the same time there is a possibility to catch consumers in life changing events, where there exist a chance of changing consuming habits and behaviour, which may include more sustainable choices. Hence, the aim of this paper is to increase the understanding of how the negotiations in everyday life regarding sustainable consumption are affected by the priorities of having children. The findings denote that individuals tend to think more about the environment when becoming a parent. This study investigates the life-changing event of parenthood and sustainable consumption behaviour. It contributes with insights how companies and organisations can reach customers in moments in life and make them consume more sustainable.

Keywords: sustainability • parenthood • consumption • consumption behaviour • life events • environment

INTRODUCTION

In research about sustainability, consumption is one of the major issues. Our everyday consumption is in need of a change in order to be greener (Brand, 2010). As much as one fourth of the human's impact on the environment derives from food. About 14 % of the green house gas emissions have its origin from the world's total meat production, which is as much as all the emissions from the transport sector (Engström, 2014). This means that the Earth we live on now is not enough to satisfy our consumption habits, but we would actually need more planets to have enough resources (WWF, 2017). In addition to the food industry, textiles are also one of the biggest industries guilty of playing a role in the climate discussion. In Sweden, the consumption of textiles has doubled in the last 30 years and almost all of our clothes are produced in developing countries and under unsustainable conditions.

During the production of clothes thousands of litres of water, pesticides, and chemicals are used and loads of carbon dioxide is released (Naturskyddsforeningen, 2014). The production of a single pair of jeans requires about 11 000 litre of water (Naturvårdsverket, 2010) and in the UK, the clothing related carbon dioxide released is equal to a family driving 10 000 kilometres by car (Wrap, 2012). Hence, it becomes more important to think about what clothes we are buying and what affects it has on the environment (Sveriges konsumenter, 2017).

There exist several different theories on why people consume as they do and if there are any sustainable consumption interventions to change these deep-rooted unsustainable consumption patterns (Brand, 2010). Several factors influence how decisions and actions towards sustainability are made, such as habits and social background (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002).

These habits are usually already a part of daily life routines and are becoming a part of people's identities and norms (Steg, Van Den Berg, De Groot, J.M, 2012). Hence, the reflection of consuming more sustainable may be left on the side. However, one way to shed new light on this issue may be to address people who are in life changing stages (Shäfer, Jaeger-Erben, Bamberg, 2011). To become a parent is such a life-changing event. Having responsibility of another human that yet does not have the ability to decide over its own life, the parent functions as the guide of life choices. It can make people start thinking over their own lives and habits, one of them being how sustainable choices may affect the future of their child. This responsibility over another person's life means having a responsibility to make your child to be as good of a human it can be, but it can bring anxiety too. The earth is supposed to be as well preserved as possible for future generations. Therefore, new arising emotions such as guilt or pride may increase the willingness to think more about sustainability after becoming parent.

Previous studies have investigated the correlation between parenthood and selected environmental issues. However, there is a lack of in-depth studies of parenthood and sustainable consumption from a qualitative perspective. Hence, this paper aims to increase the understanding of how the negotiations in everyday life regarding sustainable consumption are affected by the priorities of having children. The purpose of the study is to investigate if parents tend to think more about buying sustainable consumption than before they got children.

From this background, the following research questions are formed:

How does a life event such as parenthood affect the meaning and practices of sustainable consumption?

How does sustainable practises travel across product categories?

The first research question aims to see how becoming a parent can have an impact on sustainable consumption choices and if this life event tends to make buying habits more sustainable. This changed behaviour may have started with one product category; hence the second research question is formulated to see how possible changed consumer behaviour can act as a starting point to think about sustainability in other product categories as well. The first research question is the primary question of this study, while the second is a sub-question focusing on how sustainable practices evolve. The research questions will be answered throughout the paper, where the findings are brought together in the analysis section. In practice, companies and organisations can use the results in order to develop successful marketing strategies to reach these consumers that are in life changing events, hence make them choose more sustainable products.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter daily life routines and life events, pro-environmental behaviour, guilt and pride, online communities and common identity will be discussed. Most of the referred theories derive from a research tradition built on *objectivism*, which implies that the social reality is independent from people and their actions (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Hence, social occurrences are assumed to approach us as external actualities that are out of our reach or impact (Bryman & Bell, 2013). As a complement, this study contributes with an in-depth analysis from a *constructionism* perspective – how consumers experience, make sense of and cope with the ideals and practices of sustainable consumption and parenthood.

The theories have worked as a point of reference, providing themes and ideas in need of further in-depth investigation and analyses. Thus, the study follows the general approach of studies in qualitative psychology; where qualitative methods are used to analyse how it is to experience psychological phenomena and how they affect individuals (Brinkmann, 2014).

Daily Life Routines and Life Events

Almost all people have their own habits and daily life routines that are going on repeat almost automatically. Since these routines and habits are essential parts of the everyday life, they can make it difficult to change unsustainable consumption patterns. In spite of this knowledge, life events can be used to change consumption patterns (Shäfer *et al.*, 2011).

To become a parent is a sensitive biographical period in life and may create new consumption behaviours that are in line with the new role as a parent, but also the willingness to gain more information about health and sustainability, before and after the baby is born (Tischner & Eivind, 2010). Especially mothers are more open towards health and sustainability information during this period in life (Shäfer *et al.*, 2011). However, it can be a challenge to make consumers change a fundamental behaviour or habit, because they are usually deep rooted in their behaviours (Steg *et al.*, 2012). Daily life routines create automatic behaviours, which have been developed through repeated actions (Shäfer, *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, Kollmuss & Agyeman (2002) argue that *pro-environmental behaviours* (PEB) need to be part of these repeated actions. Habits create comfort and convenience and are thus important in order to make a practice of it and hence establish the new behaviour. In other words, the new behaviour needs to become a habit and not just something that we are willing to change (Kollmuss & Agyeman,

2002). This frequent behaviour is performed with little consciousness, awareness and intent, it is hard to regulate, hence it can lead to a habit that is either considered bad or good behaviour (Maio *et al.*, 2007). As mentioned above, habits are deep rooted in people's life and can therefore make people less enthused to take in new information, especially information that is not in line with their habits (Webb & Sheeran, 2006). However, a habit can be used as a reason to try to change. Steg *et al.* (2012) write that a change in people's life such as a new job, retirement or parenthood can have a strong effect on an individual's everyday life and behaviour and be used as a window of opportunity to reduce habit strength (Steg *et al.*, 2012). This "window of opportunity" can then be used to change consumption behaviours to a more sustainable pattern, such as food consumption.

Shäfer *et al.* (2011) describes a change towards a more sustainable consumption for people who are experiencing a life event, in contrast to people who feel steady at the moment in their life. The consumption patterns before the life event, however, play a significant role in how much effect the life event will have. Changes in consumption after the life event also depends on knowledge, preparations and planning for the upcoming event. When people became parents, mass media, books, and social networks usually reach them even before the baby arrives and for example a change in the nutrition area could be seen. Parents expressed that it became important for them to reduce unhealthy habits, since they now had gained new social roles as parents that are responsible for another person as well (Shäfer *et al.*, 2011). The healthy changes were connected with eating more organic and sustainable food in order to realise the expectancy of being "good" (Tischner & Eivind, 2010). According to Schäfer *et al.*, (2011), a life event can make a change towards more sustainable consumption more "naturally" such as buying more sustainable food products.

Pro-Environmental Behaviour

Pro-environmental behaviour (PEB) includes many different factors and is complex, hence it cannot be explained by solely one framework. In short it can be described as when one intentionally want to diminish the negative effect of one's actions on the nature and the world we are living in, which for example can be done by reducing energy consumption or the use of toxic substances (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Since there exist a huge change in the global environment, it becomes more important to encourage pro-environmental behaviour PEB (Turaga, Howarth and Borsuk, 2010). Even though there exist many different models and frameworks that are trying to explain this phenomenon, there exist no definitive answers. Yet, it is possible to still find commonalities between these different views on PEB (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). There exist little research about parenthood as a life event and it's correlation with pro-environmental behaviour. However, since PEB involves many factors, some parallels can still be seen between becoming a parent and acting more in favour of the nature (Tischner & Eivind, 2010).

