THE TRADE-OFF BETWEEN EFFICIENCY AND ETHICALITY

DO COSMETICS CONSUMERS REALLY CARE ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY?

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The Trade-off between Efficiency and Ethicality: Do Cosmetics Consumers Really Care About Sustainability?

Abstract:

During the past centuries, environmental degradation and climate change have become two of the world's most pressing issues. In order to sustain the environment for future generations, conscious choices and ethical consumerism have emerged as an active area of practice and research. Nevertheless, in spite of increasingly positive attitudes towards ethical products, people do not necessarily purchase ethically. Drawing on existing literature in the field, it is evident that there exists an attitude-behavior gap. This thesis aims to shed light on the discrepancy between self-reported actions and attitudes within cosmetics and to contribute to existing research in the field. More specifically, to generate knowledge on whether consumers are willing to trade-off conventional attributes for sustainability. A web-based questionnaire was distributed to collect representative data on Swedish undergraduate students' self-reported attitudes on ethical aspects in cosmetics and potential trade-offs between attributes. The results reveal that sustainability is of less significance compared to other attributes for cosmetics purchases. Hence, the results confirm that consumers are willing to trade-off sustainability for other factors.

Keywords:

Green cosmetics, Ethical consumerism, The green attitude-behavior gap, Efficiency in cosmetics

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1. Introduction

This section intends to provide a background to the cosmetics industry and the rapid emergence of ethical consumerism. An account of the industry and its consumers is presented to give the reader a sufficient understanding of the chosen research area. Moreover, the study's purpose, limitations, and expected knowledge contribution to the field are clarified.

1.1. Background

This study emerges at a time when the interest in environmental consumerism in various industries is accelerating rapidly. In recent years, a significant number of scholars and professionals have studied environmental consumerism (e.g., Borin et al., 2013; Johnstone., 2015; Lee et al., 2015). However, there has been limited focus on the cosmetics industry and especially on its implications on the Swedish market. Environmental degradation and climate change are forcing consumers to become increasingly conscious about their purchases, ranging from food to cosmetics (e.g., Kim et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2018). To meet evolving consumers' needs and demands successfully, more and more companies are forced to take action to offer products and solutions that are benign toward the environment. Market-leading cosmetics companies are vigorously working on viable business models to limit their environmental footprint (L´Oréal, 2018; Coty Inc., 2019).

In contrast to previously published research, this thesis aims to shed light on the Swedish cosmetics market and the underlying attributes determining cosmetics purchases. Building upon existing work in the field, a critical analysis of ethical consumerism on cosmetics and the attitudes held by consumers are investigated (e.g., Kim et al., 2009; Lin et al., 2018). In comparison to food and other goods that have been more thoroughly researched, cosmetics is highly evaluated and measured by its efficiency and promised results (Bray et al., 2011). Therefore, it is an interesting product category to study in relation to existing research on other product offerings (Lee et al., 2015). The experienced transition toward ethical consumerism is forcing companies to respond to changing attitudes. The question is, which attributes of cosmetics should companies focus on to stay relevant?

1.1.1. Overview of the Cosmetics Industry

The global cosmetics market is dynamically driven and continues to show growth potential. The most notable groups driving the projected consumption growth are the middle and upper-income classes, as well as millennials and senior citizens (L'Oréal, 2019). The Asia Pacific has mostly driven the industry's growth in the last years and will most likely continue to do so (L'Oréal, 2019). The global cosmetics market during a forecasted period from 2019 to 2026, is projected to grow from USD 493.34 billion to USD 756.63 billion, at a CAGR of 5.81% (Fior Markets, 2020).

The sustainable products segment, including but not limited to nature-based cosmetics, is expected to grow from about 35 billion dollars 2019 to over 50 billion dollars in

global revenue before 2027 (Nordic Brand Manager, Coty Inc., personal communication, 12 March 2020). Thus, the ethical product category is expanding at a faster rate than expected. The Nordic market, and especially Sweden, is at the forefront of this transition, as Swedish consumers are much more aware of the ethical consequences their purchase decisions have (Nordic Brand Manager, Coty Inc., personal communication, 12 March 2020). As a result of the rising awareness and demand for transparency, several companies today offer product lines and all-natural cosmetics brand offerings that contain natural ingredients and are manufactured ethically (Nordic Brand Manager, Coty Inc., personal communication, 12 March 2020). An increasing number of cosmetics companies are developing sustainable products, operations, and initiatives to stay relevant in a market where consumers increasingly request transparency and environmentally conscious actions (NYU Stern, 2017).

