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Master Degree Project in Marketing and Consumption

**How Consumers Navigate Ethical Tensions in a Marketplace:
Swedish Dairy Marketplace as Context**

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Abstract

This research examines how consumers navigate ethical tensions in a marketplace, which applies to the Swedish dairy marketplace. This qualitative research takes a phenomenological approach and consists of 12 interviews with consumers. Our findings show that consumers use social values, ideologies and brands when they navigate ethical tensions in a marketplace. We find that consumers use three strategies based on social values, ideologies and brands in order to navigate ethical tensions. These consumer strategies are; 1) *Use symbolic meanings to find and manage their ethical standpoint*, 2) *Polarize and dramatize the ethical tensions*, 3) *Identify political meanings*. Consumers use these three strategies when they navigate since the strategies enable the consumers to manage ethical tensions in the marketplace. The way consumers navigate ethical tensions allow them to express and reflect over their ethical standpoint. We can see an interdependence between social values, ideologies and brands, where brands work as guidance for the consumers when they navigate ethical tensions. This study contributes to existing literature by combining brands as resources with ethical consumption, and applies it to the context concerning the contemporary dairy discussion in Sweden consisting of ethical tensions.

Keywords: ethical consumption, brands as resources, ethical tensions, phenomenology, consumer culture, dairy consumption.

INTRODUCTION

“It is a huge discussion. It is very polarized. It is really all or nothing. Either you are pro keeping animals and consume milk, or not consume animals at all” - Vera

This quote from Vera describes her interpretation of the contemporary dairy discussion in Sweden. Briefly, the discussion concerns whether dairy products should be consumed or not. Consumers have to navigate this contemporary ethical discussion. Ethical consumption from a

consumer culture perspective has previously examined consumer motivations for purchasing ethically (Davies & Gutsche, 2016; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007; Arnould, 2007), as well as the formation of consumer perceived ethicality and how an un/ethical image of a brand emerges in consumers' mind (Brunk & Blümelhuber, 2011). Previous research has thereby emphasized brands in relation to ethical consumption, as well as consumers' perceptions of ethical brands. Consumers' navigation of tensions in a marketplace have been discussed by previous research, although not in the context of ethical

consumption and a contemporary discussion. Holt (2004) presents how cultural tensions and economic anxiety have historically been related to the changes in advertising campaigns for iconic brands. Hence, consumers constantly have to navigate, challenge, and appropriate the consumer culture (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011). The contemporary dairy discussion in Sweden creates tensions and complexity since it is characterized by different ethical perspectives, which is challenging for the consumers to navigate. Therefore, we ask, how do consumers navigate ethical tensions in a marketplace?

The dairy discussion in Sweden entails various arguments and cultural perspectives. Dairy products have for decades been marketed by large corporations such as Arla, as a good source of nutrition and to give consumers strong bones (Jönsson, 2017). This belief has recently been questioned, as studies and nutritionists agree that heavy consumption of milk as a beverage correlates with severe health implications (Michaëlsson et al., 2014; Michaëlsson et al., 2017; Das System Milch, 2017). These findings have been discussed various times in Swedish national media (e.g. TV4, 2018; Stenholtz & Björkbom, 2018). Simultaneously, dairy production's environmental implications are discussed by various actors since the production requires a lot of energy and resources, and cows are emitting the greenhouse gas methane (Livsmedelsverket, 2017). Therefore, an increased production and consumption of dairy products is argued by researchers to create a negative impact on the environment (Röös, 2015). The alternative, plant-based products, are presented as healthier and more environmental friendly. Producers, such as Oatly, argue plant-based products have

shorter production chains, require less resources to produce, and cause less emissions per product, compared to dairy products (Oatly, 2018). However, actors in favour of dairy products argue that dairy production entails open landscapes of pastureland, which is crucial for the biodiversity (Emanuelson et al., 2015). Simultaneously, Swedish dairy farmers' survival is argued to be threatened due to the global dairy market pushing the price of milk downwards, at the same time as their production costs are increasing. This is presented as a result to Sweden's demanding regulations on agriculture and animal keeping (Juriaanse, 2015). The hard regulations are argued to ensure development of sustainable production and better animal care compared to the global market, which is a primary argument for consuming Swedish dairy products according to debaters in favour for dairy consumption (Carlberg, 2018). However, opposing debaters perceive the industry's handling of livestock as cruel (Björkbom et al., 2015; Paulson & Bichel, 2014). Animal activist consumers and organizations argue that the first step to stop animal cruelty is to adopt a vegan lifestyle (Djurrättsalliansen, 2018).

Hence, we can see that the dairy discussion touches upon different aspects of society, and a variety of ethical perspectives can be considered when consuming dairy products. Therefore, brands existing on the market brings an interesting scenery to discuss how consumers navigate ethical tensions, in terms of how they comprehend the marketplace. For example, Arla is the traditional, market leading dairy brand in Sweden, and a strong global player (Jordbruksverket, 2016). As a plant based alternative, Oatly is a brand taking active

stand against dairy consumption by offering oat based products and communicating as an active voice for the vegan movement (Karlsson, 2018). Oatly's activist approach to the market has not only created a practical interest, but also a theoretical interest. For example, Fuentes and Fuentes (2017) examine how Oatly constructs a mass market for vegan alternatives in terms of plant-based products. Oatly's entrance and success at the Swedish market was made possible by the influence of changes in consumer preferences, since the interest for plant-based products has increased among consumers in developed economies (Janssen et al., 2016). Simultaneously, the dairy market is perceived by Swedish consumers as the market with the best possibilities to make sustainable choices (Jarelin & Jacobson, 2017). Therefore, this contemporary dairy discussion display the role of brands in a marketplace and in ethical consumption.

In relation to consumers' ethical consumption, Thompson (2004) argues that the marketplace is boundless; antagonists of the dominant market ideology constantly produces opportunities for resistance in overlapping discourses of power. Research concerning ethical consumption have previously investigated ethical consumerist resistance as part of niched social and ideological movements (Kozinets, 2002; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004), and how consumers resonate their ethical standpoint and consumption (Devinney et al., 2010). For example, Johnston (2008) describes ethical consumption as a part of social change and how consumers become citizen-consumers voting with their purchasing power. Consumer resistance in ethical consumption has been discussed from a branding perspective, e.g. by Ulver-

Sneistrup et al. (2011). They focus on mainstream Scandinavian consumers' resistance of mundane food brands based on the level of craftsmanship behind the production. Ulver-Sneistrup et al. (2011) hence support the theoretical relevance of conducting research regarding consumers' navigation by brands in mundane food consumption, since it engages political and cultural resistance which consumers have to navigate.

We can therefore see brands' relevance in this contemporary dairy discussion. Since consumers interact with brands in every aspect of their lives (Arvidsson, 2005), it is relevant from a theoretical interests to look further at the interaction between brands and consumers in the context of ethical consumption. Brunk (2010) gives focus to this research area as she investigates consumers' ethical perceptions of brands. She identifies six potential main domains for the origin of corporate social responsibility, which are corporate activities evoking favourable or unfavourable ethical perceptions among consumers. Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998) emphasize the role played by brands. They argue that consumers base their consumption choices not only on product utilities, but also on brands' symbolic meanings, which is a discussion they share with other researchers (Belk, 1988; Dittmar, 1992; Kleine, et al., 1995; Gabriel & Lang, 1995). Brands' symbolic meanings may portray the essence of consumers' individuality and even reflect connections with other individuals (Kleine et al., 1995). Further, Belk (1988) gives the insight of how symbolic consumption enables consumers to categorize themselves in the society. This construction of consumer brands are mediated by companies and used by consumers to create and maintain their

sense of identity in their identity projects (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Luedicke et al. (2009) apply this finding to ideological tensions of a brand-mediated moral conflict and the different identity projects consumers undertake. In addition to these previous researches, low involvement and frequently purchased products sold at supermarkets have also been identified to reflect aspects of values and ideologies (Khan et al., 2013).