Kollmuss & Agyeman (2002) have done a thorough literature review about PEB and have described different views on this term. In their study they describe the *US linear progression models*: altruism, empathy and *pro-social behaviour models* and *sociological models*. After their review of different models and frameworks of PEB, Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) have identified similar factors between these frameworks that have an influence of PEB. The identified factors are divided into *demographic*, *external* and *internal* with subcategories (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Since PEB is such a wide ranged set of concepts and can be seen as closely connected with other theories, only a few of the different factors discussed are chosen in this study.

The chosen factors are more concentrated on the internal factors (motivation, values, environmental knowledge, attitudes, emotions, responsibilities and priorities) because it is interesting to see the underlying reasons why people are driven towards PEB and they are intertwined in the other theories discussed. Among the external factors, economy to some extent is also seen as relevant for this study since it is related to the internal factors. (See picture 1). These factors are described below.

External factors include institutional, economic, social, and cultural factors, but in this study the focus lies on the economic factor. However, the other external dimensions such as social and cultural factors will also be discussed in the analysis, since they are intertwined with other analysed factors. The economic factor has a strong effect on how people chose to act and behave. This factor however is quite complex, since it is linked with other factors such as social, infrastructural and psychological factors, which means that the economic factor cannot solely explain the whole picture of a pro-environmental behaviour. Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) argue that the previous view that people act in an economically reasonable way is not always correct. However, they agree that people can still be influenced by economic motivations to act in the environments favour (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). A PEB is more probable to be enfolded if the cost is relative small related to the act. These economic motivations can be explained in economic models of PEB such as *homo economicus* and *warm glow*. The phenomena *homo economicus* explains that when it comes to economy, people tend to engage in activities where they have something to gain from it. One example is to only save plastic bottles and recycle them, since one get money in return for recycling it. Hence the PEB is only driven by egoistic motivations (Turuga *et al.*, 2010).

Yet, many people still seems to want to contribute to the better good by making voluntary contributions such as charity. When contributing to the public good some individuals gain something called warm glow, which can come in feelings of prestige or pride. Hence, it still can be seen as an egoistic act, because they are only contributing to the better in return of private benefits such as pride (Turuga *et al.*, 2010).

The first **internal factor**, motivation, acts as a cause for behaviour and can explain what is causing that behaviour, which can be either conscious or unconscious. There exist two motives, primary and selective ones. Primary motives influence a lot of different behaviours and selective motives affect only a specific behaviour. Sometimes selective motives can win over primary motives and cause a barrier to PEB, for example one can chose to drive to work rather than walking, since taking the car goes faster and is more comfortable. In addition, the second internal factor, values often have an effect on motivation. Values can be shaped either by our microsystem, (i.e. family and closest friends) which is the one with most influence, ranging to our exosystem (i.e. media, school, workplace and political organisations) and lastly our macrosystem (cultural surroundings) (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Turuga *et al.*, (2010) discusses that PEB based on values also can be divided into either being altruistic values towards other human beings, egoistic values, altruistic values towards other nonhuman species, where those who care for others tend to act according to PEB, while those who are more egoistic tend not to.

Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) write in their review of different frameworks that the link between knowledge and attitudes are weak and not as strong related as previously stated in the model of responsible environmental behaviour. The third internal factor, environmental knowledge, is a qualification that affects the environmental attitude; hence this relation

between knowledge and behaviour should not be acknowledged since it is diluted by not only environmental attitude, but also by ecological behaviour intention. However, sometimes an adequate relationship between the two can be found, and this can be explained by that if one has knowledge about what and how one can do something for the environment rather than only factual knowledge about the environment associated with ecological behaviour it can increase PEB (Kaiser, Woelfing, Fuhrer, 1999).

The fourth internal factor *environmental attitudes* have also been found to have an affect on PEB with varying levels of effect. Hence if the environmental attitude is low from a person who thinks the environment is important, it can be seen as contradictory if presumed that people live in line with their personal values (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Kaiser *et al.* 1999 argues that the relation between attitudes and PEB usually is quite restrained. However, studies have shown that low-cost PEB and environmental attitude are closely correlated. This means that even though people engage in low-cost acts such as recycling does not have to mean that they are also engaging in more costly and less convenient pro-environmental acts (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Toruga *et al.*, 2010).

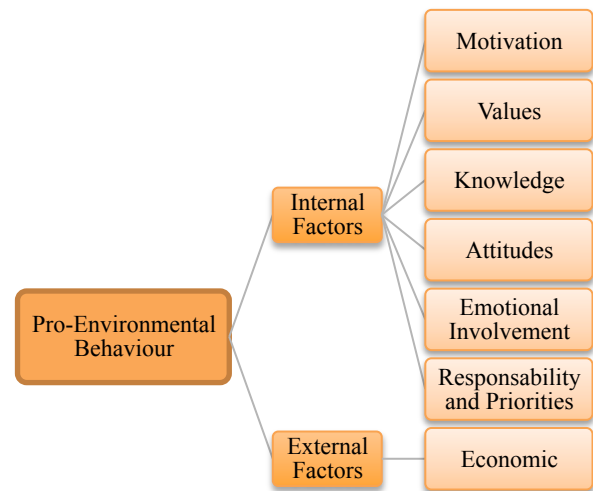
In addition to attitudes the fifth internal factor *emotional involvement* also plays a role in PEB (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). The emotional involvement can be described as to which level we have an emotional relationship to the nature. This relationship plays a big role in how our beliefs, values and attitudes are formed towards the environment. Hence, the higher a person's emotional involvement is, the higher the chance of PEB. Previous research has also shown that women are more emotionally engaged in problems regarding the environment than men. However, it is hard to find the reasons why some individuals tend to care more than others and why they care about the environment.

As described above, lack of knowledge and awareness is essential in order to have emotional involvement and this behaviour can often be learned, come in different levels and involve more abstract environmental problems. This can be seen when some people are more emotional when seeing pictures of for example turtles stuck in plastic covers than seeing a flower wilting due to being planted with cedar-chips. Here knowledge about causes and effect plays a role where the emotional involvement is the highest when seeing the turtle, since many knows that plastic is harmful for the environment and maybe lack knowledge about causes of using cedar-chips when planting. However, it cannot be proven that an increased knowledge will automatically increase the emotional contribution. Resistance against non-conforming information can also explain emotional involvement since it shows how people tend to unconsciously try to remember information that supports our own morals and mental frameworks while we are trying to avoid those who are not in line with our values and frameworks (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Hence, information about environmental problems can be avoided if they are contradictory to our views about for example quality of life or material things. Even though we might feel an emotional reaction, it does not mean that we will have a PEB, because we maybe only see the environmental degradation indirect, which can make us to filter information to fit our reality. This means that we are maybe trying to dissonance us from painful emotions or rationalize the problem, which can happen if one is exposed to these problems often (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002).

The last internal factors are responsibility and priorities. We tend to prioritize our responsibilities and these are formed after our own values and attitudes just as emotions. Like homo economicus, people are very egoistic and hence people tend to see to their own wellbeing and care for their family.

This means that when we are acting pro-environmentally, we want it to be in line with our and the family's best interest and this in turn acts as a motivation for PEB (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002).

Figure 1: PEB Factors Used in This Study



Guilt and Pride

Guilt and pride are emotions that have the ability to have an impact on consumer choices, since they are important in self-regulation (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014). Tracy and Robins (2004) write that conscious emotions only arise when the individual is aware that they either have fulfilled or failed to achieve their ideal self. These emotions are important in research about ethical consumption, since they can be used as motivators in consumption behaviour (Gregory-Smith, Smith, Winklhofer, 2013).

Pride is seen as a positive emotion that is associated with accomplishment and self-respect. The emotional dimension of pride can be associated with purpose and strive to fulfil goals, which in turn can motivate to behave responsibly in the future (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014) and thus enhance ethical behaviour (Gregory-Smith *et al.*, 2013).

