

Shaping minds to increase ecological consumption?

Ethical goal framing on consumer perceptions

BACHELOR THESIS – RETAIL MANAGEMENT

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Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to provide insight into Swedish consumers' attitudes regarding their purchasing of ecological food and household products. We also aim to investigate if, and how, negative goal framing can affect consumers in their purchase intention and evaluation of these products.

Design/methodology/approach: We used a quantitative method for data collection. The methodology consisted of a pre-study using an online questionnaire with 20 respondents, as well as a questionnaire with an experiment through an online questionnaire with 152 respondents. The framing was designed with either a health focus, or environment focus, to investigate whether any differences occurred. Using t-value analysis, we examined whether there are statistically significant differences with regards to the perception of price, quality, health risk and environmental risk depending on use or absence of ethical framing.

Findings: Our findings show that using negative goal framing does have an effect on consumers, but we conclude that the effect does not depend on what is being communicated; health or environment issues. Our findings point to a similarity with previous observations proposing that the reason for why ethical framing has an effect is the lack of information among consumers related to ethical issues, and suggest that companies possibly can use negative framing as a tool for more effective market communication of ecological products.

Key words: Ethical framing, Goal framing, CSR, Consumers, Ethical consumption,

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background case

In February 2016, a Swedish retail store owner did something that would open the eyes of many consumers walking in to the store. The non-organic grapes were placed in the shelf among the detergent. The owner of the store wished to illustrate how toxic non-organic grapes are, due to the pesticides that are used when growing them. Seeing grapes in this area of the store made consumers reflect about the issue, and the experiment resulted in no sales whatsoever of these grapes, even they were on special price.

This story led us to think about what gives consumers incentives to buy more ecologically produced products, and was our inspiration for writing this thesis.

1.2 Problem identification

There is great interest and concern for CSR issues, both among companies and consumers (Glassman, 2006), and the awareness regarding CSR issues is growing each year in Sweden (Blom, 2014). Because of this, many companies are investing their resources in CSR practices and the number of companies that commit to CSR are projected to increase rapidly (Rangan *et al.*, 2012). However, despite the increased ethical consciousness among consumers, many studies show that it is not often the case that this interest is reflected in consumers' buying behavior (Mohr *et al.* 2001).

As Pickett-Baker & Ozaki's (2008) study shows, there is a gap between consumers' perception of their own actions and their actual behavior. Steg & Vlek's (2009) review points out that a change in behavior is needed to reduce environmental impact due to technical efficiency gains being exceeded by increasing consumption. Many consumers may be interested in CSR issues, but when it comes to the buying decision, they evaluate products' attributes simultaneously. Aspects such as price, quality, convenience and brand familiarity have shown to be the most important attributes when it comes to final buying decision (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000; Dickson, 2001; Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). According to Beckmann (2007), consumers feel positively towards CSR committed companies and they are willing to reward these companies, although to a much greater extent in an intangible manner than a tangible manner. From a consumer perspective, consuming with responsibility is seen as a time consuming activity, economically disadvantageous and stressful (*ibid.*). This strongly indicates that CSR's influence on consumers' behavior is much more complex and tentative than its effects on their attitudes and beliefs, and shows that companies' CSR activities have not yet achieved much influence in the consumer's buying decision making process (Arredondo *et al.*, 2010).

The reasons for this could be many. One possible explanation as to why this is the case could be the company's ineffective marketing communication of their CSR practices. If businesses wish to integrate their CSR practices with other business goals, they must, according to Jones *et al.*, 2007,

solve the marketing challenge of moving into the mass market. A quote from Hickie *et al.* (2005) explains the opportunity that stems from the identified problem: “if the CSR movement can effectively reach and influence the purchasing decisions of a critical mass of consumers, it can make socially responsible business practices profitable - and even essential - for corporations”. Some studies prove that the amount of ecological purchases in fact has little to do with disposable income, and more to do with general interest in buying such products (Krystallis & Chrysosoidis, 2005). Therefore, we need to create ways of reaching out to consumers such that we can open their eyes and awaken their interest for buying ecological products. Then, how can companies improve their marketing communication so that the CSR messages remain along the end of the consumer’s buying process?

1.3 Research question

With the background information presented above, we can state that there is something missing for majority of consumers to be willing to choose ecologically. There might be a lack of information concerning ecological products, or perhaps a way of communicating that has no, or weak, impact on the consumers. To attract the attention of consumers and influence their purchasing behaviors, companies’ marketing communication should be formed compellingly. Beckmann and Langer (2003) state that consumers are more sensitive to negative CSR information than to positive CSR information. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate if emphasizing the negative aspects of non-ecological products will increase the consumer’s perceived risk regarding health and environment, and consequently, lead to an increased percentage of selection of the ecological alternative among our respondents. To execute this investigation, we use negative goal framing, which is part of framing theory. Framing is a way of presenting messages so that individuals are able to label and identify occurrences and making those occurrences meaningful (Snow et al, 1986).

In the remainder of this study, we aim to answer to the following research question:

Does negative goal framing have an effect on Swedish consumers’ perception and purchase intentions regarding non-organic and organic products, and if so, then in what way does it have an effect?

In addition to the main research question, we will also observe demographic characteristics of the respondents. Demography is an interesting factor to marketers, as they can use this information to target and reach specific consumer groups more effectively.

1.4 Expected contribution

What we expect regarding this thesis from a theoretical perspective, is to complement already existing research on ethical framing and goal framing theory. Previous studies have paid much

attention to testing health related issues with goal framing. We have not yet come across a study that examines whether there is a difference in consumer perception concerning non-ecological products that affect health in comparison to non-ecological products that affect the environment. Additionally, we have come across only a few studies that examine purchase intentions using goal framing. Our study and findings can therefore be interesting for potential elaborations in future research.

We also believe that this thesis will have practical implications. Based upon previous findings, we would like to examine if negative goal framing has an effect on Swedish consumers' perception regarding ecological products, and if the effect of negative framing leads to an increased consumption of ecological products. By doing this, we could provide marketers with meaningful information on how negative goal framing can be used to promote ethical consumption in Sweden. This will be particularly relevant for interest organizations in Sweden, such as KRAV or Svanen, as well as for manufacturers focusing on producing eco-friendly products.

1.5 Delimitations

For this thesis, we made several delimitations in order to narrow down the scope and to make the results of our study as generalizable as possible within the given setting.

Firstly, we have made the decision only to research the Swedish market, since all of our respondents will be Swedish, or people of other nationalities currently living in Sweden.

Secondly, we are only looked at our chosen topic in the daily consumer goods industry, mainly food and household products (e.g. detergent, cleaning materials, toilet paper). The reason for this is that every respondent over 18 years of age is expected to have familiarity with this industry, and is expected to partly, or fully, contribute to the purchasing of household and food products. This means that all respondents of our questionnaire can be expected to have been in situations that relate to our questionnaire questions before. We also believe that there are many interesting challenges in this industry, and that more research is needed to understand the discrepancy between consumers', retailers' and producers' needs and wishes concerning ecologically produced products.

Finally, we are going to delimit ourselves to use only negative framing because results of framing studies have shown that negative framing is more effective (Robert J. Donovan *et al*, 1999). We will examine whether emphasizing negative aspects of non-ecological products will affect consumers' perception of price and quality, as well as assessment of health and environmental risk, and consequently, if it leads to an increased purchase intention of ecological products.

1.6 Thesis outline

This thesis contains 10 chapters;

In chapter 1, the background for the topic of the thesis, as well as our research question, expected contribution and delimitations are presented. In chapter 2, the literature review

concerning the topics of framing, CSR, WTP and ethical consumption are described. We also relate these theories and previous research to our experiment, and present hypotheses based on this. In chapter 3, we present the methodology used in our study. The 4th chapter contains the result of the empirical tests and thereafter, the discussion of the result is provided in chapter 5. Based on chapter 4 and 5, the conclusion follows in chapter 6. Furthermore, our recommendations for the marketers and retailers can also be found in this chapter. The limitations of the study are identified in the next chapter, and suggestions for future research are identified in chapter 8. The full list of references, as well as appendix, is found in the end of this thesis.

2. Theory

This chapter presents the theories that lie as a foundation for our thesis. Definitions of the mainly occurring terms and concepts in our thesis is provided in Appendix 1.

After presenting the fundamental theories, this chapter goes on to summarize relevant research that we used as a base for creating our hypothesis. As this is a deductive study, our hypotheses are based on previous findings, and logically, we also present our 10 hypotheses in this chapter. A brief motivation is made, explaining the background to each hypothesis.

Our study consists of an experiment using framing texts focusing on two issues: health and environment, and testing two different product categories: food products and household products. Therefore, literature building up to our hypotheses focuses on studies on similar topics.

2.1 Description of the daily consumer goods industry

The Swedish daily consumer goods market presents interesting challenges. A large share of Swedish consumers seem to want to buy ecological and fair trade products to as much extent as possible (Blom, 2014). The increasing demand for such products is accompanied by an increasing supply of ecological food products, not only in grocery stores, but also in convenience stores, gas stations, restaurants, and similarly (Livsmedel.se). The consumers in this industry have a strong bargaining power, and issues that are important to consumers need to be dealt with quickly by the retailer. For instance, Swedish consumers' concerns regarding ecological bananas have caused a change in the Swedish food retail industry. After a lot of discussion concerning the health effects of non-ecological bananas in the media, a majority of Swedish food stores do not longer sell bananas that are not ecological (Supermiljöbloggen, 2014; Dagens Nyheter, 2014). Studies show that the Swedish consumers believe they can affect society more through ethical consumption rather than through other alternatives, such as voting (Löhman & Steinholtz, 2003). Consumers have a lot of power to change the industry, but this evidently goes hand in hand with the need for producers or advocacy organizations to communicate the importance of ecologically produced or fairly traded products to consumers.