The purpose of this study is to understand how consumers navigate ethical tensions in a marketplace with the Swedish dairy marketplace as context. Hence, we contribute to previous research concerning consumers' use of brands as resources in ethical consumption. This research takes an explorative approach to this combination of existing research fields as the research aims to understand the consumers in a context consisting of ethical tensions in a contemporary discussion. Also, this research can contribute to managerial understandings of the consumers, which can help to understand markets with ethical tensions.

To do this, we start by presenting the theoretical framework which explains further what is argued by previous research concerning ethical consumption and brands as resources from a consumer perspective. Thereafter, the methodological section provides an understanding for the phenomenological interviews we executed to collect the empirical material, as well as how we analysed the material. Following, the findings and analysis are presented and analysed in reflection to the theoretical framework. Finally, the discussion and conclusion provide this study's main findings and approach for future implications.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ethical consumption

Cooper-Martin and Hoolbrook (1993, p.113) define ethical consumption as "consumption experiences that are affected by the consumer's ethical concern". Based on this definition, Davies and Gutsche (2016) argue that from a theoretical perspective, the range of meanings and terms covered by ethical consumption in literature, such as sustainable (Connolly & Prothero, 2008), moralistic (Luedicke et al., 2009), green (Gleim et al., 2013), organic (van Doorn & Verhoef, 2011) and fair trade consumption (White et al., 2012), are all complementary with each other. Therefore, ethical consumption can be used to cover a wider perspective. Barnett et al. (2005) conceptualize ethical consumption into being a continuous process of re-articulating moral dispositions made by influence of policies, campaigns and practices. Hence, individuals are engaged into projects of social change (Barnett et al., 2005).

Webster (1975, p.188) defines a conscious consumer as "a consumer who takes into account the public consequences of his or her private consumption or who attempts to use his or her purchasing power to bring about social change". Ethical consumption is considered as a demonstration of consumers' resistance to the mainstream consumption, as a form for the individual's identity project or as a member in a group (Davies & Gutsche, 2016). Hence, ethical consumption is formed by consumers when they are consuming in resistance of an opposing consumption form (Arnould, 2007).

There is a belief in consumer resistance literature that consumers' choose to rely on

a rational universal truth as motivations for the resistance, which is calculable and objective (Best & Kellner, 1997). However, Holt (2012, p.237) expresses concern for the development of initiatives for sustainable consumption as “consumers’ environmental footprints continue to climb, despite poll after poll reporting that large majorities declare their allegiance to environmental values”. Likewise, Vermeir and Verbeke (2006) care for the attitude-behavioural intention gap concerning sustainable and ethical food consumption. They present the possibilities to stimulate consumption by elevating the perceived consumer effectiveness, involvement, certainty, perceived availability, and social norms.

In comparison, Holt (2012) dismantles the idea of norms and values being directly replaceable, which is in accordance with the ethical value paradigm. In the paradigm, consumers continuously follow abstract consumerist values that are consistent with their overarching ideology and consumption behaviour. The paradigm solution is to replace the unsustainable consumerist values with environmental values (Holt, 2012). Holt (2012) argues there is no evidence of the paradigm’s efficiency. In reality, consumers’ values and consumption behaviour varies over categories as “some people drive a Prius, but routinely fly long-distance on vacations; some people buy local organic milk but also veggies grown in the desert and shipped by air a thousand miles [...]” (Holt, 2012, p.240). Hence, consumer culture is not a force, rather a foundation for mediating desires and identities through consumer choices and actions (Holt, 2002). As Holt (2002) states; “Consumer culture is the ideological infrastructure that undergirds what and how people consume” (2002, p.80). Therefore, the differences in ethical

consumption ideologies and enactment of consuming ethically is motivated differently depending on the type of consumption, since there are opposing consumption ideologies in constant conflict (Holt, 2012). Hence, we can see that it is inevitable for consumers to not encounter ideological tensions in ethical consumption.

An example of active resistance in ethical consumption is anti-consumption. This describes how consumer resistance is characterized by a general distaste and resentment of consumption (Zavestoski, 2002). Anti-consumption could in some cases be a lifestyle choice created by life goals of doing good (Cherrier & Murray, 2007). It is resistance taking form in non-consumption activities, either as intentional, e.g. boycotting, or incidental, e.g. by choosing one brand instead of another, less ethically correct alternative (Cherrier et al., 2011). However, what anti-consumption practices entail and mean is subjective for the consumer and include motivations of self-interest and socio-environment (Iyer & Muncy, 2009; Lee et al., 2009; Sandıkcı & Ekici, 2009; Cherrier et al., 2011). For example, brand avoidance is motivated by the consumer’s expectations, incongruity in identity, perceived value trade-offs or incompatibility in ideological standpoints (Lee et al., 2009). Stern et al. (1993) present that the relevant personal values for ethical consumption are altruistic and biospheric, although also egoistic.

By consuming ethically, consumers can express social values such as a certain lifestyle or personal identity which is linked to a symbolic feeling of advantage (Moisander, 1991). However, one should take into consideration that there are different consumer types in ethical

consumption research. The ethical consumers are seen as individuals engaging in social movements of resistance. They are well informed, and have a strong set of values guiding and driving their identity projects (Luedicke et al., 2009; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007). Cherrier et al. (2011) argue for that the ethical consumers' identity projects concerns positioning them versus the careless mainstream consumers.

Davies and Gutsche (2016) present that mainstream consumers get confused by ethical consumption and tend to be restrained by lack of knowledge and disinterest for making decisions based on information. They found that habit was the non-value based dominant factor to motivate mainstream ethical consumption. Davies and Gutsche (2016) also argue for the mainstream consumers' habits and egoistic values are predominant, and their altruistic values being overestimated by previous research.

Both Davies and Gutsche (2016), and Devinney et al. (2010), argue for consumer groups being ethically influenced rather than led. Being ethically influenced as a consumer means that ethical alternatives are more absorbable to the consumer habits as long as it is convenient and benefits one's own esteem and perception of quality, as well as it is perceived as socially desirable (Davies & Gutsche, 2016). For example, Johnston (2008) present the concept of the citizen-consumer who practice ethical consumption by the concept of "voting with you dollar", which is an idealistic idea of bringing collective responsibility into consumerism. It entails that citizen-consumer hybrids can act both by their individual ideal of consumption, simultaneously as the can act by their ideal

of citizenship. This means, by "voting with their dollar", consumers' individual interest is fulfilled simultaneously as they are taking responsibilities to other people, species and the environment (Johnston, 2008). Johnston (2008) argues that the citizen-consumer hybrid contributes with superficial attention to social causes, and better serves consumerist values rather than the goals of society.

Navigating ethical tensions

Seeing this from a broader perspective, Askegaard and Linnet (2011) argue consumers continuously face external contexts, such as individualism and moralism. These contexts actively makes certain values important for them to gain social respect. This means that consumers constantly have to navigate, challenge, and appropriate the consumer culture (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011).

Consumers' navigation of tensions on a marketplace have been discussed by previous research, although not in the context of ethical consumption in a contemporary discussion. Tumbat and Belk (2011, p.42) found for example that consumers "negotiate and manage various marketplace tensions within an individual performance ideology" in extraordinary experiences. Similarly, Holt (2004) presents how cultural tensions and economic anxiety have historically been related to the changes in advertising campaigns for iconic brands.