This can lead to consumers change buying behaviours and have a positive influence on consumers wanting to consume more sustainable in the desire to feeling proud (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014). The wish of feeling proud can also make consumers to actively try to consume in order to feel pride and thus create a repeated consuming behaviour nurturing ethical behaviour (Gregory-Smith *et al.*, 2013).

Guilt on the other hand, is defined as a negative emotion that is triggered by worry that one has done something incorrectly or bad. This feeling can increase consumers' self-control and therefore regulate consumers' choices (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014). Guilt can highlight what is not in line with social structures, developed standards and show what needs to be changed. Hence, guilt can be seen as a mechanism that assures that an individual is acting according to e.g. own goals and standards (Dahl, Honea, Manchanda, 2003), because they want to avoid this bad feeling, but they can also try to "make up" for a previous choice that triggered guilt (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014). Guilt is a feeling that is closely connected with feelings of remorse and regret, which tends to make individuals take responsibility over how they act (Dahl *et al.*, 2003). Hence, these choices that are not in line with the consumer's standards, norms or personalised goals lead the consumer to strive to do better in the future (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014). In other words, guilt can help to nurture "good" behaviour and stop "bad" behaviour (Gregory-Smith *et al.*, 2013).

Self-conscious feelings such as guilt and pride have power to affect the consumption of sustainable products. This means that these feelings can change consumers' views with the help of interventions built on guilt and pride. In other words, these feelings can help to promote sustainable consumption, even though consumers may not be aware of it (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014).

When consumers enter a new life stage such as becoming a parent, new emotions arise. The consumer may feel guilt when they have bought something unsustainable, because then they have not acted as a role model and been responsible for sustainable consumption. Guilt might therefore make them choose "better" or more wisely next time. The same can be applied by the feeling of pride. Parents want to be seen as "good parents" by the surrounding (Shäfer *et al.*, 2011) and therefore to know that they have made a good and sustainable choice may contribute to this feeling or even make them want to buy sustainable products again in favour of the good feeling, pride.

Online Communities and Common Identity

Communities have been a big part of being online since the creation of the Internet (Armstrong & Hagel, 1996). Yet, online communities are a moderately new way of interacting and build relations with individuals who are physically distant. Ren, Kraut and Kiesler (2007, p.378) define online communities as "an Internet-connected collective of people who interact over time around a shared purpose, interest, or need". These communities open up for finding new friends and people to share opinions and media with (Fiedler & Sarstedt, 2014) and these acquaintances may never have happened if it was not for social network sites, such as Facebook (Boyd, 2008). Armstrong and Hagel (1996) describe four different types of communities: communities of transaction, communities of interest, communities of fantasy and communities of relationship. *Communities of relationship* refer to communities where people are gathering when undergoing a life experience, such as parenthood. These life experiences can be quite powerful and hence leading to deep personal contacts, where the members often know each other's real identities.

Armstrong and Hagel (1996) take Parents Place as an example of a community of relationships, which is in line with the kind of community that will be discussed in this study. On Parents Place parents have a platform to discuss and ask for advice regarding parenthood and children. The primary objective for these communities is to give people a chance to meet and share experiences (Armstrong & Hagel, 1996).

The identification with an online community can become very powerful and the members of the community can develop strong commitment without having any acquaintance about other members (Ren *et al.* 2007). This so called *common identity* means that members have a strong engagement to the purpose or theme of the online community. There exist three main sources for common identity: social categorization, interdependence and intergroup comparisons. *Social categorization* means that a group identity is outlined exclusively of individuals from the same social group. This categorization can be built on things like political values or life stages, where individuals have the opportunity to share their experiences and opinions and can get answers to questions they might have. *Interdependence* has the ability to create a feeling of common identity in online communities, where the members have a common purpose where all can give their input. The last source of common identity is *intergroup comparisons*, which refers to when members of the community are comparing themselves to other communities. Online, these comparisons can create a greater homogeneousness in the community by increasing the knowledge of other groups (ibid).

In online communities, the central part is communication where social support and collective actions exist (Ren *et al.* 2007). Previous studies have shown that if the discussions in the online community had a special topic, such as parenthood, the group identity was greater than in communities

where the topics were wider. At the same time, in these identity-based communities it is more likely to create a counter-strike to a behaviour that can endanger the success or survival of the community. This means that there often exist *moderators* or *administrators* that take care of the maintenance of the site by controlling and monitoring what is written (Ren *et al.* 2007).

To summarize the theoretical framework, life events can have a strong impact on daily life routines and even change consumption patterns (Shäfer *et al.*, 2011). Previous studies have shown that becoming a parent means entering a very sensitive stage in life that can increase the interest of sustainability (Tischner & Eivind, 2010). This new life stage of parenthood and potentially increased interest of sustainability can also increase pro-environmental behaviour. Pro-environmental behaviour means a want to decrease the negative effects on our environment by engaging in more sustainable behaviour, such as recycling (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). This theory is the most important in this paper, since it involves many different factors and has a broad spectrum of explanations why individuals may engage more in favour of the nature. In addition to this, emotions such as guilt and pride can arise when becoming a parent and have an impact on consumer choices, which can help making more sustainable ones (Shäfer *et al.*, 2011). Individuals entering parenthood can also gather in online communities where they can share experiences, gain new contacts and ask for advice (Armstrong & Hagel, 1996). In these communities the identification with the group can become so strong that a common identity arise, where there exist a commitment to the theme of the community such as parenthood (Ren *et al.*, 2007).

METHODOLOGY

In this study a qualitative method was used, including netnography and self-observations. Eight interviews were made, where most of them were conducted through telephone and one of them being a face-to-face interview/observation in the interviewee's home. The netnography was carried out on Facebook, blogs and forums.

Research Method

This paper derives from a *constructionism* perspective, where the social reality is not seen as independent, but rather that people are the ones who create the social world through social interaction. Hence, the interpretation and understanding of the social reality can be altered by the interactions. In other words, reality is about the people and their understandings and the social reality does not exist without it (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). As mentioned before, the theoretical framework mostly stems from a quantitative tradition, while this study builds on *qualitative psychology*. The possibility of multiple methods within the same subject gives opportunities to capture how these theories work in practice and to get a deeper understanding (Brinkmann, 2014). It can also function as a way to complete these theories with more reasoning around the theories and contribute to an important area within this theory bundle.

In order to find answers to the research questions, three different approaches were selected. The choice of a qualitative approach, including netnography and self-observations were made, because the knowledge regarding how life events can influence sustainable consumption behaviour is limited. Within this research field, not enough research has been carried out; hence a better understanding how parenthood can influence sustainable consumption is needed.

To gain an understanding of the subject and answer the research questions, the subject needs to be viewed from many different angles contingent upon the approaching of it. In addition, when doing a study it is important to see the whole picture and not just understand some parts of it (Andersson, 1979), in order to get a deep understanding (Grønmo, 2006).

Qualitative Research

The study makes use of different theories, such as pro-environmental behaviour and guilt and pride and will approach parenthood and sustainable consumption from a qualitative perspective. A qualitative research method sees reality as something that is in constant change and focuses on how reality is interpreted. In addition, this method's focal point is from a micro perspective of parenthood and sustainable consumption, since it is focusing on sectional parts of being a parent and consumption choices in the everyday life. This research method, in contrast to a quantitative research, is more focused on words than on numbers and can be divided into different research steps (Bryman & Bell, 2013). In this study, a qualitative research method is used, because the purpose of the study is to investigate if parents tend to think more about buying sustainable consumption than before they got children and if this consumption behaviour spreads to other buying habits, with the help of previous studies and observations gathered from secondary data, interviews and observations.

Interviews

The sample population consisted of eight women, where seven of them are members of a group on Facebook that will be referred to as "United Mothers" in this study. In order to find participants, a status was written in the group, describing the study in short and then asking for people who were willing to participate. Of these eight women, one was expecting her first child and the others were already mothers.