Despite consumers valuing ethically conscious products and brands, ethicality can negatively affect the overall perception of the product's main attributes (Luchs et al., 2010). For cosmetic products, the characteristics perceived to be more important are related to the efficiency of the products (Bray et al., 2011). According to a study performed in the US by Gfk Roper, 61 percent of consumers believe that green products' efficiency is inferior to non-green (Gfk Roper, 2007). Research suggests that there is a trade-off between the perceived riskiness and attractiveness of ethical operations and products (Makowever, 2009). Thus, a large number of cosmetics products and brands have chosen not to claim themselves as ethical. This is especially common among premium brands with high brand equity, such as Hugo Boss, Marc Jacobs, and Chloé. Environmental claims do not enhance the appeal for these brands and are thus perceived as unnecessary ventures (Nordic Brand Manager, Coty Inc., personal communication, 12 March 2020).

1.1.2. Cosmetics Consumers

Consumers become increasingly aware and cautious about ingredients, their origins, and the environmental impact their cosmetics purchases have (Nordic Brand Manager, Coty Inc., personal communication, 12 March 2020). They demand greater transparency in terms of environmentally friendly products and brands, as well as conscious ingredients and extraction methods (L'Oréal, 2019). Today's cosmetics consumers are more educated than ever, both concerning obtained results but also regarding the sustainability of products and operations (Nordic Brand Manager, Coty Inc., personal communication, 12 March 2020). Nevertheless, the ethical product segment still has a relatively small market share. Despite cosmetics consumers in similarity with the general consumer expresses ethical purchase intentions, there is a limited alteration of their buying behavior. There is an evident gap between intentions and actions (Carrington et al., 2010).

Cosmetics consumers are highly characterized by their desire to achieve results (Bray et al., 2011). The efficiency and productivity of products are at the core of the product category (Nordic Brand Manager, Coty Inc., personal communication, 12 March 2020). The focus on the efficiency of the products may likely have implications on ethical purchases in the category. Borin et al. (2013) reported that consumers continue to distrust the performance of sustainable products despite valuing ethicality.

1.2. Purpose and Research Questions

This thesis aims to shed light on the discrepancy between self-reported actions and attitudes within cosmetics and to contribute to existing research in the field. The study will explore Swedish undergraduate students' self-reported attitudes and potential trade-offs between efficiency and ethical aspects of cosmetics. More specifically, to understand if ethical claims affect the perceived efficiency of cosmetics products.

The purpose forms the basis for the following research questions:

1. What are Swedish cosmetic consumers' attitudes towards ethical aspects of cosmetics products?

2. To what extent do Swedish cosmetic consumers value sustainability in relation to effectiveness?

3. Do the respondents make decisions about potential trade-offs between efficiency and sustainability?

1.3. Delimitations

This thesis is limited to the Swedish market, and the respondents constitute of Swedish speaking students pursuing an undergraduate education. The geographical demarcation is primarily the Stockholm and Gothenburg area. There is a flux of students moving from other parts of the country to study in these regions. Consequently, the selection of respondents is considered to constitute a fair representation of students in Sweden.

The relatively limited selection of responses has been affected by the emergence of Covid-19. With regard to the virus outbreak and the Swedish Governments' recommendations to self-quarantine, the data gathering process was forced to be adjusted, and an online survey was instead conducted. The study was initially aimed to take place at Kicks, a Swedish cosmetics retailer, at three different locations in the Stockholm Metropolitan area.

The survey was distributed via direct messages through Facebook and SMS. Using a web-based method comes with a certain risk of respondents not completing the questionnaire if it is considered to be lengthy. Concerning the risk of longer questionnaires leading to a lower response rate, the survey was made shorter, and the experiment was limited to only one product.

There is no single established collective definition of cosmetics, which may affect the respondents' individual perception of cosmetics. Despite briefly explaining what products are included in the terminology, there is no guarantee that a universal understanding is present among the respondents. It may also be noted that this paper will not investigate any differences in attitudes on products specifically for "men" or "women."

1.4. Expected Knowledge Contribution

This study aims to expand existing knowledge concerning the impact of ethical aspects on cosmetics consumers' attitudes. There exist a large amount of research dealing with ethical consumerism and the ethical dilemma between attitudes and purchasing behavior. However, there is limited research on the cosmetics industry and the Swedish market, which indicates an opportunity for further research in the area.

Exploring ethical consumerism, as an established theoretical framework on cosmetics in Sweden, is expected to be relevant to various industry actors. The thesis is likely to be of interest to marketers, who ought to consider the valued attributes when branding and marketing products. It is also assumed to be of interest to R&D departments, top management, and sales teams to guide the allocation of resources. Furthermore, what attributes should be focused on when marketing cosmetics will provide insights to scholars as well as recommendations to practitioners.