Also, since consumers are primarily social and culturally bound, Askegaard and Linnet (2011, p.400) argue that "consumers consistently navigate, but only to a limited degree conduct, let alone, create, the social universe of meanings that attach to consumer goods and practices - and then

most often according to a score that they have not written themselves". This means that what consumers navigate lies within their own perception of morality, social gain and what the cultural norm is telling them.

Thereby, we can see by previous research different perspectives of how consumers have different motives and beliefs about how consumption can bring change into society. We will in the next section discuss the role of brands to further discover consumers' navigation of tensions in a marketplace. This will be presented since previous research has emphasized brands and its importance for consumers in relation to ethical consumption, as well as consumers' perceptions of ethical brands.

Brands as resources for consumers

Brands' significance for consumers in context of ethical consumption has gained attention in previous research (Brunk, 2010; Brunk & Blümelhuber, 2011; Bray et al., 2011). Brunk (2010) investigates potential sources of consumer perceived ethicality (CPE) of a brand by investigating consumers' ethical perception of business behaviour. Six main domains of CPE origin can influence the ethical perception consumers have of brands, namely; employees, consumers, local community and economy, environment, business and overseas communities.

Brunk's (2010) research presents different domains that cause certain perceptions consumers can have of brands. Other studies also emphasize the importance of brands and points out how brands can be seen as boundless parts of modern markets and sources which provide value to consumers (Ulver-Sneistrup et al., 2011; Tybout & Carpenter, 2001). Brands have a central role

within a cultural setting (Bulmer & Buchanan-Oliver, 2011; Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Belk, 1988) and brands serve as resources consumers use to achieve a wide range of lifestyle goals (Tybout & Carpenter, 2001; Arnould & Thompson, 2005). A previous study by Kornberger (2010) discusses consumers' relation to lifestyle further. He explains that lifestyle is our grammar, and brands our alphabet and further discusses how different brands contribute to consumers' lifestyle in different ways. For instance, IKEA shows how to live at home, L'Oréal teaches about beauty and Apple provides the modern technology. All brands are single pieces and together constitute a lifestyle for consumers by combining the individual with the society (Kornberger, 2010).

Consumers' use of brands is further discussed by Belk (1988) who claims that consumers prefer to buy things that hold particular symbolic meaning and transform the symbolic meanings in brands to construct individual and collective identities. There is an identified principle of consumers to view brands as valuable resources for identity construction (Holt, 2002) and Thompson and Tian (2008) argue that brands, through their commercial activities, in addition are involved in creating culturally rooted identities. The function of the symbolic meanings of products is discussed by Elliott (1997) to operate in two directions, either outward in terms of constructing the society, social-symbolism, or inward where consumers constructing the self-identity, self-symbolism. Belk (1988) and Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998) emphasize the official stand consumers may want to take by the symbolic consumption as it enables consumers to categorise themselves in the society. The use of

particular products is also a way consumers like to express that they are behaving in an appropriate manner for a given situation (Graeff, 1997). Khan et al. (2013) discuss how most of the brands consumers purchase to make a personal statement tend to be socially visible and relatively expensive. Previous research also pays attention to brands meaning for consumers in a more ethical context (Brunk, 2010).

A common focus for these studies is the interest for ethical consumers' decision making process based on values in the context of grocery purchasing (Shaw et al., 2005) and consumers' intention to purchase fair trade grocery products (Shaw & Shiu, 2003; De Pelsmacker et al., 2005). Some guiding principles in ethical consumer decision making when doing grocery shopping are; self-direction, such as choosing own goals, stimulation, achievement, such as being influential, security, such as social order (Shaw et al., 2005).

At the same time consumers choose specific brands due to the ability to create its extended-self (Belk, 1988), they also reject certain brands in order to avoid unwanted meanings to their identities and lives (Lee et al., 2009). The rejection of brands can take various forms due to the degree of rejection among consumers. Hogg et al. (2009) present these different degrees as avoidance, aversion and abandonment. The research by Lee et al. (2009) explores brand avoidance among active ethical consumers and their findings display for three different types of brand avoidance. The first category consumers might practise is experiential avoidance, which involves negative experiences with brands such as unmet expectations. Identity avoidance is discussed

as the second category in which consumers avoid certain brands they perceive symbolically conflicting with their identities. The third and last category of avoidance refers to moral avoidance and occurs when consumers perceive the avoided brands as interlinked with brand management policies with negative impact on society.

This category becomes especially interesting for us to elaborate, due to this study's focus of ethical tensions in a marketplace. For example, Kozinets and Handelman (2004) discuss anti-consumption as an action for contributing to moral and ethical changes to consumerist ideology. This can be related to moral avoidance as resistance of the dominating strengths and a belief of a moral duty to reject certain brands to contribute to ethical improvement (Lee et al., 2009). These authors indicate how the rejection of brands also can be a way consumers can use brands as resources, as they describe how an action of rejecting brands can contribute to moral and ethical changes.

In summary, we can see that consumers can use brands as efficient resources in ethical consumption. Brands have a central role within a cultural setting and can be used by consumers to achieve a wide range of lifestyle goals, construct individual and collective identities, transform the symbolic meanings in brands to express themselves and reject certain brands to avoid unwanted meanings to their lives. Brands are therefore useful resources for the consumers when they navigate tensions and brings an interesting perspective to examine how consumers navigate ethical tensions in a marketplace.

METHOD

Research approach

To examine how consumers navigate ethical tensions in a marketplace, we used a qualitative research method (Brunk, 2010; Brunk & Blümelhuber, 2011; Shaw et al., 2005). We applied an explorative approach due to our interest in consumers' navigation of ethical tensions in the contemporary dairy discussion, with the Swedish dairy marketplace as context. Therefore, we adopted a phenomenological approach due to our interest in looking at consumers' perspective and their lived experiences (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011) of how they navigate the ethical tensions at the dairy marketplace. Hence, we analysed how consumers reason with their lived experience and what meanings it carries (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

Following that the theoretical material of both ethical consumption and brands as resources includes subjectiveness (e.g. Iyer & Muncy, 2009), we treated reality as subjective. Hence, we analysed the perceptions of consumers based on their experiences of consumption which support the choice of hermeneutic phenomenology for this study, since this approach aims to search for interpretations and understandings as part of the research process (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

When creating identities, consumers tend to use socially visible and relatively expensive brands, such as certain automobile brands, fashion and watches (Khan et al., 2013). This created the interest for us to explore the particular industry of dairy consumption, as these products are frequently bought and not considered to belong to the typical group of

products bought by consumers to create their extended selves. In addition, dairy consumption is considered being a strong contribution to the Swedish tradition and part of the Swedish culture where people in the country have consumed dairy products for centuries.

The contemporary dairy discussion in Sweden became a research area of interest since this tradition of consuming dairy products now has been questioned with the many ethical considerations included. The Swedish context is therefore suitable due to the many ethical tensions existing in the marketplace. In the interviews with consumers we asked them about the two brands Arla and Oatly. This was done since Arla is a global and market leading brand a lot of people know about and have some sort of interpretation about. Oatly is at the same time running an active marketing strategy with an opposing position to Arla. Using these two brands as examples in the interviews made it easier for the consumers to express their relation to these brands, in what way they make use of these brands. This also enabled them to put other brands in relation to these two brands when discussing.