The ages of the participants ranged between 26 and 41 (mean = 33,5) where the life event of becoming a parent had occurred between 7 years ago and only weeks before the interview was held. Most of the interviewees were found in this Facebook group since this is a place where mothers have the possibility to discuss all subjects concerning parenthood. The admins of the group describe it, as “United Mothers is a group where all mothers, soon-to-be moms and bonus moms can meet to talk about everything between heaven and earth” and the group has over 12 000 group members (Facebook, 2017). The reason why the sample population only consisted of women is because; only one gender gives a more specific analysis. Women seemed to be a more natural choice, since they tend to be the ones who mostly are at home with the baby in the beginning of parenthood and the access to the group “United Mothers” gave a possibility to reach mothers in different stages of motherhood. Yet, in this study it is parenthood that is the central part being analysed and not only motherhood. The interest in newly become mothers/parents called for flexibility in contacts, which created a geographically spread of interviewees.

Figure 2. Chart of Respondents

Name	Interview Method	Age	Occupation	City	Children (No.)
Maria	Telephone	41	Nurse	Stockholm	4
Anna	Telephone	30	Service Administrator	Hudiksvall	1
Malin	E-mail	33	Maternity Leave	Märsta	2
Sara	Telephone	28	Student	Hällefors	3
Nicole	Telephone	28	Maternity Leave	Piteå	2
Karin	E-mail	27	Purchaser	Åby	1
Johanna	Chat	26	Newly Examined	Kungälv	Expecting
Lisa	Face-to-face interview/Observation	31	Maternity Leave/Store Clerk	Stenungsund	4

One face-to-face interview, three telephone interviews, two e-mail and one chat interview were made.¹ Since the interviews were made in different formats, their duration time were differing from interview to interview. An interview guide was made in advance and was divided into three parts: general questions, daily life routines and life events and finally guilt and pride. Pro-environmental behaviour, online communities and social identity were not included in the interview guide since they emerged during the interviews and were occurring during the analysing of the data. Furthermore, the subjects between the interviewees were discussed more in depth in some areas and some less depending on the interest of the informant.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted, this means that the questions asked were not asked in a specific order and there was room for asking follow-up questions, to reformulate them and to add questions to the guide during the interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2013). This interview method was chosen, since it works in a systematic way, is casual and opens up for conversations (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008) in comparison to a survey for example. In addition, this enabled a deeper understanding for some subjects if an interviewee was really passionate about a subject and hence wanted to talk more about that subject (Bryman & Bell, 2013). The disadvantage of the semi-structured interviews however is that the person holding the interview needs to be sure that all of the planned topics are included in the interview guide and is prepared to plunge into more deep going questions (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The face-to-face interviewee was found through personal contacts and was held in the interviewee’s home, which made it possible to have an observation and interview at the same time.

¹ Some of the interviews were done through Internet and is thus closely connected with netnography. However, since the same interview guide was used in all of the interviews, they are all described in this method section.

This kind of interview enables the observer/ethnographer to observe, listen and ask questions, hence gaining a deeper understanding of the studied topic (O'Reilly, 2004). This kind of interview is also a benefit, since it helps to observe the interviewee in their natural habitat and for them to explain and show how they think and act in different situations, which were not possible in the telephone, mail and chat interviews. However, since this is a Master's dissertation, the time period is limited and therefore a full-scale of observation was not possible. Consequently, a micro-ethnography was made, which means that the study was conducted only during a couple of months (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The reason why not more than one face-to-face interview was made is because the informants are from all over Sweden and therefore geographically outspread. In addition, the geographically outspread informants were a compromise in order to find interviewees. Yet, the results from the conducted interviews gave adequate data to analyse. Furthermore, since the target group are in the life stage where it can be hard to find time to participate in a study, some participants could only be a part of the study by email or chat in order to answer the questions when having the time. Hence, this was also a factor for the length of the interviews, since when conducting the interviews there could be noise in the background from the children.

This study is focused on mothers, newly become mothers or expecting mothers, because these individuals are in the stage of life where parenthood has already had an impact on their lives or is going to (Shäfer *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, they are able to recall memories of the life-changing events since they are either in it or are going to, which is important in the study of their awareness, thoughts and knowledge about sustainable consumption in the happening of parenthood. In addition, since the informants are in different time periods around the life event of becoming a mother,

it contributes to make it easier to analyse whether parenthood really has had an impact of consumption habits when comparing before, during and after the event.

Self-Observation and Participant Observation

In participant observations it can be hard to gain access to the social group that is relevant for the study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Since the author of this study was a newly become mother herself, she had already become a member of the group "United Mothers" on Facebook. This made it easier to become a part of this group and study it closely, which in turn decreased the time needed to conduct the research. However, sometimes there exist gatekeepers that decide who will gain access to the observed groups of individuals (O'Reilly, 2004), in this specific case the admins of "United Mothers" decide who will gain access to the group.

Self-observations could be made since the author had own experiences of becoming a mother herself. The combination of both self-observation and participant observation means that the researcher must know when to be objective and to separate the two roles. It is also important to remember the ethical aspect of the research. Since the researcher is using contacts in the Facebook group "United Mothers" to observe this online community further besides the interviews, a *covert role* is used and therefore not disclosing for the members of the group that they are being observed. The covert role is chosen, in order to not have an impact on the findings and validity of the research. However, this can be argued to not be ethical, since personal contacts are used for making observations for a study, without them knowing they are being observed and intruding their privacy (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Hence, it is of importance to protect the participants' rights (O'Reilly, 2004), such as offering anonymity.

In the Facebook group “United Mothers”, the researcher has worked more of a *participant-as-observer* when finding the interviewees. The members of the group were aware of the researcher both as a member (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and a researcher at that time, since a status was written in the group about finding possible interview participants for the qualitative study.

Netnography

Netnography is a term that was originally stated by Kozinets (Bryan & Bell, 2011) and has become more recently used within sustainable consumption theory (Weijo, Hietanen, Mattila, 2014). This research method is a part of the ethnographic method, but instead it is ethnographic studies online, that investigate communications online that are related to the studied subject (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Kozinets (2010) argues that this kind of research is gaining more importance since our lives are being more engaged with the online world.

In netnographic studies, the researcher should start by pinpointing prospective communities to study and then start to gather information by either showing his presence or by only observing and hence gain an understanding of the culture within the online community (Weijo *et al.*, 2014). In this study the researcher was only observing the different online communities and hence, only an already existing material were analysed. However, as described above in the interview section in methods, chat and e-mail interviews were made, which is also a part of netnography and this kind of study opens up for new forms of contacting and reaching the observed people and communities. Yet, it is important to reflect upon how the online environment can have an affect on how people are acting and what they are writing online, such as be more brave to expose their opinions in contrary to the real world.

The netnography was conducted on blogs, forums and social forums such as Facebook. These sources have been visited daily since Christmas 2016 and throughout the whole study. In this study the previously mentioned Facebook group “United Mothers”, the blogs “Ekopappan”, “Minimalisterna” and the forum “Vi Föräldrar” were chosen to be the focus of this study’s netnography. These chosen communities were found by searching on key words such as “ecological baby clothes”, “newly become parents and sustainability” etc. However, other parenting blogs were also browsed through at the same time. Then information was collected by browsing forums, blogs and comments to find discussions on the subject. As mentioned above in previous method sections, the researchers own involvement in the Facebook group “United Mothers” is believed to contribute to a deeper and unique analysis of this matter. This involvement also contributed to an access to this group and the matters discussed, such as sustainability in the everyday life of being a parent since the researcher was a member of “United Mothers”. This online community is similar to the community Parents Place, previously mentioned in the theoretical framework and was chosen because it can be described as a *social categorization*.