2.2 Framing

Companies may create messages that are meant to inform consumers and raise their awareness about an issue through marketing of these messages, and in this way influence their opinion. This is the concept of framing. "Frames are ways of presenting a message so that individuals are able to label and identify occurrences and making those occurrences meaningful" (Snow *et al*, 1986). Tversky and Kahneman illustrated the effects of framing in 1981 by explaining that consumers' preferences could be altered through framing of a certain issue. Framing may easily be mistaken for a persuasion tool, but it is rather a way of shaping perceptions in the minds of the consumers

through activating information that can be obtained from memory (Nelson *et al*, 1997; Scarabis *et al*, 2006)

2.2.1 Ethical framing

Ethical framing is used to describe frames that are created with the aim of raising awareness of a certain ethical issue (Stanforth & Hauck, 2010).

2.2.2 Goal framing

If the researcher aims to enhance the evaluation of a certain issue, goal framing may be used (Levin *et al*, 1998). It can be used in two ways, either it can focus on the potential of gaining something, or it can focus on the potential of preventing a loss. The consequence or implied goal of a behavior is framed with the aim of affecting the persuasion to the consumer. Effects are measured through comparison of the rate of adoption of the behavior between groups. Using this method is common in studies of communication with the aim of forming perceptions. It is also commonly used in research concerning issues such as health, endowment or social dilemmas. Many studies have been executed where both positive and negative goal framing were used to compare the differences in outcome. In most of these cases, a negative framing has shown to have a stronger impact than positive framing (*ibid.*).

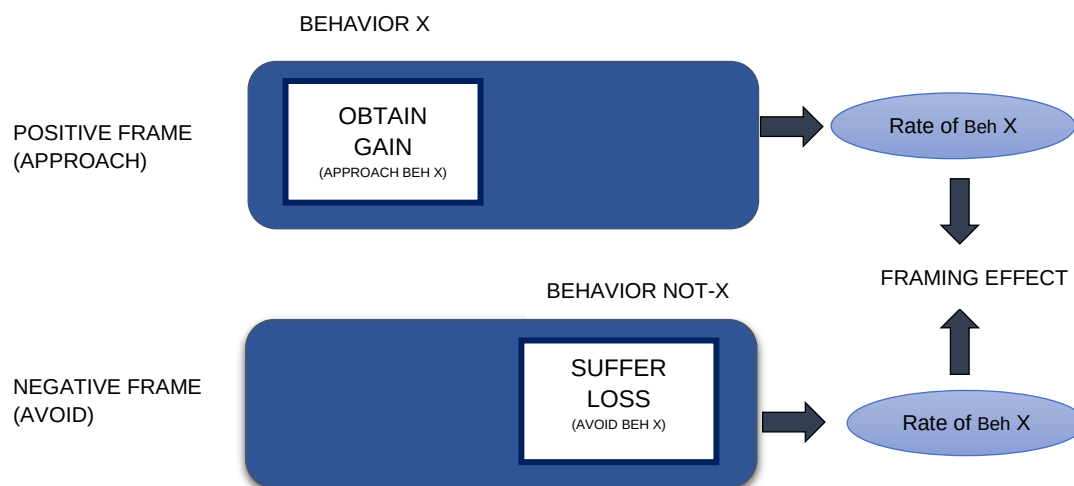


Figure 1. The basic goal framing paradigm (Levin *et al.*)

Steg & Vlek (2009) present a review of literature on factors influencing environmental behavior, and propose that there are three common lines of research, namely “Weighing costs and benefits”, “Moral and normative concerns”, and “Affect”. They further argue that these perspectives need not to be kept apart, and that many models integrate all of these views. Goal framing theory explicitly acknowledges that behavior results from multiple motivations.

2.3 CSR

Bowen is said to have laid the foundation of modern literature on the term CSR already in 1953 (Carroll, 1991). The following years, a lot of research has been made on the topic, and several points of view regarding CSR have emerged as a consequence.

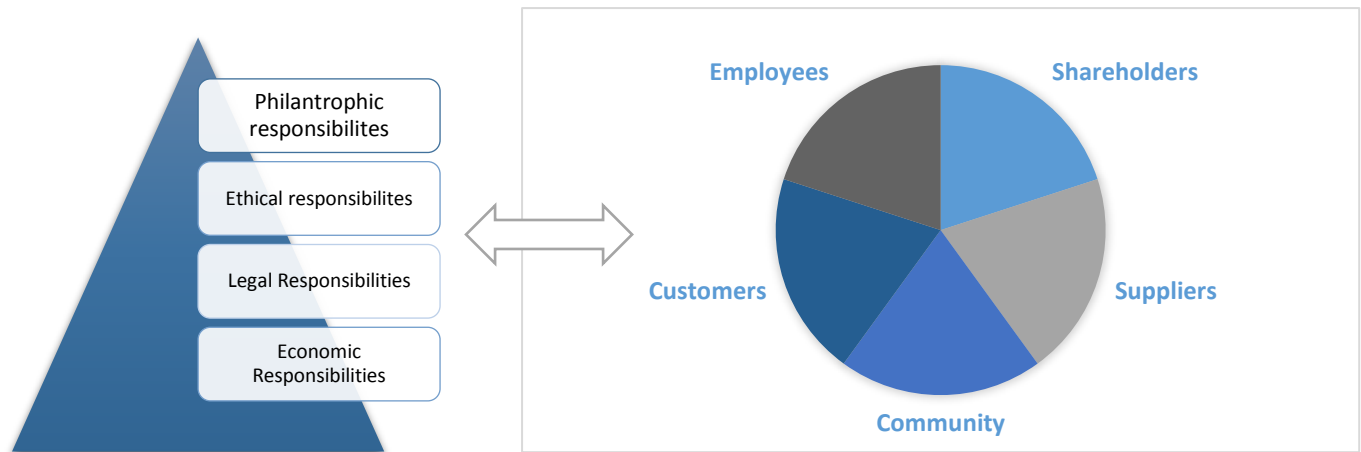


Figure 2. The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility (Carroll) and the parties that CSR is relevant to (Jobber).

Carroll (1991) created the framework “The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility” in order to describe the components of the term and how the different levels of responsibility may follow one another. The figure explains the four basic foundations of CSR according to Carroll, which are economic responsibilities, legal responsibilities, ethical responsibilities and philanthropic responsibilities. The main objective for each and every company is to make a profit by producing goods or services that can be used in our society, which is why this section lies as a base for the pyramid. In addition to this, the firm must also follow legal responsibilities in order to be in business. Ethical responsibilities refer to a company’s obligation to act according to societal norms, and philanthropic responsibilities refer to the actions a company can take to make contributions to society. These two top parts of the pyramids have recently gained increasingly meaningful positions and interest among different kinds of stakeholders.

CSR is viewed by some researchers, such as Blomstrom & Davis (1975), as an obligation of the company, but it is also commonly viewed from other perspectives. It can be viewed as a voluntary action. The European Union defines CSR as “a company’s voluntary integration of social and environmental concerns in its commercial operations and the relationships with their stakeholders” (Jones *et al.*, 2007). There is also the perspective of the expectations coming from other parties than the actual company, and Arrendondo *et al* summarize their definition in the following way: “responding to stakeholder expectations while maximizing the corporation’s

profitability; wider financial, environmental and social impact; minimizing negative and maximizing positive effects on corporate stakeholders”.

As much controversy as there is regarding the definition of the term CSR, there are also different views on whether there is a business case for engaging in the activity or not. The Commission of the European communities (2002) argues that actively taking CSR initiatives can help businesses respond to fundamental changes in the business environment. Bevan *et al.* (2004) argued that benefits include, among others, improved financial performance and profitability, reduced operating costs, enhanced capacity to innovate, increased staff commitment, better risk and crisis management, as well as enhanced reputation and brand value. However, Henderson (2001) argued in his critical book about CSR, *Misguided Virtue*, that “its general adoption by business would reduce welfare and undermine the market economy”.

Porter & Kramer (2011) state that serving disadvantaged communities and developing countries will result in equal or greater opportunities. They further mention that not all profit is equal; “Profits involving a social purpose represent a higher form of capitalism, one that creates a positive cycle of company and community prosperity”, thus suggesting longer term perspective rather than a short term, profit focused, perspective. Porter and Kramer present their view of the business case issue by introducing the term “shared value”, proposing that CSR should both make a meaningful contribution to society and create business value at the same time (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

Concerning price in relation to CSR, most researchers are in agreement that CSR issues are not common purchasing criteria among consumers, and that other aspects such as price and quality are prioritized (Mohr, Webb & Harris, 2001; Arredondo *et al.*, 2010; Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000). The explanations for this could be many. Mohr *et al.* identified two possible explanations as to why this is the case; the first one being that self-interest is manifested in consumers’ buying behavior, and the second one being that there is not enough knowledge among consumers, or they have difficulties obtaining the needed information. Relating to this is that when a legitimate reason for price increases is not stated by the seller, the price will be perceived less fair in the eyes of the customer (Schein, 2002). Finally, Berens *et al.* (2007) demonstrate in their review that consumers may not be willing to compensate the fact that a company is doing poor Corporate Ability work, which includes product quality, service, etc., with knowing that they do good CSR work. CSR associations for such things as giving to worthy causes and community involvement do not appear to influence consumer perceptions of product attributes.