1.5. Definitions

Table 1. List of definitions encountered in the study

Concept	Definition	Reference
Cosmetics	"Products applied to the human body for beautifying, preserving or altering one's appearance or for cleansing, coloring, conditioning or protecting the skin, hair, nails, lips, eyes"	(Dhadhal, 2015).
Green-attitude behavior gap	"Discrepancy or "gap" between consumers' expressed favourable attitudes and actual purchasing practices".	(Joshi et al., 2015).
Ethical aspects	Ethical aspects concern hazardous activities affecting not only the environment or climate but also people and animals.	(Strong, 1996).
Ethical consumerism	Ethical consumerism refers to buyer behavior that reflects a concern for environmental and social impact.	(Strong, 1996).
Green Products	Green products refer to sustainable products aimed to minimize its environmental impact, both concerning ingredients, extraction method, production, recycling, and so forth.	(Johnstone et al., 2015)

Note: The list does not include all concepts that may be encountered in the thesis.

2. Previous Research and Theoretical Frame of Reference

The following section presents the theoretical background of the chosen area of study. It will primarily focus on two different areas of previous research: ethical consumerism and the green-attitude behavior gap. Additionally, relevant research studies and theories concerning various aspects of cosmetics' attributes are explored. Finally, this chapter introduces the identified attribute model and provides the reader with a review of the hypotheses the study intends to explore.

The study builds on existing literature on environmentally and socially conscious behaviors, drawn from both the broader literature on sustainability and the more specific literature on ethical consumerism. The theories have been identified by searching in library databases, using search words such as "ethical consumerism," "cosmetics," and "the green-attitude behavior gap."

2.1. Ethical Consumerism

Ethical consumption is a growing phenomenon that, in recent times, has come to disrupt the way of doing business in several industries (Bray et al., 2011). To a greater extent, consumers are aware of the social, economic, and environmental impact their choices incur (e.g., Lee et al., 2015; CEAP, 2007; Eurobarometer, 2011). As a result, positive attitudes about green products have emerged. Throughout the world, companies have responded to these rising trends to support the United Nation's sustainable development goal number 12, "Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns" (SDG Knowledge platform, 2019).

The growing prevalence of ethical products on the market has made it easier for consumers to purchase sustainable products. Consumers today do not have to go to great lengths to consume ethically. Although it has never been easier to make sustainable choices, it is apparent that consumers do not purchase green goods as frequently as expected (Gleim et al., 2013). Estimates report that ethical products represent a small fraction of global demand (Gleim et al., 2013). According to Luchs et al. (2010), "40% of consumers report that they are willing to buy 'green products,' only 4% actually do so."

Despite a high projection of ethical cosmetics sales, product sales still constitute a low percentage of total sales (Trade Marketing Manager, L'Oréal, personal communication, 17 March 2020). Thus, there is potential for the cosmetics industry to expand both in terms of market size and product offerings.

This thesis's applied definition of ethical consumerism is not limited to environmental aspects, which previous research has largely focused on. Shamdasani et al. (1993) broadly define green or environmentally friendly products as "products that will not pollute the earth or deplete natural resources and can be recycled or conserved."

This thesis extends on the environmental definition to include a people element, such as union rights and animal rights, in accordance with Strong's (1996) explanation below.

> "Ethical consumerism refers to buyer behavior that reflects a concern with the problems of the Third World, where producers are paid low wages and live in poor conditions simply to produce cheap products for western consumers and profits of multinational companies."

2.2. Ethical Consumerism in Cosmetics

Ethical consumerism is a growing phenomenon in the personal beauty industry globally. Several studies have examined consumers' attitudes toward green cosmetics in different markets (e.g., Lin et al., 2018; Csorba et al., 2011; Kim, S., & Seock, Y., 2009).

The cosmetics industry has seen a significant transition toward the adoption of ethical products. The increasing consciousness about toxic and harmful ingredients in food has significantly impacted the demand for more gentle cosmetics to the body and environment (Lin et al., 2018). The trend of green cosmetics and ethical processes has resulted in a vast amount of companies and suppliers producing and selling cosmetics that are less harmful to the environment and society (Green Choices, 2012). There is a prevalence of increasing distribution of natural and organic cosmetics in supermarkets, pharmacies, and drugstores across Europe and North America (Environmental News Network, 2007).