One important factor to consider when doing netnography is the so called *netiquette*, which act as guidelines for how to behave on the Internet, governed by for example the admins of Facebook groups that decide what is acceptable to write and how to behave within the community. Furthermore, it is important to take ethics into account when doing netnography. The ethics of using netnography as a research method is similar to the one used in ethnography. However, one problem to acknowledge is what the ethical expectations are from the community. Since most of the sites are public, it can be a fine line to draw what is expected to be public and what is considered being private and solely for the community (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Thus, names that are connected with comments made on Facebook posts and comments on blog posts have not been revealed. In this research, netnography as a method has been used as an additional tool to the other methods and worked as a springboard for doing the research.

Data Analysis

In order to analyse the data, the interview guide was divided into different parts in accordance to the theoretical framework. The division of the interview guide facilitated the work to sort out which information was most relevant for the analysis. All of the interviews were also recorded and transcribed, in order to increase the reliability of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interviewees of the study had given their approval to be recorded and were aware of possible quotes being taken from the interview. They were all also given the opportunity to be anonymous. The transcriptions were then colour coded and categorized to further pick out important parts relating to the research questions. In the results and analysis part, quotes are used from the recordings to highlight the results from the conducted interviews. All of the interviews were held in Swedish, which means that quotes used in this paper have been translated into English. Hence, some of the quotes have been corrected such as grammar in order to make the English version comprehensible.

When analysing the conducted netnography pictures taken from forum, Facebook and blogs were analysed. Useful quotes were then saved and translated into English. The name of the Facebook group and all of the individuals' names appearing from the netnography have been altered in order to respect their integrity and since they have not given their consent being cited.

In the analysis a certain case from the Facebook group has been highlighted in order to illustrate online communities and common identity. All the collected data from different methods are analysed as a unit, since the analysis combine all the results from the study.

Quality of the Research

To certify the quality of this study the criteria of *trustworthiness* have been used. Trustworthiness consists of four parts (*credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability*), which all contribute to a qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). These quality indicators were assessed after the study had been conducted, however they were also considered through the whole process of the study.

In order to ensure credibility of this study the conclusions are built on adequate data (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008) and the method of *triangulation* was utilized. This means that different research methods were used, interviews, ethnography and netnography. The use of triangulation can give an increased confidence in the findings, since the observations can be verified in the interviews and hence try to eliminate any misunderstandings (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The transferability is made by a written theoretical framework to build the research on. This framework has worked as a step stone for the research and topics related to life events and sustainable consumption habits have been chosen (Bryman & Bell, 2013). In addition, this study is conducted of a small group of people of a specific culture, which contributes to a so called *thick description* since it gives the reader details about a specific subject (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In order to give the reader an insight to the research, the process of the study is presented, which contributes to the dependability of the study (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

All of the phases of the research progression are saved in forms of problem formulation, selection of research participants, observation notes and interview transcripts (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

This study was also made in accordance with conformability. The conformability of this study is shown by making an objective analysis that tries to illustrate how a life event, such as parenthood can have an effect on sustainable consumption habits. This was made by building the analysis upon transcriptions, pictures, notes from observations and theory of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2013). In addition to these four criteria, Bryman and Bell (2011) incorporate *authenticity* to quality of a qualitative research. This criterion has been used in this study by acting upon *fairness* by moderately presenting different perspectives among respondents on topics.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this section the interviews, observation and netnography will be presented and analysed. The results are divided into subcategories named after themes that arise during the analysis of the data: *the rise and fall of sustainable thinking, the significance of knowledge and being a role model, complex emotions, economy - a two-sided coin and motherhood and being a "super mom"*.

The Rise and Fall of Sustainable Thinking

From the informants a pattern of daily life routines and habits could be recognised. They have created their own way of taking on the everyday life and that behaviour has become very deep rooted. However, in accordance to Schäfer *et al.* (2011) one could also recognise that when they became parents, a change in consumption patterns towards more

sustainable choices could be seen due to different motivators.

"It is after I got children that I have gained this kind of thinking. Before I did not think that much of anything of this. [...] It is for their sake [...]" (Nicole, 2017)

"You become more concerned about the environment as a parent and often sustainable products are more natural and gentler to the skin" (Maria, 2017)

This shows that a reason behind this changed behaviour could be explained by an increased worry for the future of their kids. This worry and want of assurance that the environment is going to be there even for next generations have arisen when experiencing the life event of being a parent. Maria (2017) also expressed that she believes that sustainable products are better for children and gentler to the skin, since many of the sustainable products do not contain toxins and are more natural. In addition, the changed behaviour also resulted from that, as a parent you are not only taking care of yourself, but you is also having a responsibility to educate your children about sustainability. This knowledge can then be educated forward to the next generation. It is a question of what kind of values and moral one is teaching the children to form a new little person that is going to live in this world.

"If one is thinking of the future of our children, one can not only think about our own children in Sweden, but also think about the children of the whole world and they are affected by the environmental impact in larger extent, such as environmental disasters, poverty and such things ... and we probably consume a lot of children clothes in Sweden, much more than we should and from that aspect we consume lots of children clothes and that has a large impact on the environment." (Anna, 2017)

As discussed by Tischner and Eivind (2010) people who stand before the life changing event of parenthood are also gaining an interest to know more about sustainability, healthy food etc. This could also be seen from the study. There existed a willingness to learn more to be able to contribute to a more sustainable future for their kids as discussed above.

However, one could also see that many did not have the knowledge or information as they wanted, in order to act more environmentally friendly and to change their already existing behaviour and habits.

In line with PEB (Kollmuss & Agyeman 2002), the interviews and observations show a multifaceted set of reasons contributing to a pro-environmental behaviour. In this study, the focus is more on the internal factors than the external ones and these were expressed throughout the study. There existed a want to think about the environment and act pro-environmentally. Those who had a positive attitude towards sustainability were those who engaged more in the environment. However this want was sometimes affected by other factors such as lack of time and effort needed to undertake PEB. In other words the “cost” of having pro-environmental behaviour is decisive for the attitude towards it (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Many of the interviewees were engaging, as previously mentioned, in everyday sustainable thinking, such as not using too much water or leaving the lights on, cause it is not taking too much time and effort to do. However, for example to use the car was something that they were less keen on giving up. This can be explained by that the car is rather used in convenience and can help save time; therefore it is harder to for example start to walk or take the bike instead. In other words, it “costs” too much to not take the car in favour of the environment.

“I do care, but not always. I try to buy things that are gentler to the skin etc. It only benefits my family and me and I buy ecologically in the extent that I can afford and find. I do not recycle, because of laziness and when it comes to driving car I don’t care about the environment at all, the car is comfortable.” (Christina, 2017)

To have this kind of responsibility can also cause feelings of anxiety and worries, which could be seen from a comment made by Amanda, on one of the posts at the blog Ekopappan.

The notion of changed habits caused panic feelings in the beginning and in order to handle these feelings, small changes and experimenting were made towards new more sustainable habits. As described by Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) this enabled to make practice of her wants towards more sustainable choices real, instead of just a will to change and to develop these habits into an automatic behaviour, which was most suited for her and her family (Ekopappan, 2014). Further, some of the interviewees expressed that in order to create new habits and make a change towards sustainable consumption, they started out with only one product category and later added more product categories. This facilitates sustainable practices to be incorporated in the everyday life over time. However, the level of matureness was a factor that was expressed to cause a hinder for changed habits and daily life routines towards more sustainable ones. Maria (2017) one of the interviewees explains:

“I have become more mature and gained more knowledge about how things work. I had not ... I did not walk around thinking about the environment when I was 22 years old. Toady I think more about it.” (Maria, 2017)

“I think more about the environment since I got kids or at least the last two ones. I was pretty young when I got the first ones, but with the last two, I think more about having a sustainable environment for them and even for their kids, which has changed my buying habits.” (Maria, 2017)

She describes that this changed behaviour due to matureness can be explained by; when she became a mom she started to think more about the environment. She does not want her children to wear any clothes that she does not know where they are produced, since children are sensitive and their bodies are not made for things like flame retardants. However, to grow into the role of being a parent requires time and as described previously, parenthood means creating new habits and a changed behaviour due to a new human to take care of.