2.4 Communication of CSR

Marketers are encouraged to behave ethically, since a firm's ethical manners are believed to influence product sales and consumers' image of the company (Mascarenhas, 1995). Previous research has been dedicated to investigate how CSR should be advertised to have the greatest effect on purchase intentions and behavior. Pickett-Baker & Okazi explain that lack of information is the main reason why consumers' ethical beliefs are not always reflected on their buying behavior. Wigley (2008) argues that gaining information about a CSR activity increases consumers' purchase intentions.

Several researchers state that marketing should be educative (Pomeroy & Dolnicar 2009), informative and descriptive to effectively communicate CSR issues. Moreover, the advertisement should contain explicit information on the issues and stress the importance and seriousness of the topic (Leonidas C. *et al.* 2011).

2.5 Willingness to pay/ Willingness to purchase

Willingness to pay is a common topic of research in many different research areas, and there is also a large body of research regarding willingness to pay when it comes to organic food purchases. Krystallis & Chrysosoidis (2005) argue that WTP for organic food can be a good predictor of actual demand. The same authors also demonstrate that food quality and security, trust in the certification, and in some cases brand name, are important influencers on consumers' WTP for organic food products. However, the price premiums that consumers are willing to pay vary consumer to consumer, even within the organic food category, both between different product categories and between consumers of different nationalities or gender (Corsi&Novelli, 2002; Fotopoulos & Krystallis, 2001; Meier-Ploeger & Woodward, 1999). Attention should be given to the fact that respondents' opinions and reactions in questionnaire do not reflect their actual behavior fully, as concluded by Zanolini in 1988, and that the validity of WTP-studies depends on the methods used by the researchers. Laroche *et al* (2001) argue that consumer attitudes toward environmental issues are very good predictors of their WTP for green products.

2.6 Ethical consumer

The consumer is one of the most important driving forces behind a company's CSR work (Löhman & Steinholtz), and social responsibility will not be developed unless the consumer rewards a company's CSR practices through his/her buying decisions (Arredondo *et al.* 2010). Today, a company's competition in almost any given market is tougher than ever, because consumers do not only seek a product that meets their standards at a low price, but they also expect the product or the company to express their ethical values, and to be something that the consumer wants to identify him- or herself with (Löhman & Steinholtz). Consumers are increasingly aware of the products they choose and how they contribute to society and the environment, which has led to the creation of the term "ethical consumer". Ethical consumers are involved with the

purchasing of products that concern certain ethical issues (human rights, labor conditions, animal well-being, environment, etc.) and are chosen freely by individual consumers (Doane, 2001). Other similar terms referring to a likewise concept have been created, such as “citizen consumer”, however in this essay we will refer to the notion of the ethical consumer.

Even though many consumers have shown a willingness to be an ethical consumer, in reality, CSR issues are not the most important choice criteria when it comes to in store decision making (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000). However, when it comes to ethical consumers, these people can be expected to perform a more extensive information search due to them being more involved in their buying decisions when making an ethical purchase (Zander & Hamm, 2012). Bartels and Onwezen, 2013. found that consumers who identified themselves as ethical consumers were more willing to buy products that had environmental or ethical benefits.

2.7 Demographic characteristics of ethical consumers

Many researchers have developed empirical methods to examine the individual levels of moral judgment and ethical behavior. They identify determinants that may have effect on moral development, and sequentially on ethical behavior. Examples of the determinants are age, education and life experience. (Rest 1986 and 1993).

Several studies have examined ethical behavior differences between male and female respondents (Atakan *et al*, 2008), however, the results have not been consistent. For example, Ford and Richardson (1994) established 14 studies of gender differences and 7 of those found that female were more ethical than male at least some situations. Smith *et al*. (2001) also found that females are more attentive to corporate ethical responsibilities than males. However, Kahreh *et al*. found that the orientation and intentions of women is a little higher than men, but there was not significant differences between the genders in the CSR aspects (Kahreh *et al*, 2014).

Family structure may also have an influence on ethical behavior. For example, Essoussi *et al*. (2008) found that the presence of children in the household positively influences consumers' attitudes toward organic products (*ibid.*). Education has also been regarded as a significant factor affecting consumer attitudes, as respondents with higher education tend to have more positive attitudes towards organic products (Gracia & Magistris 2007). Moreover, households with higher income also tend to be more positive toward purchasing organic products. (Aryal *et al*, 2009; Haghiri, Hobbs, and McNamara 2009).

2.8 Presentation of hypotheses

2.8.1 Differences in price perception of organic products with negative framing

Studies have previously been made to test how framing affects consumers' price perception and purchase intentions. Stanforth & Hauck, 2010 argue that employing a positive ethical marketing frame will increase price perception due to the fact that ethical producers can be expected to invest more in environment protection, use more costly testing methods and have increased labor costs. The researchers tested three different types of price; expected price, fair price and reservation price, and found support for a hypothesized increase in all of these aspects.

When respondents realize that ecological food products are better for their health or that ecological household products are better for the environment, they will have a more positive attitude toward the ecological products and thus, their price perception will be lowered. The respondents will perceive the price of ecological products as fair after having read the framing texts, thus making their price perception of that products' pricing lower.

Based on this reasoning, stemming from previous research on the topic, we conducted the first and second hypotheses as follows:

- **H1a:** The perceived price of ecological food products will be lower with negative framing than without framing
- **H1b:** The perceived price of ecological household products will be lower with negative framing than without framing

2.8.2 Differences in quality perception of organic products with negative framing

Differences in consumers' perceptions of product quality have been found using framing studies. For instance, Levin & Gaeth (1988) found that quality perceptions change depending on if beef was labeled as 75 % lean or 25 % fat (Levin *et al.* 1998). Many research studies have also shown that price and quality are closely related, since Scitovszky (1945) presented these results (Monroe & Chapman, 1998), and thus, a higher price can often be used as an indication for consumers that the quality is high as well. Regarding ecological food products, a higher perceived quality has found to be related ecologically produced food (Krystallis & Chrysosoidis, 2005), but regarding household products, research on the topic seems to be quite unexplored.

Previous research on how ethical framing affects consumers' perception of quality is difficult to find. However, we have seen results that propose that differences do exist, and there is evidence that many consumers connect ecological food products to a higher quality. Therefore we can expect the following:

- **H2a:** The perceived quality of ecological food products will be greater with negative framing

- **H2b:** The perceived quality of ecological household products will be greater with negative framing

2.8.3 Differences in health risk perception of non-organic products with negative framing

Goal framing is commonly used in studies relating to people's health, as promoting the negative consequences of not enacting on a certain behavior in these situations has shown great effects. Among the researchers to have proven this, was Levin *et al* (1998), who found that the consequences of not doing screening tests for diseases were much more persuasive than the positive consequences of doing screening tests. Similarly, for behaviors such as breast self-examination, exercise, and smoking (Levin *et al*, 1998) negative framing has tended to result in greater message compliance. When a topic is relevant to the individual, framing has been found to have a greater effect (Stanforth & Hauck, 2010).

Based on previous research, we can conclude that framing can be expected to have a greater effect regarding health issues. We also believe that one's health is an important topic for a vast majority of the respondents. This has led to the creation of the following hypotheses:

- **H3a:** The perceived health risk of non-ecological food products will increase with negative framing
- **H3b:** The perceived health risk of non-ecological household products will increase with negative framing

2.8.4 Differences in environment risk perception of non-organic products with negative framing

Framing studies have also been conducted on the topic of environmental issues. In contrary from most results of other studies in which goal framing has been used, when the framing concerns environment, in some cases the loss frame has had more impact and in some cases the gain frame has had more impact on consumers (Davis, 1995; Spence & Pidgeon, 2010). Davis found that a loss frame affected respondents to react more positively to the communication of environmental issues, and that these respondents also were more prone to take on environmentally-responsible behaviors. Spence&Pidgeon (2010) in fact noticed a greater effect in change of attitude from the positive frame in communications regarding climate change, but it was more difficult for them to recall information provided by a gain frame, rather than a loss frame. "Goal-framing theory seems to be suitable as an integrative framework for understanding environmental behavior", as concluded by Steg & Vlek (2009).

The studies we have seen show quite mixed results, but there is an indication that negative goal framing is stronger than positive goal framing also regarding the environment, and studies that

have tested such issues have found that the framing did affect respondents. Even though we believe that framing will have an effect regarding both food products and household products, we expect the increase to be slightly larger regarding detergent, since only the second framing text, regarding non organic detergent, concerned environmental effects.

- **H4a:** The perceived environment risk of non-ecological food products will be increased with negative framing.
- **H4b:** The perceived environment risk of non-ecological household products will be increased with negative framing.

2.8.5 Negative framing's effect on purchase intention

Since negative framing is believed to have an effect on respondents' price perception, perceived health- and environment risk, we also believe that this will lead to an effect on their purchase intention.

- **H5a:** Communicating the risks of choosing non-ecological food products will increase the number of respondents selecting organic food products
- **H5b:** Communicating the risks of choosing the non-ecological household products will increase the number of respondents selecting organic household products

3. Methodology

To come closer to an answer to our research question, we carried out an experiment through an online questionnaire. We used negative goal framing in the form of two descriptive texts - one regarding each of the products tested in the study. In this chapter, we start by first presenting the formation and execution of our pre-study, to finally present the formation and execution of our main study.