Companies such as L´Oréal and Coty, Inc are working towards minimizing their adverse impact on the environment through various initiatives and efforts. However, efforts are not limited to these companies. The industry as a whole is leveraging the strategic opportunity to meet attitudinal and behavioral changes in demand.

Ethical labeling is gaining a foothold in especially Europe, where vegan and fair-trade labels and claims are requested on cosmetics. According to research published by Fior Markets (2020), "The vegan segment is anticipated to grow at the highest CAGR of 6% over the forecast period". Vegan choices are, however, not a new phenomenon in Sweden. Vegan product offerings have been demanded long.

The terminology of ethical and environmental claims in cosmetics is not regulated, which has led to companies using words interchangeably (Wischhover, 2018). Thus, it is hard to know what different companies mean with their claims, as they make their assessment of the meaning. Previous research proposes that the various standards and immense amounts of green and ethical concepts confuse consumers (Mintel, 2010). Lack of regulation and understanding of claims and misleading marketing information makes it more difficult for consumers to assess ethical cosmetics (Environmental News Network, 2007).

2.3. The Green-attitude Behavior Gap

Prior research reveals that there exists a notable difference between attitudes and consumers' willingness to make ethical purchases (Roberts, 1996; Simon, 1995).

Carrigan et al. (2010) observed that it is evident that consumers do not always "walk their talk." Many researchers have pointed to it as a discrepancy between attitudes and action, which can be related to the fact that consumers might not be as ethically minded as they claim to be (Johnstone et al., 2015). It is apparent that consumers still buy non-sustainable products regardless of their environmental concerns (Strong, 1996). (Strong, 1996).

Through the years, several researchers have referred to this as the Green-attitude Behavior Gap (e.g., Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; Gupta and Ogden, 2009; Pickett-Baker and Ozaki, 2008). They have all investigated the phenomenon - that despite consumers holding positive attitudes toward green products and expressing their concern toward the environment, it is common that their attitudes do not translate into actual purchase behavior. Boulstridge and Carrigan (2000) reported that "The reality is that social responsibility [for consumers' purchase decisions] is not the most dominant criterion." Research supports that it appears to be a significant gap between consumers' explicit attitudes toward sustainable products and their consumption behavior (Luchs et al., 2010). Many support the cause of acting sustainable, but few carry out the act themselves.

2.4. Research Model of Factors Influencing the Formation of Attitude

The current study focuses on two elements of cosmetics – non-formula attributes and formula attributes, inspired by Lee et al. 's (2015) conceptualization of sensory and functional attributes and Stimulus – Organism – Response model. According to their study, sensory appeal attributes (taste, appearance, texture, and odor) are among the most important factors for food purchases. Sensory appeals are also considered to pertain to cosmetics purchases (Mintel, 2014).

To adequately illustrate the relationship between attributes affecting cosmetics' attitudes and extending on the research by Lee et al. (2015). The attributes concerning cosmetics in this thesis have been defined as either formula related or non-formula related instead of functional or sensory appealing. The functional attributes pertain primarily to the non-formula category, and the sensory attributes relate primarily to formula attributes. By understanding what aspects of the cosmetics product offering (formula or non-formula) consumers base their decisions on and how the different attributes are related to each other, it becomes easier for the industry to know what aspects to focus on.

The conceptual framework presented by Lee et al. (2015) and the study conducted by Luchs et al. (2010) on 'the potential negative effects of ethicality on product preference' form the theoretical basis for this study. Through a combination of attributes identified in previous research and the questionnaire development, the following factors are considered to be the most relevant for consumer attitudes on cosmetics: accessibility, brand, efficiency, gentleness (to the body), packaging, price, scent, and sustainability. The definition of product attributes is retrieved from the study by Lee et al. (2015) "Product attributes are categorized based on whether consumers can accurately evaluate a product's performance before purchase, after purchase, or not at all."

The illustrative model comprises the eight aforementioned attributes that are expected to drive consumers' perceived attitudes towards cosmetics purchases. This study will only explore three of them more in-depth. With regard to the core of cosmetics – the model revolves around the formula.

Price constitutes a determinant unrelated to the function of the product, hence its allocation in the model. Price and efficiency are perceived to be the dominant influences on why consumers purchase non-ethical products despite being environmentally conscious (Johnstone et al., 2015). The factors marked with an asterisk are the factors that will be further examined in this study.

Ethical attributes are related to both environmental and social issues. Prior literature by Luchs et al. (2010), among others, commonly refer to products with positive ethical attributes as "sustainable." In this thesis, I will also allude to both environmental and social aspects as sustainable.[1]

The attribute model found below illustrates the relationship between determinants influencing consumer attitudes.