This also means that as a parent one can have less time to think about anything else, since children requires much time and hence the environment can be left on the side. This constant chasing of time can cause a previous sustainable thinking become less important when entering parenthood, even though the willingness to contribute to a better environment still exists. This expressed feeling of less energy and time to spend on sustainability could also be seen on the blog Minimalisterna. The blog has posted discussions about when becoming a parent; one can be very tired at times and then think that it is easier to buy clothes that may not be sustainable (Minimalisterna, 2016).

“I probably made that more before and tried to be more ... think a little more ecologically in order for it to be more sustainable for the environment, but right now there is so much that has been laid on the side ... but I want and will try to go back to that when I feel that I have energy.” (Sara, 2017)

Another phenomenon that emerged from the study was that if there already existed a sustainable habit it could spill over to create other new sustainable habits. This means for example, that if one is already recycling or buying ecological food, it can in some cases create awareness about the environment when also buying clothes and toys. Even though there was an impending thinking to care more about the environment when becoming a parent, one respondent explained this thinking to be more blurred out with time and the products for the parents, such as shampoo where also used by the children in the family (Anna, 2017).

“ I think that one becomes more attentive on such things when one gets a baby. Then the older the child gets, if I talk for my self, I do not care about it. So yes ... to some extent I think that one can get more aware about toxins and chemicals in products [...] Now that our kids are older we have left that thinking. Now they are grown up, so they are not chewing on plastic and they do not use feeding bottles and do not have problems with eczema or dry skin and stuff like that, so one comes away from that somehow.” (Anna, 2017)

The Significance of Knowledge and Being a Role Model

From the study of Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) a correlation between knowledge and PEB was described to be quite low. However, in this study a link was present. One could see that those who knew much about environmental problems tend to act more pro-environmental. From the blogs Ekopappan and Minimalisterna one could also see that, since they had much knowledge within this subject they were also keen to educate and motivate others to have a pro-environmental behaviour. A general knowledge about environmental problems was however present among all the informants. This knowledge was either gained from family, friends, and school or by a self-driven willingness to learn more. Even though many had a more general knowledge about the subject, not many had much knowledge about the correlation between sustainability and clothes. This lack of knowledge about sustainable clothes was expressed as a reason why they did not engage more in thinking about their choices when they bought clothes. However, they expressed that they were willing to learn more about it and change their buying behaviour. Since the future of further generations was expressed as a reason for PEB some of the informants also explained that they had started to teach their children about the environment and sustainability.

“[...] When I am shopping I use to tell them how I am thinking.” (Maria, 2017)

“[...] I can understand that it is important to teach our kids to not consume hysterically and to not throw garbage in the nature.” (Anna, 2017)

One could also see that since many thought that knowledge about the environment was something so obvious and all-round education, they did not educate their children about it, since they thought it was the school's undertaking.

Sara, one of the interviewees, expressed that she wanted to learn more about how harmful some of the unsustainable products are, but that it feels like it is up to one self to be educated about it. That the responsibility lies on the individual rather than on a higher court to educate its inhabitants, which she felt could be improved and should be changed, hence making it a problem of a state level. Her solution of educating as many as possible about the climate change and environment was to make child care centres talk to parents about sustainability, since they bring trust.

"[...] These things are something one would want to learn more about, but it feels like it is up to one self to gain that knowledge. It is not on a higher court so to speak. It is the individual's own responsibility to learn more if one is interested. However, I feel like it should not only be one's responsibility. " (Sara, 2017)

"I feel like the child care centres could have a big part in this, because they are already talking about pharmaceuticals and what not to give our children, but it exists much more than only that, that can affect our children when they are small and are growing, because they are small and sensitive and it is shown to have an affect, therefore some information would be good. They do not have to give all the information about how every little product have an effect, but explain that it can be harmful and where to get more information if interested, what is good and what is not. That is something that I would like, but also for someone who has become a parent for the first time, they maybe do not have this kind of information. One listen a lot, or at least they who have got their first child listen to the child care centres. [...] One sees them as competent. [...] I think that they at least could have an impact on choices of clothes, shampoo and food if one would know that it is harmful. " (Sara, 2017)

Another factor that was seen from the study was the feeling of responsibility that worked as a stimulus of acting pro-environmental, which could also be seen in Kollmuss and Agyeman's (2002) study. This feeling was especially expressed when it came to family and their children. Hence the want of caring for the environment was sometimes more of a selfish act than thinking of the environment itself.

Nicole, one of the informants explained that she has started to think more about the environment and sustainability where she started with food and it has expanded to try to eliminate plastics in the home. This thinking has increased since she got children and because the nature works like a system that goes around, she believes that if she is not caring about the environment it will come back around. She is also expressing that she feels a responsibility to act as a role model for her children and that she wants them to think about sustainability too. Other informants also expressed that they are trying to educate their kids about the environment and how they are thinking when they are out shopping and if the children are to young, they plan to educate them as soon as they are able to understand why sustainability is important.

"I believe that one becomes more aware since one has a responsibility and because one wants to teach them too. " (Nicole, 2017)

This shows that family and friends are important people in our lives and that they have an impact on how our values are shaped. From a comment on Ekopappans blog, one can read that Sara was born with an eco-thinking and that her mother introduced her to think more about the environment and the consumerism during her whole upbringing. This has then shaped her to think about what she is buying and her belief is that, to choose environmental products matter and she thinks that the reason why people still do not think more about what they are buying is not a matter of lack of knowledge, but rather fear. Social media such as blogs and Facebook are also having a strong impact on what is seen as being "good values" versus "bad values". These platforms can act as guidelines and if one is not having the same thinking or values as others, one can get really strong negative feedback. This matter is further discussed in online communities and common identity.

"One is being influenced by others on social medias, if one is posting something." (Nicole, 2017)

“If others say that this one was really nice or that it has good functions, one maybe trusts more in friends and their advice when shopping, since the store clerks wants to sell their stuff and as expensive as possible. That is how I think at least, because I rather trust my friends and people who have tried things and says that “it is not a good buy, do not buy that”, and then I trust them. “

(Sara, 2017)

“I also feel like it is more present now, that one starts to think more like that and it is also more available in the stores. [...] It comes more and more. It feels like it is easier to make these kinds of choices now than it was before. “ (Sara, 2017)

Even though many expressed that their surrounding had a strong impact on their buying behaviour, Maria, one of the informants explained that she is being source critic. Maria only listen to people who seem to know what they are talking about and can support their theories in fact. This means that people who write on forums such as “Vi Föräldrar” are not people who she trust in having knowledge about sustainability.

“I put them aside. I was browsing around there many years ago, but there are ... there is no one, they are only talking about their own aspects, what they think, but they do not have anything to support their facts with.” (Maria, 2017)

Complex Emotions

Emotions showed to play an important role in PEB, which is in accordance to Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002). This factor is also one of the most complex ones and has many different angles that are intertwined with each other. The feelings that were expressed the most from the interviewees were worryment, guilt and pride (Figure 3). Among the respondents in the study there was a feeling of guilt and pride expressed in connection with the environment. In accordance with the study of Gregory-Smith *et al.* (2013) these feelings were sometimes used as motivators to think more about their buying habits that could have an effect on the nature. To feel proud, to act as a role model for their kids and to think that the nature is for future generations were also acting as

motivators. One of the respondents even said; since it brings a feeling of proudness and goodness, her buying habits are directed towards sustainable choices and keep her to continue to buy it.

“When I buy ecological food, it feels good, because I know that it is good and I think it is definitely directing me to keep wanting to buy it. It feels good when we eat it. “ (Nicole, 2017)

“Partly, I feel proud over myself and think that I have done a little of what I can contribute with. I feel good and that I am doing what I can, since everyone cannot do everything, but one can do something and then I have done something. I feel involved. “ (Sara, 2017)

The feeling of guilt could also compensate for other bad habits and enhance the want of doing good (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014), hence trying to minimize the feeling of guilt for one habit that is hard to change and try to change other not so deep-rooted habits.