When executing both our pre-study and our main study, we used the program Qualtrics for questionnaire design, and the statistical software SPSS for data analysis.

3.1 Pre-study

3.1.1 Sampling Design and Process

To ensure valid results of our ethical framing study, we have conducted a pre-study investigating respondents' reactions to the two framing texts that were later on presented to respondents in the main questionnaire. The pre-study was sent out to 20 respondents with the aim of testing whether there were any differences in how the texts were perceived. The pre-study can be viewed in appendix 2.

3.1.2 Research Design

The two framing texts were designed to be equally long and framed with equally many negative arguments. In a questionnaire, we tested what message the respondents believed the texts aimed to tell them, with one open and one multiple choice question. We wanted to assure that respondents could openly reflect their thoughts about the text, as well as choose the one most relevant option out of a few similar choices, to understand which is perceived to be the main point communicated through each of the texts.

The subject of the first framing text was the negative health consequences of consuming non-ecological grapes, and the second was the negative environmental consequences of using non-ecological detergent. We chose these products for the reason that both have a significant impact on the environment that is quite well known, and both lie in a similar price range. Swedish environment institutions (Naturskyddsföreningen, Hansson, 2013), National Food Agency in Sweden (Livsmedelsverkets pressjour, 2014) and press (Marielle Olsson, Aftonbladet, 2016) have warned people about eating non-ecological grapes. Due to the well-known health effects caused by pesticides, we thus found that grapes would be an interesting article to place against the dishwashing detergent, which also has been debated in the media due to its environmental damage (Natur och Miljö), to study whether health effects have a greater impact than environmental effects do.

Respondents were also asked about their perceived seriousness of the issue described in the texts, which they were to rate on a one to seven degree Likert scale, and were asked openly about the motives behind their answer, for us to understand what aspects of the texts influenced respondents' perceived level of seriousness.

Finally, respondents were asked whether they perceived the statements to be aimed at showing the negative consequences of not choosing ecological products or the positive consequences of choosing ecological products. Since we use the method of negative goal framing in our main study, we wanted to make sure that respondents perceived both of the texts as describing the negative consequences of not enacting on a certain behavior, in this case, of not selecting ecological products.

3.1.3 Data Collection

The data was collected from 20 respondents. The respondents of the pre-study mainly consisted of people known by the authors, the authors' thesis supervisor and several doctorates and researchers with broad experience in different research fields. The data was collected during 10 days.

3.1.4 Data Analysis

The results concerning the perceptions of the two texts were quite similar. However, we made some slight changes to the text regarding detergent, as some of the respondents perceived the text to focus on the positive side of choosing ecological products. Therefore, we removed any sentences that could be perceived as positive and replaced them with similar sentences describing the negative consequences of not selecting an ecological detergent. This way, we ensured that the texts are equal in the aspects of length, degree of negative framing, and that the respondents understand what message we want the texts to convey.

3.2 Main study

3.2.1 Sampling design

Our main study was a quantitative research study with an experiment design. We used an experiment design because we not only wanted to observe consumers' intentions, but also wished to observe how framing causes different responses to respondents, which is usually done through an experiment (Festing & Altman, 2002). The main goal was to test consumers' purchase intention as well as consumers' perception changes of non-ecological versus ecological products in the case that the product affects their health negatively or affect the environment negatively.

3.2.2 Questionnaire and experiment design

The questionnaire was designed to investigate the respondents' attitudes, perceptions and purchase intentions regarding non-ecological and ecological products, and lastly to gain general information about demographic characteristics (the questionnaire is provided in appendix 3).

We used an experiment design for the questionnaire, and thus, we designed two questionnaires that were exactly alike in all aspects but the framing aspect. The respondents in one of the questionnaires were presented with a framing text before evaluating the alternatives and making a choice on organic and non-organic products whereas the other questionnaire was distributed without the framing text. The reason for choosing this type of design was to make sure that the effects of the goal framing could be measured accurately (Levin *et al*, 1998).

The first section was related to consumers' general attitudes. Most of the generic questions concerning attitudes were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (Simplypsychology, 2008), however, some were formatted differently in order to allow us to compare our results to other previous studies, and in order to allow for respondents to openly reflect and express their opinions.

The second section of the questionnaire was conducted to test how the consumers' perception in four aspects changes with or without negative framing. The framing was presented in the form of the texts that were tested in the pre-study. These aspects were price, quality and health- and environmental risk. Price and quality perceptions are common topics of research, however environment and health risk are quite uncommon aspects. We wanted to research these partially because negative framing is connected to avoiding something that is perceived as risky, and we therefore wanted to see how much the perceived risks increased.

The structure of the question regarding purchase intention was designed similarly to Stanforth and Hauck's (2010) study, which aimed to measure consumers' price perceptions with ethical framing. They listed the typical market price of the products, and presented respondents with different options. The market prices used in their study were found by doing an internet search.

An internet search as well as a search in several food stores was conducted to determine the price level of the four different SKUs presented in our questionnaire. The prices that we used in our questionnaire are thus relevant, and are very probable to come across when buying these products in a Swedish retail store.

After considering posing a question on willingness to pay (using a scale response format where respondents can state which price they would be willing to pay) or a question on willingness to purchase (using alternatives with pre-set prices), we decided to pose a question aiming to measure willingness to purchase for several reasons. Firstly, we received feedback after testing

our questionnaire that it is difficult to remember the standard price of almost any product, and therefore, it can be difficult to state what one would be willing to pay. This could in turn lead to an unrealistic outcome of the results, with prices that in practice would not bring any profit for producers and retailers, or on the contrary that the respondents would think were too high in the actual purchase situation. Secondly, Corsi & Novelli (2002) found that only consumers who knew what the products actually cost and had a clear reference point would be willing to pay more. Without any reference point, it would therefore be difficult to measure consumers' actual attitudes. A more realistic situation would be to give respondents alternatives to choose from, as they would in an actual retail store.

Giving the respondents an "other" option and thereby a "no purchase" option provides a realistic experimental setting and a clear reference point for the respondent (Schiereth & Skiera, 2016). We gave the respondents an opportunity to specify why they chose the "other" option, partly to avoid giving the respondent an "easy way out" by instead of making a decision concerning whether they would buy the non-ecological grapes or the ecological grapes, simply clicking "no purchase", and partly to understand the possible reason to why they do not want to make a choice. There are many possible reasons behind, such as: the respondent does not like grapes, the respondent wishes to buy a substitute product due to the price, the respondent prefers a specific brand, or similarly. By not giving the respondents an option to specify such a reason, we would not be able to fully understand if the ethical framing had an effect on them or not.

The last section contained questions on demographic characteristics (i.e. gender, age, household size, education, personal income, etc.). This information provides basic demographic characteristics of respondents for the further analysis.

3.2.3 Data collection

For this study, we used a non-randomized sampling method, more specifically, a convenience sampling (Research Methodology). Due to limitations in resources, we were restricted to sending our questionnaire to friends and acquaintances, posting them in forums online, or asking respondents on the streets. Therefore, our sample was almost completely convenience based, and some random samples were collected in addition to the convenience sample. Hence, our sample will not completely reflect the Swedish population as a whole.

3.2.4 Data analysis

We used t-tests for the main data analysis, in order to be able to find and analyze statistically significant differences between the two groups. These tests were used as main analysis method, to come closer to an answer to our research question. We furthermore executed a variety of other tests, to better understand how ethical consumers or people who frequently buy ecological products reacted to our experiment.

Data regarding what we choose to call “organic buyers” was summarized using descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and descriptive tests. To analyze differences between consumer types, the respondents were divided into two groups based on one of our questionnaire questions; “Have you purchased goods that are produced in an ethical, ecological, and environmentally conscious way during the past 12 months?”. The question contained 5 alternatives; Often, sometimes, seldom, never, and do not know. We decided to choose respondents who answered “often” and “never” to see what kind of differences exist between the two groups. Those who bought organic products very often during the last 12 months were labeled “organic buyers” and those who had never bought organic products during the last 12 months were named “non-organic buyers”, and we compared these two groups in the five demographic variables; Age, gender, household type, education and income level.

We further executed Mann Whitney U Test to see if one gender group tends to have a larger mean value than the other in four perceptions; Price, quality, health risk and environmental risk. Since we experimented using two product groups (food products and household products), the mentioned four perceptions are also divided and tested in the two mentioned product groups.

To find whether ethical consumers have different reactions to the framing texts than non-ethical consumers, we created an index (Cronbach’s alpha 0,713) of three variables relating to ethical consumption, see Q5, Q6 & Q13 in Appendix 3. All consumers who had answered a 4 or higher on the scale for all of these variables were defined as ethical consumers, and all who had answered a 3 or below were defined as non-ethical consumers. We thereafter conducted descriptive tests to examine respondents’ perceptions.

3.2.5 Validity and reliability of the study

To be able to ensure that variables in our study measure what they are intended to measure, we needed to examine the validity of our study (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). In the demographic and generic parts of our questionnaire, we used questions that have been used for previous studies of the attitudes in the Swedish market (Blom, 2014; Ljung & Seldus, 2011, Löhman & Steinholtz, 2003). These questions have thereby been tested and ensure reliable results that we can compare to results of other studies.

When it comes to the design of our experiment, we have followed theory by Levin *et al*, 1998, but created questions and formulated framing texts ourselves, and this is thereby the first time that these questions have been posed. To increase reliability, the questionnaire was pretested among 10 fellow students, researchers and teachers. After receiving their opinions, some questionnaire questions were modified. Even though we took these actions, the fact that a similar study has not been executed before lowers the validity and reliability of our study.