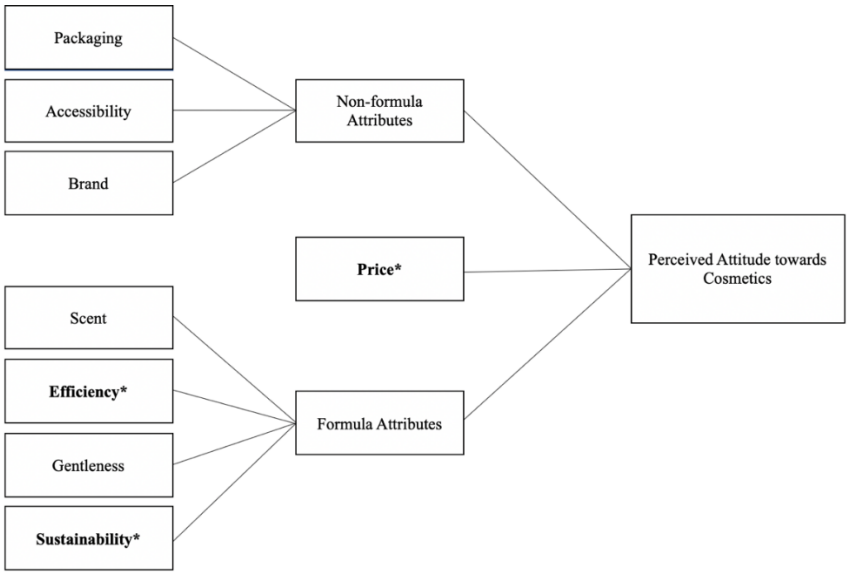


Figure 1. An illustration of the relationship between attributes influencing attitudes towards cosmetics, divided by price, formula- and non-formula attributes

2.5. Determinants of Consumer Attitudes toward Cosmetics

This thesis investigates three crucial determinants of attitudes toward cosmetics - price, efficiency, and sustainability. The aforementioned cosmetics attitudes are obtained from previous research and the questionnaire development.

[1] Sustainability and ethicality will be used interchangeably in the study.

2.5.1. Non-formula Related Attributes

The non-formula attributes include packaging, accessibility, and brand. The following section provides a shorter background of each attribute.

Packaging serves to differentiate the product and to communicate its worth (Doyle, 2011). It is an important element to cosmetics' overall feeling and especially essential for luxury cosmetics (Trade Marketing Manager, L'Oréal, personal communication, 17 March 2020). Packaging consists of both informational and promotional labeling necessary to the communication of the brand (Underwood, 2003). The current research model follows Keller's (1993), positioning of packaging as a non-product attribute "not directly relating to the product performance."

Accessibility was formerly most likely a more determining factor when purchasing cosmetics. However, due to the rise of online retailers, consumers can easily buy cosmetics wherever and whenever. Nevertheless, it is still a factor that cannot be excluded from the model. According to Gleim et al. (2013), the effort to evaluate and search for products is included in the cost of consumption. Thus, further supporting the attribute's place in the model.

The brand name is the second most crucial factor influencing purchases of skincare cosmetics, according to a research study by Dhadhal (2015). It is a determinant that most likely not only pertains to skincare but also purchases of other cosmetics types. Consumers are generally perceived to be quite loyal to brands of frequently purchased products (Dhadhal, 2015). Thereby, cosmetics brands are assumed to have a considerable influence on recurring purchases. Carrigan et al. (2001) also indicate that brand image is one of the dominant factors influencing product choice. Hence, the brand is assumed to be a relevant factor to include in the illustrative model.

The non-formula attributes possess influential roles, critical to the perception of a cosmetics product. However, these do not form the basis for the hypothesis presented later in this chapter.

2.5.2. Formula Related Attributes

The scent is according to research by Lee et al. (2015), a sensory attribute that is recognized as one of the most important factors for food purchases. Building upon their work, the scent is perceived to also play a vital role in cosmetics, as it is a feature that is included in almost every cosmetic offering globally. A study performed by Mintel (2014) further supports the idea of its importance for cosmetics, "Scent is a primary purchase driver in personal care." Additionally, the Cosmetic Toiletry and Perfumery Association highlights fragrance as a critical factor influencing purchase behavior (CTPA, 2018).

Efficiency is a significant factor in cosmetics that, for many, is the primary attribute determining purchases of products (Trade Marketing Manager, L'Oréal, personal communication, 17 March 2020). Consumers purchase products with a specific result in mind they wish to obtain. Fowler (2002) reported that 42 percent of people are resistant to purchasing green products, fearing that they work less well compared to conventional

products. The efficiency of products is crucial for various product segments, including but not limited to cosmetics.