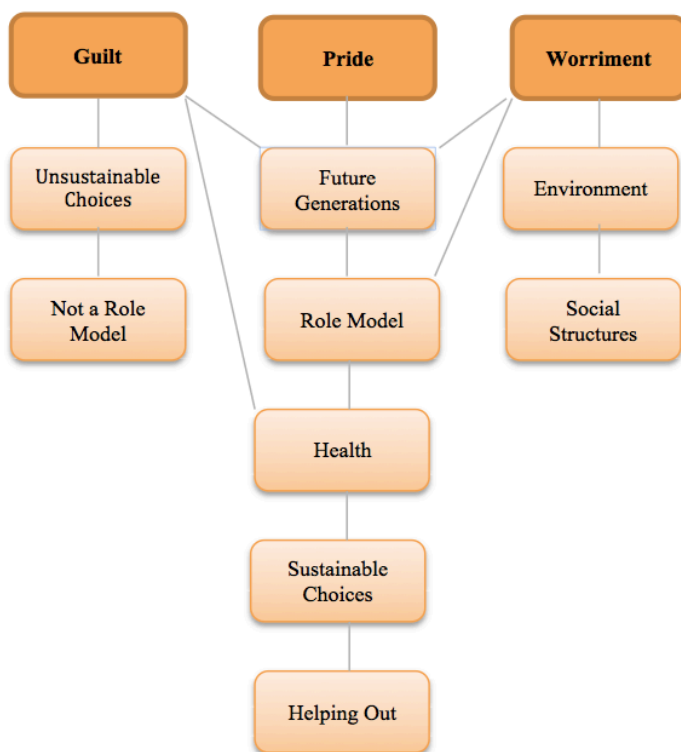
“I am traveling a lot, hence not acting pro - environmental, but I believe that if I do everything else right maybe it will compensate something. “ (Maria, 2017)

Here, one of the respondents Maria explains that she likes to travel; often up to one time per month and that she knows that it is not good for the environment. The traveling is something that she enjoys and is a moment to have fun with the kids, however this is triggering a feeling of guilt and is not in accordance to her otherwise environmental friendly behaviour. Therefore she tries to compensate this by thinking more about the environment in her everyday life such as not letting the car idling in order to compensate for her travels. The feeling of guilt was also expressed from an economic perspective. Anna expressed that when she is buying things on second-hand she often feels pride and joy since she has both been thinking about the economy of her family and at the same time she has not contributed to the consuming society to the same extent.

However, when she has bought something that she really likes that is sustainable, but not necessarily cheap, these two factors can compete with each other and the joy of finding something really nice and sustainable can be taken away by the guilt of not being economic. Internet sites also seem to contribute to bad shopping behaviour since it facilitates shopping and when shopping at second hand sites such as Tradera. On the blog Minimalisterna one can read:

“Here it is easier to justify a purchase both to one self and to the children, because it is second hand and at once it feels more environmental friendly even though it is still unnecessary purchases if it is not something that you or the children really need.”

Figure 3: Triggers of Feelings



Economy – a Two-Sided Coin

In accordance to Kollmuss and Agyeman’s (2002) study, the economical factor seems to be one of the biggest external factors to act in favour for the environment. The economy can either increase or decrease the pro-environmental behaviour.

Respondents expressed that they felt that sustainable clothes are more expensive than other clothes and that depending on how much more they cost and what they get in return plays a big role in the decision making. However, some were willing to buy the sustainable clothes if the price marginal was not too big. Money also seemed to play a more important role for those who had only one child or when buying clothes to the youngest child, Anna explains:

“Because I do not have anyone who can inherit the clothes, thus the using period is very short since he is growing very fast and therefore the price becomes a decisive factor.” (Anna, 2017)

“If I would have had a child with younger siblings, I think that I would think more about sustainability and that the clothes would last longer.” (Anna, 2017)

This means that those who thought that economy played a big part in the level of PEB, they also wanted to feel sure that the money they spend on sustainable products were really making a difference. They wanted some kind of guarantee that the extra money spent really went to the producers or other things to make a change. One of the informants said that she would like to have some kind of information about how much and where the money she gave for sustainable products went to, such as 12 % going to wages of the producers. Maria however expresses that the price is not a factor for her when buying sustainable clothes. She is willing to pay more for clothes that she knows are made in Sweden and are without any toxic substances.

Further, since it was not always possible to make as much sustainable choices as wanted due to lack of money, time or knowledge, some of the interviewees chose to contribute to charity. The charity in forms of donating old clothes and buying clothes at second hand were a way of doing the best for the environment of what economic means they have.

However, to buy sustainable products were not only seen as being "luxury". Lisa, one of the informants explained that for her mother, sustainability was a way of being economic and save money. Her mother still reminds her to think about small things such as bringing own bags to the grocery store and not using wet wipes to her baby, hence being both economic and environmental friendly. This was further explained by other informants, that they for example bought clothes at second hand and only bought clothes that they knew would last longer in order to save money and think about the environment at the same time.

Motherhood and Being a "Super Mom"

From the interviews and netnography there was a feeling of having a special responsibility as a mother. Hence, in this chapter I will change from the parenthood perspective to the perspective of being a mother and motherhood. With motherhood come special engagements, such as thinking more about the environment and being environmental friendly, because of worries for future generations (Shäfer *et al.*, 2011). In the Facebook group "United Mothers", all kind of questions are asked. This community can be described as a social categorization that is exclusively for mothers in Sweden and here mothers can share experiences and opinions about motherhood. However, some observed subjects have had an ability to start huge discussions in the online community of mothers. One of these subjects is how to relate to sustainability and what people do/do not do for the environment. The community claims that this is a group where mothers are supporting each other and where no subject is taboo. Yet, there exist an image of how to be the perfect mother and how one as a mother is supposed to feel and act in certain situations to fit the image of being a "super mom", because of this, it is common that those mothers who do not fit in to this

"super mom" image are getting many slurs from the others in the community and they blame each other of being bad moms. This phenomenon could be seen when one of the members in the group posted the following status in the group:

"Now I will write something that some of you may think is idiotic, but I am writing it in order for others to know that they are not alone in having this opinion. Honestly, I do not care about the environment. I buy a lot of detergent, washing powder, fabric softener, do not buy ecological things, buy semi finished and finished products, buy regular shampoo and soap to me and my kids among other things. We all make different choices and that is okay. I am not a bad parent because of my choices and I do not have a bad conscious because of my choices."

This post got over a hundred comments and over two hundred reactions such as likes and anger and created huge discussions in the community. In the comments one could recognise two kinds of opinions, either people who agreed with her or people who thought she was acting as a bad example. The people who were negative against her post had shared opinions about that nobody can do everything, but everyone can do something. Some thought that she should think about what kind of morale she is teaching her kids and how to be a good role model and teach her kids to think about sustainability, since it is a huge global problem. Some even thought that she with her opinions couldn't be a good mom, because if she is not caring about those things, she is also contributing to destroying the world for her children.

"I don't know why one chose to give birth to a child in a world that one does not care about and on top of that spreading this thinking to next generations." (Ninni, 2017)

"I understand that one may not have the ability to buy ecological products and so on, but it is naïve to say that one does not care, because it is affecting you, your children, your grand children and your grand children's children (if the earth even exists that long...) and there exist clear evidence that our lifestyle is affecting us and the environment we live in." (Linda, 2017)

"I think you are a quite bad role model with that attitude. You are teaching that one does not need to care about our common responsibility... You do not have to do everything, but to not care is just stupid." (Mathilda, 2017)

"Egoistic. And yes, I would even take it to the point where one is not a good parent if one does not care about their future." (Janice, 2017)

However, there were also people who could recognise themselves in this post and thought that it was a relief that someone dared to write honest about their opinions and show that one does not have to be a bad mom just because one does not think about the environment all the time. They wrote that it was liberating that someone, just like them, did not have the time or economy to be a "super mom" and also think about sustainability in this busy everyday life.