Interview process

In an initial phase of this research we collected secondary material in order to be informed in the contemporary dairy discussion in the Swedish marketplace. We collected this secondary material by looking at documentaries, interviews from TV-shows, YouTube videos, reading reports, posts at social media, news and debate articles. This contributed to a good understanding for the debate and the main topics recurring in the discussion. This enabled us to create relevant interview

questions which covered the main parts of what the dairy discussion concerns.

We collected the empirical material by phenomenological interviews of individuals who are well-grounded in the contemporary discussion of dairy consumption. This is supported by Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) who argue that suitability of the interviewee is more important than the number of participants. The phenomenological interviews allowed the consumers to discuss freely about their lived experiences regarding ethical tensions in the dairy discussion and we did not restrict them to certain questions.

As consumers can be seen as either ethically influenced or ethical consumers (Davies & Gutsche, 2016), the spectrum of to what extent the individuals were ethical consumers deferred. However, all consumers we interviewed had basic knowledge and an interest for the discussion of dairy consumption, as well as some ethical thoughts about the contemporary discussion. We also aimed to interview as many people consuming dairy products as people consuming plant-based products, in order to have a balance in the empirical material.

The participating consumers were found both in accordance to the non-probability methods of convenience sampling as well as snowball sampling. This non-probability sampling technique was well suited since samples thus are selected based on the subjective judgement of the researcher (Saunders et al., 2009), which enabled us to find relevant and informed consumers. We started to interview individuals we could find by convenience sampling in our own networks. Simultaneously, we used the

snowball sampling technique since we got in contact with another consumer via email who we found relevant for this discussion due to her occupation as a professor in caretaking of livestock. After her interview she in turn recommended two other consumers she found relevant due to their occupations in combination with their ethical opinions and interest for this discussion.

We conducted 12 interviews. Six of the interviews were phone interviews due to a wide spread of geographical locations and the other six interviews were held face-to-face. The interviews lasted for about 45 minutes in general, where the shortest interview was 20 minutes and the longest lasted for 1 hour and 30 minutes. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Table 1. presents a list of our study participants. We used pseudonyms throughout this research to guarantee anonymity for consumers to evoke their personal experiences. The consumers' ages differed between 20 and 58. All consumers were currently situated in Sweden except from one who temporary lives in Denmark. It was easier to find well-grounded women in this study's discussion topic, rather than men. Therefore, all of the consumers except from one were women.

Table 1. Description of consumers

Pseudonym/age/gender	Occupation
Johan, 58, male	Former dairy farmer, current forest farmer
Maria, 46, female	Professor in caretaking of livestock
Hanna, 32, female	Former sociology student
Lina, 20, female	Student, sociology & criminology
Josefine, 30, female	PR-manager
Stina, 34, female	Postdoc in dairy cow management and behaviour
Ann, 26, female	Student, sociology
Ellen, 26, female	Student, textile
Vera, 48, female	Agronomist specialized in livestock. Scientist and lecturer at SLU
Fanny, 26, female	Student, marketing
Agnes, 27, female	Student, marketing
Ida, 24, female	Student, law

Analysis process

The phenomenology perspective allowed us to focus on the individual consumer in order to see his or her point of view and analyse the consumer's expressions. This indicates the consumers' experiences and what is relevant for them in the discussion of ethical tensions on the Swedish dairy marketplace (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). The interviews were conducted one-to-one. This is a well suited approach to decrease the social influence of the individual's perception since ethics is personal and subjective (Brunk, 2010). Using phenomenological interviews also assist the analysis by being comprehensive meanwhile the interviews are kept on an informal and conversational level, letting the participating consumers to freely have reasonings

regarding the phenomenon (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

In order to start analysing the interviews, we transcribed the empirical material into almost 100 pages. The analysis's initial phase was done to get familiar with the transcribed interviews by reading and re-reading it thoroughly (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). The analysis followed an iterative process and an open coding process, which allowed us to read and comment on certain comments. We processed each interview separately. The participating consumers' comments were coded and labelled to certain themes in order for us to identify common and relevant patterns across the different interviews. This coded material from each interview was thereafter related to each other and a complete interpretation of the collected material could therefore be made. At this point we could combine and compare identified similarities, differences and common discussed topics among the consumers. This analysis procedure enabled us to collect the consumers' experiences and identify consumers' own perceptions of the dairy consumption discussion as well as their ethical standpoints.

We used a mix of Swedish and English in this research process. All the interviews were performed in Swedish where we in turn also transcribed the material in Swedish. Thereafter, the coded material consisting of the identified themes were done in English in order to at this stage label and clarify different key words in English. An issue we thereby came across during interviews and the translation process is the way Swedish people refer to milk. People tend to use the word "milk" when they refer to all dairy products, most likely due to milk's strong

and rooted position in Swedish culture. However, others make a difference between milk- and dairy products. It has therefore been difficult to know what the consumers refer to and also for us to perform a correct translation. Therefore, we performed this translation process very carefully due to the awareness of this potential confusion.

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

Our findings and analysis show how consumers navigate ethical tensions in a marketplace. It appears that consumers use social values, ideologies and brands when they navigate ethical tensions in a marketplace. We find that there is an interdependence between these, as presented in Figure 1. Consumers' social values and ideologies are used by consumers when they relate to brands, at the same time as brands influence the consumers' social values and ideologies. Also, there is an interdependence between social values and ideologies as consumers' social values are influenced by their ideological beliefs, and vice versa.

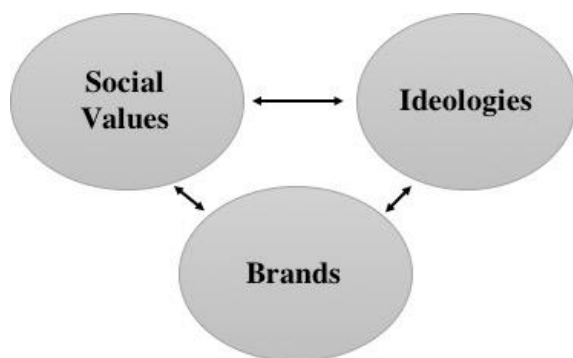


Figure 1. Navigation of Ethical Tensions

How consumers use social values, ideologies and brands to navigate are subjective for the consumers. We find that consumers use three strategies based on social values, ideologies and brands in order to navigate ethical tensions in a marketplace.

These consumer strategies are; 1) *Use symbolic meanings to find and manage their ethical standpoint*, 2) *Polarize and dramatize the ethical tensions*, 3) *Identify political meanings*. The way consumers navigate ethical tensions allows them to express and reflect over their ethical standpoint. Consumers use these three strategies when they navigate since the strategies enable the consumers to comprehend ethical tensions in the marketplace.

This analysis is structured according to social values and ideologies, and brands having a mediating role of the marketplace, to show how consumers use the three consumer strategies to navigate the ethical tensions in the contemporary dairy discussion.

Social Values

We can find some prominent and recurring social values among the consumers. These social values are; health, environment, animal ethics, agriculture and nature, lifestyle, identity, and trend following. We can argue for these to be social values since previous research have presented that ethical consumption can create symbolic feelings that links to lifestyles, identities or other social values (Moisander, 1991). These social values are to some extent coherent with Brunk's (2010) findings of potential sources of CPE origin, namely the kind of corporate activities that evoke favourable or unfavourable ethical perceptions. However, the certain social values we found for this study are particularly relevant for the specific ethical tensions existing at the dairy marketplace in Sweden. These social values have an important role in the consumers' discussions and their reasoning about brands and ethical consumption. The consumers

view the ethical discussion and consumption differently depending on what social value the consumers' prioritize. We consider some of these social values as more interesting to analyse further due to the consumers' strong argumentations or conflicting reflections.