Gentleness in this thesis concerns gentleness toward the body (CTPA, 2018). Luchs et al. (2010) propose that those product categories where gentleness-related attributes are valued, such as facial soaps and body lotion, ethicality is an asset. The research and expert interviews support that gentleness is an attribute that consumers take into consideration for cosmetics purchases. However, most cosmetics offerings are likely valued more based on efficiency (Bray et al., 2011). Nevertheless, gentleness is an attribute worth including in the illustrative attribute model.

Sustainability is a factor that, in recent years, has become increasingly important. It is a broad concept, as there are various opinions on what the definition includes. In order to delimit the survey, this thesis explores sustainability as the basis for the broader concept - ethicality. Sustainability is an attribute that cosmetics consumers increasingly request (Nordic Brand Manager, Coty Inc., personal communication, 12 March 2020). Thus, it is an appropriate attribute to explore in this research.

2.5.3. Price

Price is viewed as a monetary sacrifice for buying a product (Völckner, F, 2008). It is an attribute that is highly influential in consumers' decision-making. The substantial differences in price points for cosmetics suggest that consumers have varying price-sensitivities. For drugstore cosmetics in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) segment, consumers are perceived to be more price-sensitive than for high-end cosmetics in the luxury segment. To conclude, price is a vital evaluation principle for buying cosmetics. According to Carrigan et al. (2001), price, together with quality and value, outweighs the ethical aspects of purchase decisions.

2.6. Development of Hypotheses

The following section reviews relevant literature for the development of the proposed series of hypotheses.

This first hypothesis elaborates on Luchs et al.'s (2010) findings, which propose that sustainability as an attribute can negatively affect perceptions of a product's other characteristics. Incorporating a sustainability element to a product offering does not necessarily enhance the appeal for the cosmetics product in question. Their study asserts that consumers value higher product ethicality for gentleness-related attributes and lower product ethicality for strength-related (efficiency-related) attributes. If a product is valued based on its strength-related attributes, sustainability will reduce consumer preference. Hence, the benefits sought in a product determine if sustainability will increase liking or not. Luchs et al. (2010) suggest that many assume products to be either ethical or efficient, which implies a dilemma between choosing ethically or not.

Their paper further suggests that facial soaps and body lotions are valued based on gentleness-related attributes. This thesis will, however, make a different assessment of which category cosmetics pertain to. Cosmetics are highly valued based on its

performance attributes - an anti-age cream is expected to reduce fine lines, and lipstick is purchased to have a long-lasting color (Bray et al., 2011). Therefore, this thesis assumes that cosmetics are primarily valued based on efficiency and, thereby, strength-related attributes. Thus, in this product category, ethical claims are perceived not to benefit consumer preferences. The preference for ethicality should, according to Luchs et al. (2010), be reduced for cosmetics.

Based on the discussion above, the first hypothesis is formed:

> *H1: Cosmetics consumers' attitude towards perceived effectiveness relates negatively to ethical attributes*

The importance of price as a driver and criteria for consumer purchases has been noted by, among others, Borin et al. (2013) in his research on consumer reactions to green strategies. Also, previous research by Boulstridge and Carrigan (2000) on whether or not a current investment in corporate reputation is justified assert that price, together with the factors: cost, brand familiarity, and quality, are the most critical influences on purchase behavior.

Gleim et al. (2013) investigated barriers affecting consumers' evaluation of green products. Their study identified eight green barriers to green purchasing, where price sensitivity is one of the principal constraints. Both Gleim et al. (2013) and Luchs et al. (2010) elaborates on ethical products involving a more significant cost, not only limited to higher price but also performance risk.

Extending on the aforementioned research, the relationship between price and ethical attributes is a phenomenon in the context of many product offerings. There is a lack of previous research that has specifically studied how cosmetics' price relates to ethical attributes. However, building on existing research, attitudes toward price are likely to precede ethicality.

The discussion leads to the second hypothesis:

> *H2: Cosmetics consumers' attitude towards price relates negatively to ethical attributes*

Several purchase decisions are perceived to involve a trade-off between ethical aspects and other valued attributes. Cosmetics is assumed to be no exception. Luchs et al. (2017) suggest that consumers rather compromise hedonic value (e.g., esthetics) for sustainability than a utilitarian value (e.g., functional performance). According to this finding, the efficiency is less likely to be traded off for ethical attributes as it pertains to the functioning of the product. Thus, the research suggests that cosmetics consumers are reluctant to compromise their functional performance need.