We have used reliable and relevant measurement methods for analyzing results of our experiment. 2-tailed t-tests were used to test differences between groups, as we used two

different groups in our study; one with manipulation and one without manipulation. Chi-square tests were used to analyze questions that did not use scale variables. Finally, descriptive tests were used to describe our experiment results. Using accurate measurement methods assures reliability of our analysis.

4. Results

The findings of our experiment are presented in the following section. We firstly present the findings relating to each hypothesis in order, and finally present other interesting findings resulting from our data analysis.

For statistical data analysis, researchers generally use either a 90 %, 95 % or 99 % confidence interval. Our lower limit is set to be 90 %, due to the fact that a 90% confidence level is often used to analyze the questionnaire data. (Sauro & Lewis 2012) Even though the uncertainty regarding the hypotheses accepted on the 90 % level will be a little higher, we believe that these test results are still of value for our analysis. All confidence levels are presented for each analysis.

All mean values that are presented in this section are based on respondents' answers on a 7 point Likert scale.

4.1 Results regarding perception

4.1.1 Price perception

H1a: The perceived price of ecological food products will be lower with negative framing than without framing.

We performed an independent samples t-test to investigate the differences in perceived price of ecological grapes and detergent between the control group and the framing group. The test result indicates that respondents perceived the price level of ecological grapes to be lower when having been exposed to negative framing. The mean value of the price perception decreased from $\bar{x}=5,3$ in the control group to $\bar{x}=4,7$ in the framing group, and the mean difference is statistically significant (Sig<0,005).

Thus, H1a is supported on the 95 % confidence level.

H1b: The perceived price of ecological household products will be lower with negative framing than without framing.

The results of the t-test regarding ecological detergent and respondents' price perception did not show any significant difference between the mean values. We can see that the mean value of ecological detergent has actually increased from $\bar{x}=4,1$ to $\bar{x}=4,2$, which means that respondents in the framing group perceived the price of ecological detergent to be more expensive than the respondents in the control group did.

With evidence from this analysis, H1b is not supported.

H nr	Hypothesis regarding	Mean Control Group	Mean Framing Group	Mean Difference	p-value
H1a	Price perception of ecological grapes	5,2941	4,7419	0,5522	0,018
H1b	Price perception of ecological detergent	4,1343	4,2182	0,0839	0,714

4.1.2 Quality Perception

H2a: The perceived quality of ecological food products will be greater after negative framing.

Our t-test analysis showed a significant difference between the perceived quality of the ecological grapes in the control group and the framing group. The mean value increased from $\bar{x}=4,7$ to $\bar{x}=5,2$, meaning that the framing group perceived the quality of the grapes to be higher. Therefore, we have enough evidence to support H2a with a 95 % confidence level.

H2b: The perceived quality of ecological household products will be greater after negative framing.

The test results from the t-tests showed a significant increase in quality perception regarding detergent, with a mean value increase from $\bar{x}=4,2$ in the control group to $\bar{x}=4,9$ in the framing group.

We can therefore support H2b on the 99 % confidence level.

H nr	Hypothesis regarding	Mean Control Group	Mean Framing Group	Mean Difference	p-value
H2a	Quality perception of ecological grapes	4,7536	5,1803	-0,4267	0,031
H2b	Quality perception of ecological detergent	4,2836	4,9483	-0,6647	0,005

4.1.3 Health Risk

H3a: The perceived health risk of non-ecological food products will increase with negative framing.

Our independent sample t-tests showed a significant difference between the mean value of $\bar{x}=4,25$ in the control group and $\bar{x}=4,78$ in the framing group. This was also the biggest mean difference between all of the variables tested regarding the difference between groups for non-ecological grapes.

The hypothesis H3a is supported on the 90 % confidence level.

H3b The perceived health risk of non-ecological household products will increase with negative framing.

There is a significant (5%) mean difference between the control group and the framing group for perceived health risk regarding detergent. The mean value before was $\bar{x}=3,27$, and after framing was $\bar{x}=3,88$.

H3b is thereby supported on the 95 % confidence level.

With mean differences of -0,52778 for grapes and -0,60854 for detergent, we can also conclude that the effect of health perceptions regarding the products was greater for detergent than for grapes.

H nr	Hypothesis regarding	Mean Control Group	Mean Framing Group	Mean Difference	p-value
H3a	Health risk perception of non-ecological grapes	4,25	4,7778	-0,5278	0,0545
H3b	Health risk perception of non-ecological detergent	3,2687	3,8772	-0,6085	0,039

4.1.4 Environment Risk

H4a: The perceived environment risk of non-ecological food products will be increased with negative framing

Our results show a mean difference between the control group and the framing group for non-ecological grapes, however it was not significant. The mean without framing was $\bar{x}=4,62$ and with framing was $\bar{x}=4,73$, and therefore, we can see a tendency in the data, that speaks in favor of our hypothesized outcome.

However, since results are not significant, H4a is not supported.

H4b The perceived environment risk of non-ecological household products will be increased with negative framing

There was a significant mean difference between the control group and framing group regarding non-ecological detergent. The mean in the control group was $\bar{x}=4,27$ and in the framing group was $\bar{x}=5,19$.

We therefore have enough evidence to support H4b.

With mean differences of -0,10697 for grapes and -0,92433 for detergent, we can also conclude that the negative framing resulted in a greater effect regarding perception of environmental risks when it comes to the detergent than when it comes to grapes. Since the framing text regarding detergent was constructed to highlight environmental effects only, this result is in line with what we could have expected.

H nr	Hypothesis regarding	Mean Control Group	Mean Framing Group	Mean Difference	p-value
H4a	Environment risk perception of non-ecological grapes	4,6232	4,7302	-0,107	0,732
H4b	Environment risk perception of non-ecological detergent	4,2687	5,193	-0,9243	0,002

4.1.5 Purchase intentions

H5a: Communicating the risks of choosing non-organic grapes will increase the share of respondents selecting the organic grapes

To test the above hypothesis, we performed independent samples t-tests between the control group and the framing group, regarding the differences in choosing the first or the second alternative. In the control group, 36,8 % of respondents chose the non-organic grapes, and 52,9 % chose the organic grapes. In the framing group, 30,2 % chose the non-organic grapes and 63,5 % chose the organic grapes. However, the differences between the groups were not significant. Therefore, H5a is not supported.

H5b: Communicating the risks of choosing the non-organic household products will increase the share of respondents selecting the organic detergent

We performed a similar analysis as we did for the previous hypothesis, and found significant differences, with a p-value of 0,01. 47,1 % in the control group chose the organic detergent and 48,5 % of these respondents chose the non-organic alternative. In the framing group, 75 % of respondents chose the organic detergent and 21,4 % chose the non-organic alternative. Thus, H5b is supported on the 99 % confidence level.

4.2 Demographic results

4.2.1. Demographic characteristics of organic buyers

The sample consisted of 57% females and 43% males, and the age group of the respondents varied from 15 to 65 years. More than half of them live in a large city such as Stockholm, Gothenburg or Malmö (73%) and the rest of them live in medium sized- or small cities. About 59% of our respondents had a bachelor degree or higher, about 32 % had finished high school, and about 9% had an associate degree or lower.

Only 4% of respondents have children in their families, the most of respondents live without any children; 37% of them are single person households or couple households without children 26%, and 10% of respondents live with their friends. About 35% of the respondents earned a monthly income of less than 10 000 SEK, 29 % earned between 10 000 – 25 000 SEK, and 36% earned above 25000 SEK.

Variable	Number of respondents (Frequency)	Organic buyers (%)	Non-organic buyers (%)
Age group:			
15-25 years	57	35%	5,2 %
26-35 years	53	54,7 %	0 %
Gender:			
Female	71	55,1 %	3,1 %
Male	53	36,1 %	3,8 %
Household type:			
Without Children	46	45,7 %	4,3 %
With children	15	73,3 %	0 %

Education level:			
High School	40	35 %	2,5 %
Bachelor	35	60 %	2,9 %
Master or above	38	52,6 %	2,6 %
Income level (net):			
< 10 000	43	32,6 %	4,7 %
10 001 – 25 000	24	45,8 %	0 %
25 001 – 35 000	25	56 %	0 %
> 35 001	20	70 %	0 %

The column “number of respondents” shows the number of respondents that were included in each group of variables. For example, when it comes to house hold type, single households and couples without children are a total of 46 people and couples with children or single parents were a total of 15 people. Therefore, those who selected the alternatives “living with friends”, or “living with parents” as answers to the question are excluded. Organic buyers in % shows how many of single households or couples without children answered that they “often” buy ecological products (i.e. 21 people of 46 answered that they buy the eco-products often).

Since the majority of the respondents’ ages are between 15-35 years old (88,7%), we examined organic/non-organic buyers only in this age group. About 35% of the 15-25 years group were organic buyers, and 5,3% of them were non-organic buyers. The older age group contains more organic buyers (54,7%) than the younger age group, and there were no non-organic buyers in this age group.