First, we can identify the origin of brands as a recurring discussion topic for two groups of consumers, both the consumers having agriculture and nature as their prioritized social value, as well as the group of consumers who give priority to animal ethics. Due to these groups' social values, they all share the same desire to choose Swedish brands and preferably locally produced products. Which brand it is has a minor influence in their choice making, as long as the brand is locally produced. We can see how these consumers implement the first consumer strategy when they consume different brands as they search for symbolic meanings in brands to find brands coherent with their social values.

Hanna: Locally produced and solidary production helps me to navigate in choosing Oatly. A trust in the brand makes me feel confident in buying products coming from a fair production which I want to support.

Vera: My first choice is the locally produced dairy products from a farm in Uppland, Sju Gårdar. Why I buy Swedish produced dairy products is because I want to support Swedish dairy farmers and our agriculture. I think it is important to protect and maintain Swedish agriculture.

These two quotes picture two different arguments for choosing Swedish and locally produced products. However, both these

consumers make active choices in choosing only Swedish and locally produced products so that they can know for sure that they consume brands coherent with their own social values. Hence, they perceive it as value trade-offs, which is one of the motivations for ethical consumption (Lee et al., 2009). Due to this discussion, we can therefore see how these consumers use brands, in this case Oatly and Sju Gårdar, based on their social values when they navigate by implementing the first consumer strategy of using symbolic meanings to find and manage their ethical standpoint. This has been done in terms of how they have reviewed the brands to know whether the products are coherent with what they want to support by their consumption. Thereafter, they can by their self-confirmed choice of brand use it to navigate ethical tensions as they by then know they consume in line with their social values.

Similarly, when discussing brands' origin, distinctive brand avoidance can at the same time be identified among the group of consumers prioritizing agriculture and nature as their social value in their ethical consumption. Brands are in this case guiding the consumers by giving them information and working as moral compasses. We can also see how brands influence their social values to a larger extent when consumers are discussing what brands they want to avoid. When the consumers reject certain brands, we can see that consumers also in this case use the first consumer strategy. The consumers therefore become more confident in what brands they want to avoid and why, when they use symbolic meanings in brands to manage their ethical standpoint.

Moral avoidance discussed by Lee et al. (2009) accounts for a corresponding

motivation for why these consumers avoid brands with a different origin than Swedish. The Swedish dairy production has according to these consumers a well-developed production which is in front of other countries' production. At the same time, they explain that Sweden has regulations which assure the production to be environmental friendly, the animals are treated well and there is a great livestock keeping.

Together with these arguments, Vera points out the argument for maintaining Swedish agriculture. She emphasizes the importance of having existing agriculture in Sweden in case of an emergency that would force Sweden to be self-supporting, which would not be possible if we would choose to phase out Swedish agriculture and farmers. Consumers who avoid foreign brands and its production can also be explained as avoiding brand management policies with a negative impact on society, which is explained as moral avoidance discussed by Lee et al. (2009). There is a belief of moral duty among consumers to reject certain brands in order to instead give priority to Swedish production and contribute to ethical improvements in terms of support Swedish and locally produced dairy products.

Identity creation is another prioritized social value among the consumers. A predominant part of these consumers signify that there is abstract symbolism existing in the brands they discuss. We can see how this is used as the first consumer strategy to create identities as a part of their ethical standpoint. In line with both Holt (2002) and Thompson and Tian (2008), brands are used as valuable and useful resources and involved in creating identities. The identity discussion emerges in one way or another among all the

consumers' reasoning and we can argue that consumers associate this ethical discussion with identity creation. We can see this especially among the ethically influenced consumers who tend to consume for egoistic values rather than altruistic values (Davies & Gutsche, 2016). For example, Josefine is an ethically influenced consumer seeking to create an identity based on her other prioritized social values; health and environment. However, she perceives her consumption as something she does to express her identity, in the same time as she also use the second consumer strategy:

Josefine: You are more than willing to identify yourself with Oatly. I cannot identify myself with bringing a product from Eldorado to the cashier when buying food. However, Oatly is no problem since I can identify myself with that brand.

Except from the apparent symbolic meaning Josefine use in Oatly, this quote also shows how she implements the second consumer strategy to dramatize the ethical tensions. This can be seen by her dramatized examples to emphasize her social value of creating an identity even more. Josefine strongly stresses the unwillingness to identify herself with the brand Eldorado which supports the identity avoidance discussed by Lee et al. (2009), which is done when consumers perceive that brands symbolically conflict with their identities. At the same time it is easy for her to express herself by using brands with strong symbolic meanings to navigate the ethical tensions and comprehend the marketplace. Her quote supports one of the two directions the symbolic meaning of products can take, which is social-symbolism discussed by Elliott (1997). This also confirms the official

stand consumers might want to make to categorize themselves in the society (Belk, 1988; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). It is also coherent with how ethically influenced consumers are more prone to choose ethically when products are socially desirable (Davies & Gutsche, 2016).

These theoretical discussions could arguably be adapted to the main part of the consumers who are buying plant-based products with health as their social value. It appears that these consumers want to feel and also be perceived as modern, healthy and trendy consumers having an identity connected to the trend of consuming vegetarian- and vegan products, where Oatly often is mentioned in the discussions. The vast majority of the consumers associate Oatly with the vegan movement. This is noticeably a popular association for this group of consumers who are prioritizing their health as social value, since it appears as an easy and understandable source of information for them in what the brand stands for. Oatly is for them a part of the modern and healthy consumption trend. Thereby, Oatly is also a relatively easy resource for them to use in order to navigate the ethical tensions and they can be confident in their consumption choices related to their social value. This supports Belk's (1988) reasoning for how consumers prefer to transform symbolic meaning in brands to construct collective identities, which the healthy option in combination with the vegan identity can be an explicit example of.

However, the discussions among the consumers which touch upon identities have different point of views and thus take different directions. There is an identified tension between the consumers' different identity creation as well as the divergent

thoughts consumers have concerning it. Ann, a consumer who also buys Oatly, shows there can be other opposing opinions regarding how people use brands for their identity construction. When asking about her thoughts regarding ethical consumption, she argues that ethical consumption has to some extent lost its meaning, and she says:

Ann: It feels like it can be a lot of identity building by consuming ethically. Then I am wondering how much focus it actually is on supporting ethics and how much it is about one's own identity to be perceived as an ethical consumer.

She doubts the extent people actually care about the ethics behind their consumption. At the same time she also thinks brands make it to some extent impossible for consumers to not create some sort of identity when consuming, due to the extensive branding strategies corporations use. Ann, as an ethical consumer, does not identify herself with seeking to create an identity through brands and ethical consumption. Rather, she opposes the mainstream idea of creating an identity. Hence, she is not directly opposing the mainstream consumers, as Cherrier et al. (2011) argue ethical consumer's identity projects consist of. Instead, she identifies with resisting the system created by corporations, based on her ideology. Thereby, we can see the interdependence between Ann's social value and ideology when she uses the third consumer strategy of identifying political meanings.

Another path this identity discussion takes can be pictured with Maria's view of consuming brands in favour of one's own

identity creation if not having well-grounded reasons behind the decisions.

Maria: I think it becomes cumbersome when one gets attached to an identity; I am either this or that, and then get provoked by discussing the reasons behind the decisions.