Research by Luchs et al. (2010) implies that consumers believe that superiority on ethical attributes automatically leads to the inferiority of other valued attributes. Hence, a sustainable cosmetics product would be perceived as inferior regarding its performance as sustainability in strength-related categories can be a liability. The study

continues to propose that the sustainability liability phenomenon can be overcome by providing additional information about product strength. Hence, mitigating the negative perception of ethicality, leading to decreased product efficiency. This implies that adding information about equal performance on a regular and sustainable product would lead to a sustainable product being chosen to a higher degree than without the information.

Based on the discussion above, the third hypothesis is formed:

> *H3: Cosmetics consumers will purchase the more sustainable product if they are to choose between two identical products that have been described as equally efficient and priced*

Several research papers have noted that there is a willingness to pay a price premium for green products. Vlosky et al. (1999) investigated the willingness to pay a premium for environmentally certified wood products, and Carrigan et al. (2001) highlighted US consumers' willingness to pay a premium and reward ethical behavior.

A paper by Laroche et al. (2001) also investigates the willingness to pay a premium for environmentally conscious products. The study found that 13.1 percent of respondents were willing to pay more for ethical products.

Kim et al. (2009) investigated young female consumers' shopping patterns on cosmetics and their attitudes toward ethical products. The research asserts that those who are both health- and environmentally conscious are willing to pay more for natural beauty products.

However, research findings by Borin et al. (2013) on consumer reactions to green strategies assert that consumers are not prone to pay a premium for green products. Owing to the fact that there is no incentive to pay for the costs of ecological differentiation. Nevertheless, they acknowledge that consumers may be motivated to buy ethically if products are appropriately priced and if they incur no sacrifice of convenience and quality. The paper further suggests that there are potentially product categories where consumers hold a more positive attitude towards paying a higher price for sustainable products.

Based on research by Laroche et al. (2001) and Kim et al. (2009), it is reasonable to assume that there may be a willingness to pay an additional cost for cosmetics products only containing natural ingredients.[2] As there is no mutual comprehension among researchers on receptiveness to pay a premium for ethical products, it is assumed to be of interest to explore the phenomenon for cosmetics.

Extending on the aforementioned research, the fourth and final hypothesis is formulated:

[2] The hypothesis is limited to examining only natural ingredients, as sustainability has the risk of becoming too broad a concept with regard to the thesis limitations.

H4: *Cosmetics consumers are willing to pay more if the product only contains natural ingredients*

2.7. Summary of Hypotheses

Based on existing theory and the discussions above, the following hypotheses are offered.

Table 2. Summary of hypotheses and literature base

Hypotheses	Hypotheses Formulation	Literature base
H1	Cosmetics consumers' attitude towards perceived effectiveness relates negatively to ethical attributes	Luchs et al., 2010; Bray et al., 2011.
H2	Cosmetics consumers' attitude towards price relates negatively to ethical attributes	Boulstridge et al., 2000; Gleim et al., 2013; Luchs et al., 2010; Borin et al., 2013.
H3	Cosmetics consumers will purchase the more sustainable product if they are to choose between two identical products that have been described as equally efficient and priced	Luchs et al., 2010; Luchs et al., 2017.
H4	Cosmetics consumers are willing to pay more if the product only contains natural ingredients	Borin et al., 2013; Carrigan et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2009; Laroche et al., 2001; Vlosky et al., 1999.

3. Method

The following section is dedicated to present and motivate the method and research design. A quantitative research approach is selected to answer the research questions. The chapter briefly reviews the questionnaire development and then proceeds to explain the study. Further, the survey and the sample of respondents are presented. Lastly, there is a brief discussion of the reliability and validity of the research.

3.1. Methodological Approach

This study is of an experimental nature and uses a deductive approach. The hypotheses are generated based on previous literature and established theories, aiming to explore whether prior research applies to the cosmetics product offering (Bryman & Bell, 2017). The study employs a quantitative research design based on two web-based questionnaires. The aim is to explore which product aspects consumers find important when purchasing cosmetics products and if there is a trade-off between efficiency and ethicality. The respondents in the experiment were randomly assigned a questionnaire and received different treatments. The experimental nature provides the opportunity to manage the variables actively.

Based on the research questions, a quantitative approach is perceived to be superior to a qualitative one. It allows for analysis and comparison of statistical observations between the control and the treatment group. The testing of the hypotheses using a survey method was identified as the most appropriate and accessible technique to provide a relevant sample and understanding of consumer attitudes and trade-offs.[3]
The starting point for the study is a qualitative questionnaire development consisting of interviews with industry experts. The aim is to gain an understanding of the vital attributes, which influence cosmetics purchases. The interviews, together with previous research, form the basis of the selected attributes and the illustrative model presented in the previous chapter.