The total respondents who answered the demographic questions were 124 people, and 71 of them were female and 53 of them were male. About 55 % of the female respondents stated that they “often” purchase ecological products and about 3 % stated that they “never” purchase ecological products. The percentage of male organic buyers are relatively lower compared to female organic buyers. Only 36% stated that they “often” buy ecological products, and 3,8 % stated that they “never” buy organic products. About 45 % of the single households or the couples without children were organic buyers and 4,3 % of them stated that they never buy ecological products. Respondents who have children seem to be more organic buyers than the other group. More than 70 % of the households with children were organic buyers and there were no non-organic buyers in this group. The education level and the ratio of organic buyers were almost proportional. About 35 % of respondents who have high school degrees stated that they purchase organic products often, and 2,5 % were non-organic buyers. The ratio of organic buyers was relatively high for the respondents who had a Bachelor (60%) or higher academic degrees (52,6 %). The non-organic buyer rate in these two groups were similar to the high school degree group. The higher the income levels are, the higher the rate of organic buyers. For

example, only 32,6 % of the respondents who receive a monthly income of less than 10,00 Swedish kr were organic buyers and 70 % of the respondents who receive more than 35,000 Swedish kr were organic buyers.

4.2.2 Differences between genders in perception

Mann-Whitney U test result of ecological grapes

When male respondents are exposed to negative framing, their perceived quality of ecological grapes was higher; mean value of $\bar{x}=4,6$ without framing and $\bar{x}=5,2$ with framing.

The perceived price of ecological grapes differed from the mean value of $\bar{x}=5,5$ without framing to $\bar{x}=5,1$ with framing. There were no differences in mean value in perception of health and environment risk between the control and framing group.

The *Mann-Whitney U test* results of the female respondents are similar to the results of the male respondents; the perceived quality of ecological grapes was higher with framing ($\bar{x}=4,8$ to $\bar{x}=5,3$) and the perception of price was lower ($\bar{x}=5,0$ to $\bar{x}=4,4$) when females were exposed to framing. One different result compared to the male respondents is that the perceived environmental risk of ecological grapes was lower with framing, from $\bar{x}=2,6$ to $\bar{x}=2,2$.

Mann-Whitney U test result of Detergent

As we expected, the mean value in both male and female groups' quality perception increased. However, the result indicates that the female respondents' quality perception is affected stronger than male respondents' quality perception; the mean value of female control group in quality perception was $\bar{x}=4,2$ and increased to $\bar{x}=5,2$ when they exposed to the framing. (Sig: 0,002)

Another interesting result is that the mean value of price perception is slightly increased in both of the males and females in the framing group (Male: $\bar{x}=4,6$ to $\bar{x}=4,8$ / Female: $\bar{x}=3,8$ to $\bar{x}=3,9$).

4.2.3 Ethical consumers

In the control group, there were 18 ethical consumers and 16 non-ethical consumers. In the framing group, there were 26 ethical consumers, and 5 non-ethical consumers. There were 4 system missing on detergent in the framing group, and 2 on grapes. There was 1 system missing on detergent in the control group.

Results of their selection are presented in the tables below, in the form of share of respondents in each group selecting each of the choices.

ETHICAL CONSUMERS

Product	Non-eco	Eco	Other
Grape (No framing)	11,1%	77,8 %	11,1 %
Detergent (No framing)	38,9 %	55,6 %	5,6 %
Grape (Framing)	8,3 %	83,3 %	8,3 %
Detergent (Framing)	4,5 %	90,9 %	4,5 %

NON ETHICAL CONSUMERS

Product	Non-eco	Eco	Other
Grape (No framing)	68,8 %	18,8 %	12,5 %
Detergent (No framing)	73,3 %	20 %	6,7 %
Grape (Framing)	20 %	80 %	0 %
Detergent (Framing)	60 %	40 %	0 %

Since the findings above do not give us any statistically significant results, more research on the topic is needed to make any conclusions on this topic. We can see in our data that framing affected respondents whether they were ethical consumers or not, but we can also see that more ethical consumers chose the ecological products even without being exposed to framing. These findings thus indicate that ethical consumers are less affected by the framing, due to them already being willing to buy more of and pay more for ecological products, just as previous research has shown, however we cannot be certain of this.

4.3 Summary of hypotheses and results

Summary of results	
Hypothesis	Result
H1a: The perceived price of ecological grapes will be lower after negative framing than without framing	Supported
H1b: The perceived price of ecological household products will be lower after negative framing than without framing	Not supported
H2a: The perceived quality of ecological grapes will be greater after negative framing	Supported
H2b: The perceived quality of ecological household products will be greater after negative framing.	Supported
H3a: The perceived health risk of non-ecological grapes will increase with negative framing.	Supported
H3b: The perceived health risk of non-ecological household products will increase with negative framing.	Supported
H4a: The perceived environment risk of non-ecological grapes will be increased with negative framing.	Not supported
H4b: The perceived environment risk of non-ecological household products will be increased with negative framing.	Supported
H5a: Communicating the risks of choosing non-organic grapes will increase the number of respondents selecting organic grapes.	Not supported
H5b: Communicating the risks of choosing the non-organic household products will increase the number of respondents selecting organic detergent.	Supported

5. Discussion

In this section, we discuss the results that were described in the previous section. The discussion is divided into two separate areas. Firstly, we discuss consumers' overall perception change and gender differences in perception. Furthermore, we will discuss purchase intention and ultimately, relate these two areas to our research question;

Does negative goal framing have an effect on Swedish consumers' perception and purchase intention regarding non-organic and organic products, and if so, then in what way does it have an effect?

5.1 Consumers' perception and purchase intention

The empirical results supported the hypothesized outcome that the control group would perceive the price of the ecological grapes as slightly lower. Since we have seen from previous research that consumers need to be provided with a legitimate reason for the price increase in order to perceive the price as fair (Schein, 2002), this phenomenon can be one possible explanation as to why respondents who have read the framing text perceived the price as lower. There is also evidence that people are more affected by framing when it concerns something that is relevant to them (Stanforth & Hauck, 2010), and since health is probably a very relevant topic for each of the respondents, this is a further explanation for the decrease. After having read the text and understood that non ecological grapes affect their health negatively, respondents may feel that the ecological grapes give them more value, and thus, do not perceive the price to be as high. The same goes for the non-ecological grapes, which were perceived as more expensive, probably also due to the framing text having created a sense of loss of value provided from these grapes. These results are very interesting, as they lead us to believe that the more we feel that a product gives us value, the more we are willing to pay, and thus, we will also perceive the product to be less expensive.

The framing group's price perception of detergent increased slightly, which shows an opposed result from what we hypothesized. The following quote from one of the respondents gives one possible clarification around why we can observe this tendency: "Detergent already contains strong substances so I don't believe ecological substances to be better, it's still a good detergent with good dishwashing power that I want". Berens *et al.* 2007 present results of several studies which show that people are not willing to compensate a company's lacking Corporate Ability even if they know the company does good CSR work. This confirms exactly what the quoted respondent believed – he or she did not think that ecological ingredients could compensate for a lack of quality in the detergent. However, whether the quality of an ecological detergent is lower or not is often depending on one's personal opinion, and different respondents surely have different quality perceptions. What the quoted respondent was perhaps not aware of, was that the Swedish certification Svanen actually does quality test all products that they certify

(Svanen.se). Perhaps this may have to do with lack of information, since if the respondent would have known that Svanen guarantees a certain level of quality, they could have perceived the price of the ecological dishwashing detergent differently. From the descriptive results of our dataset, we can also see that as many as 71,6 % of our respondents believed price to be most or second to most important among 8 alternatives when buying household products, compared to 55,3 % on food products. This means that consumers may be more price sensitive when buying household products than they are when buying food products, and this can be an explanation for the observed increase in price perception that we have seen.

In both of the cases there was an increase in quality perception, which we also had foreseen. One reason for this could be that the framing texts have affected respondents to think about ecological products more positively in general, and that this reflects in their quality perception of the different products. Consumers may also be associating food without pesticides as better for their health and detergent without toxins as better for the environment because of what we described in our framing texts, and therefore associate this to a better product quality. It can also be the case that the price had something to do with the respondents' quality perceptions, as researchers have found that higher price can be an indication for consumers that the product also is of higher quality.

The outcome of hypotheses 3a and b was quite surprising, as the perceived health risk increased more with detergent than with grapes, and the framing text for grapes was formulated to emphasize only negative health effects, whereas the framing text for detergent was formulated to emphasize only negative effects to the environment. We believe that the detergent increased more firstly because there is a possibility that people could think one step ahead, and realize that environmental damage also affects their health, for instance through the drinking water that may have been affected by the chemicals in the detergent, the fish we buy in grocery stores, or similar. Secondly, the reason could be that when respondents are reading the framing text on detergent, they have already read the text about grapes, leading them to be even more strongly affected the second time around.

Regarding hypotheses 4 a and b, we can conclude that the perceived environmental risk of non-ecological grapes increased slightly, as anticipated, but not significantly. The framing group perceived the environmental risk of choosing a non-ecological detergent to be high, which is a significant result that goes in line with our hypothesis. Since environmental risks of detergent that is not ecological were thoroughly described in the framing text, the outcome is plausible.

The results from our hypotheses regarding purchase intentions (5a and 5b) showed mixed results. Purchase intentions for detergent did have a significant increase in the framing group (at the 99% of confidence level). However, we did not observe the same effect on grapes. What we found is a tendency, which is the share of respondents who selected the ecological grapes was

higher in the framing group (52,9% VS 62,5%). The difference was not statistically significant, hence, we are not able to state that the observed difference is only caused by negative framing.