Maria clearly states the concerns she has with people not doing conscious choices, but rather base their choices on what is in line with their identities and let the identity creation instead be the reason behind consumption choices. One prominent group of consumers supports Maria's thoughts about consumers' obligation to make conscious choices. These are the consumers having animal ethics as their prioritized social value. For example, Ida is one consumer who can represent this belief and based on her reasoning we can see how her ethical standpoint is a part of her identity. Her identity is based on being a knowledgeable consumer who supports animal ethics.

Interviewer: What do you think would be a better solution when it comes to keeping animals?

Ida: To not consume animals. For me that is so obvious. You do not need to. There is nothing that says that you need to continue to consume animals. Consume in a different way. Do not consume dead animal bodies or their decay products. Primarily, you need to look up what the production actually looks like. The oat has not suffered in the same way as the cow.

She is confident in herself when she encourages others to search for information

and take conscious decisions based on this information. Ida is an example of how consumers implement the second consumer strategy by both dramatize and polarize the ethical tensions to make her ethical standpoint clearer. At the same time she makes a distinction between her and others' ethical standpoints, she encourage the others to seek information to see it from her perspective. For consumers who have their ethical standpoint as a part of their identity it seems important for them to have a lot of information and knowledge. There is an understanding and interpretation that you need to be informed in the subject in order to be taken seriously. These consumers do not refer to brands when explaining their perception and experience regarding being a conscious consumer. Hence, their ethical standpoint is a main part of their identity as conscious consumers, where they do not need brands as resources to navigate the ethical tensions.

Consumers' willingness to not only create an identity, but also a certain lifestyle by their consumption is another salient social value occurring among the consumers. The symbolic meaning Oatly has succeeded to create is noticeable among the consumers in the way they can use the brand to achieve a certain lifestyle. This can easiest be understood by looking at how Lina uses the first consumer strategy. Lina has a willingness to create her wanted lifestyle and she explains how she can achieve this by the use of Oatly and its symbolic meanings, to also find her ethical standpoint:

Interviewer: Do you think there is an underlying reason why you choose to consume Oatly?

Lina: I would say that the primary factor is lifestyle. There is some sort of lifestyle I want to achieve. Maybe it is a bit about ethics, but to be honest I do not think that is the primary underlying factor even though I wish I could say it was. But no, I think it is more about a lifestyle which includes a lot of things of course. For me it is about being healthy, and if it is the healthiest alternative to choose Oatly – that I do not know. But it has been launched in that way as well as the brand had a good timing with this vegan wave which includes being healthy and change consumption patterns to choose plant based products.

Interviewer: So this lifestyle you said you want to achieve, how do you think about that in accordance to choosing Oatly?

Lina: I think that I easiest can describe this with a scenario. Isabella Löwengrip is a famous, well-known and successful entrepreneur and has several companies. She communicates that she has a healthy diet and that she has changed her lifestyle. She uploads pictures on her social media channels of her fridge which is filled with berries, chia seeds pudding, kale, and there is also Oatly's oat milk. Even at her company's office, having fancy interior and is located at Stureplan, serves Oatly's oat milk. I connect Oatly to these kinds of settings and social context and I think this is something that many people want to belong to or admire. This is my picture of this brand and the lifestyle connected to it.

There is a large group of consumers that are confirming this lifestyle described by Lina. Whereof Josefine agrees with Lina and points out how Oatly has managed to profile the brand after a lifestyle which is youthful and modern. This is in line with previous studies (Tybout & Carpenter, 2001; Arnould & Thompson, 2005) of how brands serve as resources to achieve a wide range of lifestyle goals. At the same time it also assimilate with Kornberger's (2010) discussion of how brands are single pieces and enable consumers to create lifestyles. Oatly seems to be fairly easy to use as a resource in their navigation when they implement the first consumer strategy of using symbolic meanings, since it is a brand with a clear positioning at the market with a strong symbolic meaning.

Based on Lina's explanation and use of the first consumer strategy it can be understood how she has used the brand to achieve her social value of creating a lifestyle. This enables her to comprehend ethical tensions in the marketplace. However, she simultaneously clarifies her awareness of Oatly's strategy and good timing with the vegan trend. Oatly's association to the vegan lifestyle is a common association almost all the participating consumers agree upon, even though there are diverse opinions about the brand. For example, although Johan does not consume plant-based products himself, he supports this association. He explains it as a collaboration Oatly has created to the vegan movement and lifestyle, which the brand tends to take advantage of and use it as a market strategy.

Ideologies

As both Holt (2002) and Lee et al. (2009) present, ideologies are interwoven concepts in consumer culture and ethical consumption. Therefore, consumers position themselves as complying or opposing to brand's ideologies - depending on their own ideological beliefs. The consumers' perceptions of dairy consumption and the contemporary discussion often reflects ideological perspectives. By understanding the consumers' associations and reflections of the different perspectives in the dairy discussion, we can understand how they motivate their ethical consumption. We can see throughout the consumers' discussions that ideology and brands base their use of the consumer strategies in their navigation of ethical tensions.

Depending on whether the consumers are ethically influenced or ethical consumers, we can see differences in how they resonate. For example, when we ask the consumers whether they believe they can vote with their wallet, they reflected differently. In coherence with Johnston's (2007) study of consumer-citizen hybrids, some of the consumers reflect both on their individual benefits and the societal benefits of their purchase.

The ethically influenced consumers identify it as a positive and rewarding statement to which they could agree upon and they tend to perceive their consumption vote as an individual act which influences markets. Agnes for example, argues that when she actively asks to get Oatly in her coffee, she reminds the cashier to put the oat drink more visible in the coffee shop, and thereby she influences the cashier to believe more people want Oatly. She believes her action and consumption contribute to the society, since

she perceives Oatly to be a good choice for people's health and the environment. Hence, she uses symbolic meanings to construct the society (Elliot, 1997) and act on her ideological belief. Thereby, we can see how she uses the first consumer strategy from an ideological perspective. She continues to argue for her individual influence:

Interviewer: Do you believe you can influence on a larger scale? That you as a consumer can influence a large industry?

Agnes: The more times I do it, the market will notice. As a consumer you have an extreme power. Not just once, however, when you repeatedly ask or buy. In the long term, it will show clearly what you demand. I am taking it up to discussion with my parents and friends which means I am spreading the word. Similarly, when I am cooking dinner to guests and use Oatly's oat based products, my guests might notice that it is not a big difference for them to do it too.

Similarly, Stina reflects on her possibilities to influence by her purchasing power as:

Stina: I think and hope I can influence by my choice. I lived in Uppsala when Sju Gårdar started their business, and I have seen them grow by number of products and customers. And I have definitely contributed to it by purchasing their products.

As they believe their consumption and actions eventually will influence the market, there is an underlying ideological belief of individuals having the power to influence markets. This reflects what Bargh (1994)

and also Khan et al., (2013) argue, that consumers' daily and mundane choices can reflect deeply rooted ideologies, values and personality traits. However, the ethically influenced consumers' reflection of their ideology is not based on altruistic values, rather it is based on their own identity projects (Davies & Gutsche, 2016).

These ethically influenced consumers are implementing the first consumer strategy of using symbolic meanings in a different way compared to the how previous consumers' discussions have used the first consumer strategy. They use brands in line with the construction of their identity (Elliot, 1997) as they are positioning the brands and their actions in relation to their own identities rather than to the system as whole. They identify with being an influential part of a collective and use brands as symbols to influence others and the marketplace. As Elliott (1997) presents, this shows how consumers use brands in outward direction in terms of social-symbolism to construct the society.