"You are awesome! Watch out for all the perfect moms out there ... I feel bad for their kids trying to live up to their supermoms ... Not surprised that psychical illness is increasing among our children!" (Dina, 2017)

"I also buy these products sometimes and sometimes I do not have a choice and sure, I am a much worse mom on that. I actually think that you want to be a good mom on all levels, but we need to realise that one cannot be a superman all day. We do the best we can." (Ylva, 2017)

There was also a feeling of guilt among the mothers, where they expressed that they wanted to be a fugleman for their children, but felt like they are not able to.

"Here I am, living at subsistence level and cannot buy ecological or even recycle because I do not have enough space for it. I do CARE a lot about the environment, but unfortunately I cannot do much about it right now and I feel bad about it." (Emelie, 2017)

After this well noted post about not caring about the environment, a wave of posts from other moms regarding sustainability could be observed in the community. One of them wanted other moms in the group to comment on her post about tips on how to be more sustainable or what other moms do to contribute to a better environment.

Her post got over 60 comments with examples on what one can think about to be more environmental friendly. Among the comments one could read about things such as using vinegar as clothes softener and to buy more ecological clothes. This post with tips on how to be more environmental friendly seemed to make individuals more motivated to engage more in this subject and to think more about pro-environmental behaviour.

This phenomenon of being identified as a bad mother and judged by others was also expressed in the interviews. Lisa one of the informants described how forums could contribute to an anxiety where one should not read everything that is written. In this situation, it is important to think about what the technology and the online environment contribute with. Online, individuals tend to be braver and to write exactly what they think and there exist an opportunity to choose what is being visible for others to see. Hence, it is easier for people to write in the group "United Mothers" to other mothers that they are bad role models for their children if they do not think about the environment or buy certain sustainable products, than it would be to express in the real world. From the interviews many of the informants also expressed that they wanted to be as good of a mother and role model as they could be and realise the picture of a "good mom" for their surroundings, such as friends and family (Tischner & Eivind, 2010). However the time factor and everyday life of motherhood made it difficult to always be a "super mom". They were afraid of being judged by family and friends of not being able to think and do everything that other in their surrounding saw as something obvious. This could also be seen in the community "United Mothers", where mothers who did not have the same opinion or had the same ability to be as environmental friendly as they would wish could get angry comments and judged by others as not having good parenting skills.

This means, that even though they give their kids a good upbringing and are seen as “super moms” in their children’s eyes, other mothers judge them solely by a comment, a picture, or a post in the Facebook community. However, what is interesting to reflect about is; what have caused this stress to be a perfect mother on all levels and what is a perfect mother?

To conclude the analysis, one can see that the willingness to engage more in sustainability starts before or when becoming a parent and tends to decrease as the child grows up. The willingness of PEB also depends on how much knowledge individuals have about the environment and sustainability. This knowledge is often gained from the social surrounding, where the pressure to act in a certain way and be a “super mom” derives from. However, to be environmental friendly is also depending on the economy, where money can either be a restraint or increase PEB. Further, emotions play a big role where they have the power to affect consumption habits and ways of thinking, hence possibly leading to environmental thinking.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

With the purpose of investigating if parents tend to think more about sustainable consumption than before they got children, the research questions were to discover how a life event, such as parenthood affect sustainable consumption and how sustainable practices travel across product categories. This study has contributed to theories of sustainable consumption with a qualitative study, more specifically by investigating the underlying reasons to a changed buying behaviour towards a more sustainable one due to becoming a parent.

Further, this combination of theories, such as combining guilt and pride with the theories of PEB have not been done before in order to investigate if parents tend to think more about sustainability when becoming a parent. This study contributes to new insights for companies and organisations in their marketing towards people, who are entering, are undergoing or have already experienced the life event of parenthood. To become a parent involves many feelings and new responsibilities arise. As described by Schäfer *et al.* (2011) this life event can shed new light on consumption behaviours. With new consumption behaviour comes new habits and a changed everyday life. Since one now has a responsibility over a new life and have their future in one’s hands, a change towards more sustainable choices can be seen. This changed consumption behaviour can be explained by a worry and want to secure the future of their children and in order to save the environment. The new behaviour is then passed forward to their children in order to keep this thinking and to act as a role model in this kind of questions. Already during pregnancy many thoughts about parenthood appears and preparations for this new life to be born. These thoughts seems to be directed towards how to be as good of a parent as possible and right now consumption is one of the major issues in the world (Brand, 2010), where everyday consumption is need of a change, hence it exists many guidelines on how to be a good parent such as thinking about the environment. Furthermore, this increased interest in sustainable practices is affected by what others in the surrounding and social media have created a picture of being a good mother. There is a constant flow from friends, family and online communities with opinions about motherhood.

Related to the second research question, sustainable practices seem to start with the food category for many families. It is the product category that is most often mentioned and many have knowledge about what sustainable food products are and how they affect the environment. Furthermore, a sustainable thinking seems to already exist in the back of mind and be automatic in the everyday practices, such as not leaving the water on, recycling and not litter. Thus, a journey to other product categories seems to happen when becoming a parent. A child is very sensitive and as a parent one want to do everything to protect this new life, hence products that are close to the body are then reevaluated and often changed towards as natural products as possible to not harm the child or the environment. However, this travel towards more sustainable products seems to fade as the child grows up and becomes more independent and less sensitive. It appears like PEB has a tendency to decrease with the years and the child starts to use products used by its parents.

To conclude, there exist evidence that when a life event such as parenthood happens, a sustainable consumption behaviour increases and often this pro-environmental behaviour starts with one or two products and then it spreads to other product categories. This can then be described as a carrier in sustainability, where one starts in small scale and then works its way up to a bigger scale in forms of sustainable thinking in more product categories and have a bigger influence in the everyday life.

Implications

The aim of this paper is to increase the understanding of how the negotiations in everyday life regarding sustainable consumption are affected by the priorities of having children. With this aim, this study showed that there is an indication that even though individuals may change their

consumption behaviour towards more sustainable ones when becoming parents, it is not certain that their behaviour lasts as the child grows up. The child grows up to be its own individual and is not as sensitive anymore, which may contribute to a natural transition to use the parent's products and the sustainable thinking may blur out. However, there exist evidence that there is potential for the sustainable consumption behaviour to stay and develop, and hence not disappear with the years. Therefore, it is important for companies and organisations to develop strategies in order to keep this behaviour alive and keep up with the life changing event that their customers are experiencing. This can be done by entering the stage for example in the children's school years and give an encouragement to keep up the sustainable thinking or to market sustainable products in that sensitive stage where there is a risk to fall into old habits and slope the pro-environmental behaviour. Furthermore, guilt and pride showed to be a part of and be an important aspect of PEB, where these emotions play a vital part in the growth of sustainable consumption. These emotions may be stronger in connection with parenthood, yet guilt and pride can affect consumption habits in other life events and still be vital long after the occurrence of the life event.

Limitations

The limitations of this paper are primarily related to time and the generalizability of the informants. The informants who participated in the study live in Sweden and they may have been more interested in being a part of this study because of an already existing interest in sustainability and hence had an affect on the results. The majority of the interviewees were from the same Facebook group, which can decrease the generalization of the results and make it harder to implicate on a broader spectrum.

In addition, only females were participating in this study, both from the interviews and netnography, which means that the dad's view on sustainability after becoming a parent is not considered. Hence, a possible difference between genders could be considered in future research.

Further Research

Further research within this research field could also be done in form of ethnography of maternity groups at child care centres. In addition, since maturity showed to influence the level of sustainable consumption, a quantitative study, where comparisons between ages, people who are parents and not parents could be of interest. In this study different data collection methods were used, hence it would also be interesting to focus on only one method in further studies, such as netnography to see how the interaction between individuals, social surroundings and online communities can affect parents to act more PEB. Further, a study can be done where the researcher follows mothers from the time they become pregnant to when the child is in kindergarten to see how PEB, consumption habits and sustainable thinking have changed over the years.

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