Deriving from previous research that has resulted in conclusions that consumers' lack of information may be the reason for the discrepancy between attitudes and actual buying behavior, we see that the lack of information is a likely effect in our results as well. Throughout, in almost all of the variables, the differences between the control group and the framing group were much smaller regarding grapes than regarding detergent. Since there has been some discussion in Swedish media concerning grapes lately, for instance where one store owner had placed non organic grapes in the detergent shelf to visually explain that "they belong among the other toxins", consumers may be more informed about the issues concerning grapes than about issues with detergent. Because respondents in our control group can be believed to have been quite well informed, this could then be an explanation for the smaller increases we see in mean values between the groups for the questions on grapes. Furthermore, consumers are especially sensitive to food safety issues, and Asherson *et al.* (2000) state that "There is definitely a hierarchy of environmental issues for the consumer and for the coming decade it looks as if food is going to be high on the list". This may be a further reason why differences were smaller concerning the grapes rather than the detergent.

5.2 Characteristics of organic buyers

The share of organic buyers is higher in the older group (26-35 years old) than in the younger age group (15-25 years old) in Sweden. Older consumers (over 26 years old) seem to be more willing to purchase organic products and no respondents in this group stated that they never bought ecological products in recent times. In comparison to older consumers, more than 5% of young consumers (less than 25 years old) stated that they never bought any organic products, and this result is similar to result in other countries. (Engel 2008; Radman 2005). This result is intuitively reasonable, since young consumers often have lower financial status than older consumers, and the report by Blom (2014) shows that Swedish consumers' purchasing of ecological products is related to financial status.

We were able to identify that the households with children are more concerned (28%) about what they purchase than the households without children. Similarly to the older age group (26-35) there were not any non-organic buyers in this type of family structure. Therefore, Essoussi *et al.*'s study results (Essoussi and Zahaf 2008) could also be confirmed in this study; the presence of children in the household positively affects the consumers' decision regarding the organic products.

A study of Gracia (Gracia and Magistris 2007) shows that those who have higher education tend to have more positive attitudes towards organic products, and our study also shows similar results.

As other studies indicate, research regarding gender differences in CSR has been inconsistent. The frequency test on gender in our study seem to be more similar to Smith's study (Smith *et al.* 2001) since there were higher rate of female organic buyers.

5.2.1 Gender differences in perception

The result of the Mann Whitney tests on gender differences showed mixed results.

When male respondents are exposed to negative framing, their perceived quality of ecological grapes was increased from the mean value of 4,6 to 5,2 at the 94% confidence level. The female respondents' results showed the same tendencies, but the test result was not significant. Regarding price perception, women were more likely to think that ecological grapes' price is fair (sig. 92%) than what men perceived among the framing group, but the results for men were not significant.

We continue to see mixed test results in the case of detergent. Both men and women perceived that the quality of ecological detergent is better among the framing group but the difference is that the female-framing group's mean value increased much more than the male-framing group. These results are similar to Kahreh (Kahreh *et al.*, 2014), Ford and Richardson's study (Ford *et al.* 1994) result which indicates that the test of gender differences in CSR has mixed results.

5.2.2 Purchase intention of ethical consumers

The results about how ethical consumers were affected by the framing messages are interesting to look at and can provide insight for more in depth research on the topic of ethical consumers. What was in line with results from previous studies, was that the ethical consumers from the beginning already did choose the ecological products to a higher extent than the ones that were not ethical consumers. Previous research thereby indicates that ethical consumers would be less affected by framing messages, as they would already beforehand be selecting the ecological alternative. Nevertheless, in all cases, whether they were ethical consumers or not, and whether they were asked regarding grapes or detergent, the framing increased the percentage of respondents who selected the ecological alternative, and thereby also decreased the number who selected the non-ecological alternative. We can therefore conclude that ethical consumers were also affected by the framing, and when being exposed to framing, a greater percentage of them did choose the ecological products. Perhaps this is due to the fact that when a frame is aligned to the individual's interests or values, the frame is likely to be more persuasive in decision making situations, as concluded by Stanforth and Hauck (2010).

We do see that the percentage difference of ethical consumers choosing ecological grapes in the control group versus in the framing group was not very large (from 77,8 % to 83,3 %). In comparison with the non-ethical consumers, (from 18,8 % to 80 %), this increase seems quite

small. When doing the same comparison for the detergent, we see interesting results relating to our previous discussion on lack of information. The percentage of ethical consumers selecting the ecological detergent changed from 55,6 % without framing to 90 % with framing, and with non-ethical consumers, respective numbers were 20 % without framing and 40 % with framing. Firstly, this further feeds our idea that the degree of how one is affected by the framing depends on their level of information about the topic, since grapes have been debated among many influencers, and many ethical consumers, who are interested in ethically and environmentally produced products, probably have heard about the effects that non-ecological grapes can have.

6. Conclusion & recommendations

After having analyzed the results of our research study, we can conclude that applying a negative goal framing did have an effect on our respondents. However, it should be noted that we saw an effect on 7 out of 10 hypotheses that were tested, and the framing messages have thus not been successful in every case. In general, the effects were greater when it came to the results of the questions regarding the detergent, as we saw greater mean value differences in the t-tests. Given these results, we can recommend Swedish retailers to use negative ethical framing in retail stores. Since consumers generally make their buying decision quickly in these situations, the framing messages in store need to be formulated differently than the ones in our study. There probably needs to be a much shorter text, a picture, or any other illustration that conveys a strong message to the consumer, such as in the example where the store manager of Hemköp placed grapes among detergent (Expressen). In that case, the owner noted that they did not sell a single package of non-organic grapes, even though they were on special offer. Moreover, environment protection organizations in Sweden can also use negative framing in their communication, to encourage consumers to make more ethical decisions.

Negative goal framing has had an influence on consumers no matter what was the main focus in the text. Both health and the environmental issues seem to be able to affect respondents' attitude. This tells us that the actual content of the text may not be the biggest priority, as long as facts are relevant to the issue and can be easily understood. Beckmann showed in his study that people are more sensitive to negative information than positive information when it comes to CSR issues, and the main focus of CSR communication can therefore be suggested to be negatively toned. We see from our results that negative framing has an effect on our respondents, but it is not sure that companies will see expected responses from their audience through negative framing, as we saw quite varying results in different aspects.

Although not having statistical support for the conclusion, we can see tendencies that indicate that lack of information is closely connected with the degree of ethical consumerism, based on our, and previous researchers' studies. After having seen these tendencies in our results, our belief is that a lack of information can lead to a lack of engagement and that, the other way around, gaining information leads to a higher degree of ethical consumerism. Our framing, which was specific and informative, led the respondents of the framing group to make more ethical choices than the other group. This goes in line with what previous researchers have stated - that CSR communication ought to be informative. Steg & Vlek (2009) also argue that it is important to consider contextual factors. Even though we find support that certain attitudes or intentions exist among consumers, retailers who want to encourage an increase in ethical purchasing among consumers need to make sure that ecological products are in stock and easy to find in store. Based on the findings explained above, our recommendation is therefore that any producer, retailer or organization that wishes to aid consumers to doing more ethical choices should try to

communicate informatively, and highlight facts concerning ethical consumption of specific products, that can be relevant and of value to the consumer.

7. Limitations

Some limitations of our study disabled us from obtaining as generalizable results as we had wished for and from explaining what specific factors that drove respondents to be affected by the framing. Firstly, had our study been executed using a randomized sample from respondents spread geographically over entire Sweden, our results would have been more generalizable and would be able to represent the opinions of Swedish consumers. Our sample is overrepresented by young people, and to some extent by females. To shed a positive light on this, our sample is good for the purpose of understanding the ethical consumer in Sweden, as young people and females have found to be more concerned about buying ecologically.

Secondly, to correctly measure and understand whether it is the health or the environment perspective that plays a role in affecting respondents' attitude and purchase intentions, we would need to perform the framing experiment with both a health focus and an environment focus for the two products in addition to a control group. This more elaborate experiment would have enabled us to understand exactly which effects come from what part of the manipulation.

Finally, we did not use a manipulation control question in our questionnaire, to assure that respondents had actually read the text and understood it. This lowers the reliability of our study, and when executing a similar study again, we recommend using a manipulation control to assure reliable results of the study.

8. Suggestions for future research

In this study, we have investigated how negative goal framing affects consumers through a questionnaire. Due to limited time and resources, we did not have the possibility to investigate the gap between consumers' attitudes and behavior further, however, we suggest that further research can elaborate on this area. We have seen that negative goal framing does affect respondents in several aspects, but the next step would be to investigate how framing works in a real purchase situation. Some suggestions that we believe would be interesting to investigate further are the following:

- Since framing has mostly short term effects (Steg&Vlek, 2009), it would be interesting to experiment with framing in stores. Effects of doing this may be even greater than in a questionnaire, as it would be related to consumers' actual purchase decisions. Furthermore, to measure consumers' attitude-behavior gap accurately, it would be best to study real life situations.
- How should companies and organizations best communicate using negative goal framing? Partially due to lack of information, many consumers choose non-ecological goods. We need to understand how the information best reaches them and influences them during their purchase decision. There are numerous ways in which a framing message could be formed, and future research is needed to understand if consumers react more toward text, images, videos, warning signs, or other alternatives with negative framing messages.
- For what type of products does negative ethical framing work better? Our study looked at one household product and one food product. Future research could aim to investigate whether there are any differences in results between different products within one category, or between several different categories.
- It would perhaps be easier to communicate to consumers through online stores. With more time and not as much of a disturbing environment around them, as well as more tools to gain access to additional information, the internet may be a more optimal environment for ethical framing to have an effect. Future research could be based on the reasoning that attributes are sorted differently in store and online, to test whether it is easier to reach out with ethical attributes in online shops rather than in physical stores.