This differs in comparison to the ethical consumers. The ethical consumers carry stronger sets of values than the ethically influenced consumers, (Luedicke et al., 2009; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007) and they tend to not reflect on their individual influences and personal gain when asked whether they as consumers can influence markets. Neither do they use brands to exemplify their ideologies to the same extent as the ethically influenced consumer. Rather, they have associations to societal and political perspectives, and tend to navigate by using the third consumer strategy of identifying political meanings. Hanna, for example, does not believe consumers can vote with their wallet:

Hanna: I do not believe in capitalistic systems. I do not believe you as a consumer are able to influence a global market, like waste disposal and working conditions for humans, those questions are too complex to consume your way out. People can influence a pro mille, but not the whole world. I am too pessimistic to believe that. I believe it is politics, economy and markets.

Similarly, Ann argues that corporations create demands through marketing. Therefore, consumers cannot vote with their wallet on such conditions that the demand for ethicality is genuinely created:

Ann: Consumers cannot be trusted to take ethical responsibilities, since they are influenced by corporations. Neither can corporations since they are bid to make profit before making good, ethical decisions. I believe politics must decide what is ethical to make the corporations act ethically.

Ann and Hanna thereby believe political incentives are required to change ethical consumption. What they express is that individuals are not in charge, rather are larger entities in power; politics and corporations. Their ideological dispositions divert from capitalism, and are more aligned with socialism. Hence, being an ethical consumer for Hanna and Ann is an issue of adapting a socialist ideology. In these reflections, they are not using brands as resources, however, are navigating by using the third consumer strategy of identifying political meanings. This enables them to express and reflect on their ideological disposition, which helps them to navigate and understand the ethical tensions in the marketplace.

Similarly, the ethical consumers prioritizing the social value agriculture and nature, rather speak about how the political system fails farmers. This becomes a matter of political perspectives and ideologies. For example, the ethical consumer Maria perceives consumer actions as contradictory. This is problematic for her, since the farmers are put in between stronger forces and are blamed by consumers to not adopt fast enough to the consumers' demands although they are constantly developing their production processes:

Maria: I think you should turn the discussion. Instead every consumer should be able to defend their purchase. It is not the farmers, because they are doing what they can to produce the products we demand politically. The fact that we do not purchase those products in store is actually wrong.

This shows how Maria use the second consumer strategy by polarizing and dramatizing the ethical tensions in her navigation. She believes the consumers cannot be trusted in this system. Rather than blaming the farmers, she thinks the consumers should take on more responsibility and act more coherently to their own desires by making better purchasing decisions. Hence, Maria polarizes and dramatizes the ethical tensions since she states what she thinks is problematic and what the consumers are doing wrong, in order to make the ethical tensions understandable.

The consumers who prioritize the social value agriculture and nature further use the third consumer strategy of identifying political meanings. Johan, for example, argues that the political solution in the global

economic imbalance is to have higher tariffs on imported dairies, even though he in principal is against tariffs and positive to free trade. He argues that the higher requirements on animal welfare and environment in Sweden must pay off, and the international market should adjust after the Swedish market if they want to exist on it. Hence, he identifies with a liberal ideology, although is willing to contradict his own ideological principles to create better terms for what social value he prioritizes; agriculture and nature. To exemplify this, he uses Arla as a reference in the dairy discussion. He perceives Arla as a large farmer owned corporation in which the farmers lack actual power:

Johan: It is peculiar that the farmers own organisation cannot make sure they get paid what they need to break even [...]. The farmers live on subsidies from the EU, and it is sad that they have to be subsidies takers instead of entrepreneurs, since Arla pays them so badly.

From this perspective, he search for the political meanings in Arla and use it to negotiate his liberal standpoint. This since he believes in the idea that everyone have the ability to choose how to act, especially within a collective corporation. However, he believes that the complexity of the farmer situation and the dairy discussion have to entail solutions that are not coherent with his ideological belief. As Holt (2012) argues, consumers' ideologies and values in consumption differ between categories. Hence, we can see that an underlying political ideology is negotiable when the circumstances demand solutions based on an opposing ideology.

Thereby, we can also see indications of an existing connection between brands' ideologies' and the individuals' ideology, both concerning coherence and resistance. For example, ethical consumers who purchase plant-based products and have strong ideological beliefs, actively avoid brand ideologies associated with capitalism. The consumers avoid Arla since it is seen as a large corporation with a lot of power, only thinking about making profits. Simultaneously, Oatly is met with scepticism, although the brand has vegan priorities in the dairy discussion. Ann expresses her view of Oatly's way of doing business as problematic:

Ann: Oatly has an interest in market shares, so it is obvious they have found a great niche to make profit of when vegetarianism and veganism is trendy. So the question is, how critical can a resistance movement be? Veganism have previously been hard core socialism, they are against capitalism. Then it becomes problematic when a corporation such as Oatly are channelizing veganism's resistance against capitalism.

Hence, Ann's ideological belief in socialism and veganism makes her resistant of brands making profit by exploiting ideologies they are unable to be identified with. The resistance of both Arla and Oatly are therefore related to incongruity in ideological standpoints (Lee et al., 2009). Even though Oatly shares Ann's social value of animal ethics, her ideological belief is motivating her more than Oatly's offer of vegan products. When consumers use the third consumer strategy in the way Ann does, we can see how the brand's political

meaning is identified to not confirm her own ideological standpoint.

Similarly, the ethically influenced consumers also use the third consumer strategy of identifying political meanings between ideologies of dairy consumption and plant-based consumption. With support from Khan et al. (2013), who argue that aspects of ideology is reflected in frequently bought products, we can argue that brands becomes politicized in this dairy discussion. Lina, for example, elaborates her reflection on lifestyle and connects Oatly and Arla with different values and political preferences:

Lina: Oatly and oat drink is connected with urbanization, larger cities, an individualistic, competitive society. Oatly is right winged, capitalistic politics. Arla and milk, on the other hand, is connected to the farmer society, Marxism, conservatism and left winged politics.

She cannot define why she makes this connections, although argues that the associations of ideologies are linked with the brands attracting different kinds of people. She perceives Oatly to not be present in rural areas in the same way as in larger cities. She argues that is because the contemporary society is more individualistic, conscious and trend oriented, which makes it beneficial for companies to approach consumers likewise. Arguably, she is indirectly influenced by the individualistic and trendy symbolic associations as she chooses Oatly instead of Arla. Hence, she uses the first and third consumer strategies when she is navigating, as she uses the symbolic meanings and identifies political meanings in the brands. Also, when she express her reasoning, she is at the same time using the

second consumer strategy of polarizing and dramatizing how she perceive the brand's symbolism and political meanings. She is doing this to comprehend the ethical tensions in the marketplace, as well as to reflect over her own ethical standpoint.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This research aims to understand how consumers navigate ethical tensions in a marketplace by exploring the context of dairy discussion in Sweden. We find that consumers use social values, ideologies and brands when they navigate ethical tensions in a marketplace, which are interconnected. Consumers' social values and ideologies are used by consumers when they relate to brands, at the same time as brands influence the consumers' social values and ideologies. Also, there is an interdependence between social values and ideologies as consumers' social values are influenced by their ideological beliefs, and vice versa. Our analysis shows that the consumers use three consumer strategies based on their social values, ideologies and brands in order to navigate ethical tensions in a marketplace. These consumer strategies are; 1) *Use symbolic meanings to find and manage their ethical standpoint*, 2) *Polarize and dramatize the ethical tensions*, 3) *Identify political meanings*. The way consumers navigate ethical tensions allows them to express and reflect over their ethical standpoint. Consumers use these three strategies when they navigate since the strategies enable the consumers to comprehend ethical tensions in the marketplace. We can see that consumers use one consumer strategy at the time, or several simultaneously.