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10. Appendix:

1. Definitions of terms

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) - “The managerial obligation to take action to protect and improve both the welfare of society as a whole and the interest of organizations” - Davis & Blomstrom, 1975.

Ethical consumption - “The purchase of a product that concerns a certain ethical issue (human rights, labor conditions, animal well-being, environment, etc.) and is chosen freely by an individual consumer.” - Doane, 2001.

Framing - “Frames are ways of presenting a message so that individuals are able to label and identify occurrences and making those occurrences meaningful” Snow et al, 1986.

Goal framing - “Goal framing refers to a frame that focuses on negative consequences of not enacting a certain behavior.” - Levin et al. 1998.

Positive Frame: Positive frames present the positive consequences of adherence to the message recommendations (e.g., “if you quit smoking, you reduce the risk of developing lung cancer”). Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy 1990

Negative Frame: Negative frames describe the negative consequences of non-adherence (e.g., “if you don’t quit smoking, you increase the risk of developing lung cancer”). Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy 1990

2. Pre- Study questionnaire

The questionnaire was presented to respondents in Swedish, and thus, questions have been translated, and probably thereby slightly modified, here.

Instructions provided: Read the texts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

GRAPE TEXT

Q1. What is this text talking about?

Q2. What is the purpose of the text? Choose the alternative you believe to be the most suitable.

To inform about grape production

To inform about how pesticides affect the environment

To inform about how pesticides affect health

To make consumers want to buy ecological grapes

To help consumers make more conscious choices when grocery shopping

Q3. How serious do you believe the consequences explained in the text to be?
Scale 1-7

Q4. Why do you believe the consequences to be more/less serious?

Q5. What do you think this text explains? Choose the most suitable alternative.
It explains the positive consequences of choosing ecological grapes.
It explains the negative consequences of not choosing ecological grapes.

DETERGENT TEXT

Q1. What is this text talking about?

Q2. What is the purpose of the text? Choose the alternative you believe to be the most suitable.
To inform about the contents of detergent
To inform about how detergent affects the environment
To inform about how detergent affects health
To make consumers want to buy ecological detergent
To help consumers make more conscious choices when grocery shopping

Q3. How serious do you believe the consequences explained in the text to be?
Scale 1-7

Q4. Why do you believe the consequences to be more/less serious?

Q5. What do you think this text explains? Choose the most suitable alternative.
It explains the positive consequences of choosing ecological detergent.
It explains the negative consequences of not choosing ecological detergent.

3. Main study questionnaire

The questionnaire was presented to respondents in Swedish, and thus, questions have been translated, and probably thereby slightly modified, here.

Q1 – Have you in the last 12 months chosen to buy products/services that are produced in an ethical, ecological or environment conscious way?

Often (Several times per month)

Sometimes

Seldom

Never

Don't know

Q2 – What factors are most important to you when buying a food product? (Ranking)

Price

Quality
Packaging
Brand
Availability
Healthy ingredients
Labor conditions in production
Healthy ingredients

Q3 - What factors are most important to you when buying a household product? (Ranking)

Price
Quality
Packaging
Brand
Availability
Healthy ingredients
Labor conditions in production
Healthy ingredients

Q4 – What is the primary reason why you would choose ethically/ecologically produced products?

Concern for nature and environment
Concern for local producers
Concern for future generations
Improved quality
Good for my health

Q5 – To what degree would you say you shop ethically?

Scale 1-7

Q6 – To what degree are you interested in the production process of products you buy?

Scale 1-7

Q7 – What would be the primary reason for you to buy more ecological products?

Lower price
Better product quality
Better supply in these type of products
Nothing, I don't care about these questions
Other: _____

Q8 – How well do these sayings reflect your own beliefs?

If I would buy more ecological products, I would improve my health.

Scale 1-7

If I would buy more ecological products, I would contribute to a better environment.

Scale 1-7

I feel pressured from people in my surroundings to buy more ecologically.

Scale 1-7

Q9 – What do you think about the supply of the ecological products within the following categories?

Ecological food products: Too narrow, Enough, More than enough, Don't know/No opinion

Ecological household products: Too narrow, Enough, More than enough, Don't know/No opinion

Q10 - What do you think about the price of the ecological products within the following categories?

Ecological food products: Low, Fair, High, Don't know/No opinion

Ecological household products: Low, Fair, High, Don't know/No opinion

Q11 - What do you think about the quality of the ecological products within the following categories?

Ecological food products: Low, Fair, High, Don't know/No opinion

Ecological household products: Low, Fair, High, Don't know/No opinion

Q12 – Where do you receive information about whether the products you buy are ethically/environmentally friendly produced?

Commercials/Campaigns

Labels in store

Certifications on the products

Through friends/acquaintances

News/Radio/TV-reports

Social media

Company website

Other: _____

Q13 – To what degree would you say you have knowledge about the environment certifications that are in the market today?

Scale 1-7

Q14 - To what degree would you say you need clearer information on the meaning of different environment certifications?

Scale 1-7

Q15 – Please read any instructions or texts in this section carefully before you respond to following questions.

ONLY PRESENTED TO THE FRAMING GROUP:

“Grapes are among the top when it comes to pesticides used on fruits. In total, 220 000 tons of pesticides are spread in the European Agriculture each year due to production of grapes.

Eating grapes that have not been produced ecologically is not only dangerous to the environment, it is also bad for your health. Grapes have very thin peels, and part of the toxins that are used has to go through that plant's roots instead of the peel for it to have an effect. Consequently, the pesticides cannot be washed away, and we consume them as we consume the grapes.

Research has shown that the kinds of pesticides that are used can worsen children's' IQ and thought process during early school age if mothers eat them during her pregnancy. There is also evidence that pesticides can cause sterility. "

Imagine you are about to buy a package of 500 g grapes. You have two alternatives; either a non-ecological alternative which costs 30 kr, or an ecological alternative which costs 40 kr, that are certified, we use KRAV as an example. They both contain the same amount of grapes and are produced in the same region. Which alternative would you choose?

30 kr

40 kr

Annat, specificera vad du gör och varför?

30 kr, 40kr, Other, specify what you choose and why.

Following are some questions regarding the **non-organic grapes**. Grade your answers on a scale from 1-7.

- How do you perceive the price?
- How do you perceive the quality?
- How do you perceive the health risk?
- How do you perceive the environment risk?

Following are some questions regarding the **organic grapes**. Grade your answers on a scale from 1-7.

- How do you perceive the price?
- How do you perceive the quality?
- How do you perceive the health risk?
- How do you perceive the environment risk?

Q16 -

ONLY PRESENTED TO THE FRAMING GROUP:

“Dishwashing detergent contains many chemicals that are washed out in our drains every day. Thereafter, the water passes through sewerage systems, although we cannot manage to rinse away all of the chemicals that the detergent contains.

Some of the chemicals are poisonous to living organisms, and others take a long time to be broken down naturally, and can stay inside living organisms for a long time. Surfactants are the most important component in cleaning detergents, but they are poisonous to organisms living in water.

Also phosphorous is an ingredient that usually exists in detergent, and is a substance that causes over-fertilization. This means that too many algae will grow in the water, which blocks out sunlight and leads to the death of many other water living organisms. This is what have caused the over-fertilization in the Baltic Sea, and phosphate can cause huge amount of fish death, leading to so called dead zones in the sea.”

Imagine you are about to buy a package of 500 ml detergent. You have two alternatives; either a non-ecological alternative which costs 20 kr, or an ecological alternative which costs 27 kr, that is certified, we use Svanen as an example. They both contain the same amount of detergent and are have the same label and smell. Which alternative would you choose?



20 kr, 27kr, Other, specify what you choose and why.

Following are some questions regarding the **non-organic detergent**. Grade your answers on a scale from 1-7.

How do you perceive the price?

How do you perceive the quality?

How do you perceive the health risk?

How do you perceive the environment risk?

Following are some questions regarding the **organic detergent**. Grade your answers on a scale from 1-7.

How do you perceive the price?

How do you perceive the quality?

How do you perceive the health risk?

How do you perceive the environment risk?

Q17 – Which gender do you identify with?

Man

Woman

Q18 – Age

15-25

26-35

36-45

46-55

56-65

66+

Q19 – Where do you live?

Large city (more than 200 000 inhabitants, i.e. Stockholm, Göteborg or Malmö)

Bigger city (between 50 000 – 200 000 inhabitants)

Middle sized city (between 20 000 – 50 000 inhabitants)

Small city/On the countryside

Q20 – Please specify your latest finished education level

High school

College

Folk High School

University – Bachelor's degree

University – Longer than 3 years

Q21 – What is your monthly income before taxes?

Below 10 000 SEK

10 001 – 19 000 SEK

19 001 – 25 000 SEK

25 001 – 35 000 SEK

35 001 SEK or higher

Q22 – What does your household structure look like?

Single household
Couple without children
Couple with children
Single parent
Living with parents/family
Living with friend/collective
Other

4. Price research

After price research was made in both online and physical stores, it was concluded that the mode price of ecological grapes was 45 SEK (30 SEK for non-ecological). Regarding detergent, prices were more difficult to decide, as varieties of brands had different prices. However, after the price research, we concluded that a price of 27 SEK would be accurate for the ecological detergent (20 SEK for non-ecological), as the price levels for detergent vary around these prices. The price increase in percent was made sure to be equally great, i.e. 33 %. These were the final prices used in the questionnaire.