How the consumers navigate by implementing the strategies are discussed as followed:

1) *Use symbolic meanings to find and manage their ethical standpoint*

We find that, to navigate ethical tensions, consumers' search for symbolic meanings in brands in order to simplify their choice of brand. Based on social values and ideologies, consumers find symbolic meanings in brands when they use brands as resources. The consumers evaluate whether the brand consists of a symbolic meaning coherent with their social values and ideologies, which helps them to achieve their ethical standpoint. They have reviewed the brands to know whether the brands are coherent with what they want to support by their consumption. This enables consumers to simplify the evaluation of brands, at the same time as it allows consumers to easily express their ethical standpoint. Hence, brands works as guidance for the consumers when they navigate ethical tensions.

Our analysis shows how consumers find symbolic meanings in brands useful for also creating identities and lifestyles. We can for example see how strong social values and ideologies are important for consumers, and influence how they evaluate the symbolic meanings in brands. By using symbolic meanings, consumers can also reject certain brands and therefore become more confident in what brands they want to avoid and why to manage their ethical standpoint. The symbolic meanings in brands are strong, nondependent whether the consumer can identify with it or not.

2) Polarize and dramatize the ethical tensions

Our analysis presents that the consumers are navigating the marketplace by polarizing and dramatizing the ethical tensions. Polarizing the ethical tensions helps consumers to understand the market and the discussion. Consumers explain how others are acting, and how they do not agree upon it. This is a way of mapping out the tensions in the marketplace as well as emphasizing their social values and ideologies. We can see how the polarization often is dramatized when consumers express strong social values and ideologies, and their opinion is the correct one. Brands are also included when consumers polarize and dramatize. It is easy for the consumers to use brands as examples in their discussions, due to the symbolic meanings and positions in the marketplace.

Consumers can also dramatize the ethical tensions without polarizing them. Consumers then use strong references and dramatized examples to emphasize their social values and ideologies even more, without putting it in relation to others' opinions.

3) Identify political meanings

In the analysis, we can see that the consumers differ in how their political ideologies influence their use of brands to navigate the ethical tensions. There is a difference in how the consumers perceive themselves being influential by consuming ethically. Most consumers believe they are influential by their consumption, and are more prone to use brands coherent with their social values and ideologies as resources. However, the consumers who are critical to the idea of them being influential are more prone to use brands as resources in resistance

to what is not coherent with their social values and ideologies. Hence, consumers identify political meanings based on their ideological belief, which help them to navigate the ethical tensions on the marketplace. When they identify a political meaning they react in coherence or resistance.

We can also see the difference between ethically influenced consumers and ethical consumers. The ethically influenced consumers present their ideological reasoning from an individual perspective and their ethical consumption contributing to their identity projects. In comparison, the ethical consumers present their ideological reasoning in a societal and political perspective. Additionally, brands in the dairy discussion become politicized by both ethically influenced consumers and ethical consumers since they reflect their closely knitted ideologies to their ethical consumption.

Theoretical contribution

This research's theoretical framework consists of ethical consumption and brands as resources in consumer culture, which in this study applies to ethical tensions in a marketplace with the contemporary dairy discussion in Sweden as context. This enable us to contribute to the theoretical field of brands' significance in ethical consumption to understand how consumers navigate ethical tensions in a marketplace. Our research therefore contributes to the discussion of how consumers use brands as resources in ethical consumption when navigating ethical tensions (Brunk, 2010; Brunk & Blümelhuber, 2011; Bray et al., 2011; Ulver-Sneistrup et al., 2011; Holt, 2004).

Previous research have also paid attention to understand ethical consumers' decision making processes and the values involved in these processes when consuming food products (Shaw et al., 2005; Shaw & Shiu, 2003; De Pelsmacker et al., 2005). Our findings of what social values and ideologies consumers use in this dairy discussion are similar to previous studies. Brunk (2010) adds an important perspective to this discussion as she presents potential sources of CPE origin, the kind of corporate activities that evoke favourable or unfavourable ethical perceptions among consumers. This consumer perspective of corporate ethics harmonizes with our findings of how consumers reason with their social values and ideologies in relation to how they perceive different brands. We further contribute to this discussion by the understanding for how consumer use social values, ideologies and brands in a contemporary discussion on a marketplace. Based on this, we further contribute theoretically by showing how consumers navigate ethical tensions by using the three identified consumer strategies in the Swedish dairy marketplace.

This study provides reflections of consumers' ideologies, and combines Holt (2002) and Lee et al. (2009) when analysing how ideologies are interwoven in consumers' navigation of the dairy discussion. We contribute to a theoretical discussion in line with Elliot (1997) by showing how brands are used in consumers' reasoning to construct their realities. Also, we complement to the discussion of how ethical consumers and ethically influenced consumers differs in their motivations (Davies & Gutsche, 2016; Lee et al., 2009)

We also contribute to further understanding of Holt's (2012) statement of the ethical value paradigm being incorrect. This since we discuss ideological standpoints as negotiable and underlying for ethical consumption, and analyse these evaluations rather than assuming consumers being motivated by a set of values. Additionally, we portray the boundless marketplace with antagonistic ideologies, from a different perspective (Thompson, 2004). Our study contributes to the understanding of marketplaces with opposing ideologies, and how consumers navigate by implementing the consumer strategies based on their social values, ideologies and brands.

Future research

Since this study has contributed with understandings for how consumers navigate ethical tensions in the Swedish dairy marketplace in the context of a contemporary discussion, future research could further develop this understanding by exploring similar context. This future research could focus on a closely related consumption discussion, for example meat or palm oil, as such would evaluate whether our findings are specific for this particular context. Also, future research could adapt similar ethical discussions, such as the car industry in which consumers' consumption ideologies are changing due to innovation. The theories would benefit to be discussed in ethical issues such as; is it really sustainable to purchase an electrical car instead of a fossil fuelled car? Should consumers support locally produced cars to protect the industry's factory workers? Further, future research would gain deeper understanding of this study's analysis, by elaborating Holt's (2012) statement of consumers having different consumption ideologies for different consumption categories.

Secondly, we find consumers in this study to argue extensively for Swedish dairy products to be superior foreign products. We are aware of this being a subjective ethnocentric belief since all consumers in this study are from Sweden. Ulver-Sneistrup et al. (2011) support the relevance of engaging in theoretical cross-cultural discussions of mundane consumption engaging political and cultural resistance. Therefore, future research should investigate the cross-national differences in dairy consumption discussions to elaborate the usage of brands as resources in ethical consumption. Preferably this can be done in countries similar to Sweden, such as Norway, Denmark and Germany, which the consumers have used as examples during our interviews.

Managerial implications

The contemporary dairy discussion in Sweden is challenging for consumers to navigate as there are tensions and complexity due to the different ethical perspectives. Our findings for how consumers navigate the ethical tensions offer managers useful insight for how consumers manage this discussion and marketplace. Since the discussion entails societal topics relevant for managers, such as politics and consumer trends, it becomes useful to understand consumers' reasoning and usage of brands in such conditions. This research can therefore contribute to managers who seek to acquire understandings of consumers. The understanding for consumers and how they use brands as resources in ethical consumption when navigating ethical tensions is arguably valuable information for managers when they create or improve brand strategies. We also show what the consumers perceive about brands, how they evaluate brands and

what brands they see as useful for its navigation. These are key features for a manager to understand in order to create relevant and valuable brands for the consumers. This insight could in turn contribute to the wanted response a manager would like from its consumers.

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