3.2. Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire development was conducted based on a qualitative method consisting of interviews with industry experts in the field. The preliminary investigation is performed to confirm or alter the attributes considered influencing consumers' decision-

[3] There are many appropriate methods to choose between, and conducting an experiment is not necessarily the best approach. A qualitative research method will undoubtedly lead to a depth of insight that cannot be achieved by a survey instrument. It is also most likely beneficial to understand why specific attributes are valued. However, based on the thesis' purpose to measure the effects of attributes on attitudes - a quantitative research method is perceived to be preferable. Moreover, there are not sufficient resources to conduct an appropriate number of interviews. Hence, a quantitative approach is chosen since more responses can be gathered, providing more accurate mean values and less risk of skewed data. Additionally, a quantitative nature directs the natural choice of selecting a deductive approach (Bryman & Bell, 2015). A field experiment would with regard to the purpose also be considered reasonable as it enables both observation and opportunity to ask further questions. However, in the context of Covid-19, stores are reluctant to have additional people on their premises.

making identified in prior research. The qualitative study, together with research theories, lays the foundation for the selection of determinants further investigated. For this purpose, two qualitative one-to-one interviews with representatives from Coty Inc. and L´Oréal were completed.[4] Additional information was gathered through email contact with an employee at Kosmetik-och hygienföretagen and participation in three sustainability seminars at L´Oréal. The interviews also helped to provide an overall understanding of ethical consumerism in cosmetics and future expectations on ethical trends.

The information gained from the interviews confirms the attributes identified in prior research on cosmetics and similar types of products. In conclusion, determinants of attitudes toward products for personal use do not differ considerably. The attribute considered to be the most influential for cosmetics based on the interviews was efficiency. Based on this overall assessment, eight variables are deemed vital for cosmetics consumers: accessibility, brand, efficiency, gentleness (to the body), packaging, price, scent, and sustainability. See Appendix for more information on the questionnaire development.

3.3. The Study

3.3.1. Research Design

An experimental research design was used to measure the impact efficiency as a feature has on product choices of ethical cosmetics. The experimental research approach aims to observe the relationships between the dependent and independent variables. The design enables analysis and comparison between the treatment and control groups. Further, it facilitates the analysis and interpretation of data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The use of a survey method is also perceived to increase the likelihood of receiving a larger sample of respondents, which is preferable when conducting a quantitative study (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The research instrument is based upon existing theories and findings, which allow for relevant comparison and expansion of results obtained under differing researching conditions. The expertise and the discoveries this study stems from thereby provides an opportunity to contextualize the phenomenon that is inherent in strength-related categories.

The survey was written in Swedish as it was distributed to Swedish undergraduate students. The choice of language was decided to limit the risk of the sample skewed towards students more confident with English.

Prior to distributing the survey, three students at the Stockholm School of Economics provided further input on the questionnaires' content and design. Certain formulations could then be adjusted to minimize the risk of ambiguities and incorrect interpretations and misunderstandings (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

[4] The confidentiality of the interviews will be maintained throughout the thesis. I was, however, granted permission to mention the companies by name. Sensitive information shared about the companies during the interviews, and the sustainability seminars will be kept confidential to protect company interests. All the information extracted from the interviews is considered to be truthful and reliable.

3.3.2. Survey Participants

The experiment was conducted with a random convenience sample of two groups, consisting of Swedish undergraduate students. The experiment's focus was to measure the effect of additional information on ethical product choices. The surveys were distributed via direct messages on Facebook, and SMS, to ensure that only the target group received the questionnaires.

The survey instrument contained an experimental manipulation. The group with information on equal product efficiency is referred to as the treatment group (Survey 1), whereas the other group is referred to as the control group (survey 2). By using students in both surveys, differences in responses across conditions can be concluded to stem from the variations in the manipulation (Druckman, 2011).

The choice of analyzing Swedish undergraduate students is perceived to be of interest as there is little research on the Swedish cosmetics market in general. An examination of the respondents in the current thesis showed that the majority were women (61.2%) aged 18-29, which account for the largest share of cosmetics consumers (Social standards, 2019).

A convenience sample poses a risk of receiving a limited homogenous selection (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The students cannot be assumed to constitute a representative sample of the average Swedish cosmetics consumer. However, I believe the respondents represent a fair representation of undergraduate students in Sweden, as well as the predominant consumer group - females at the age of 21-29 (Social standards, 2019).[5]

3.3.3. Sampling and Data Collection

The sample of the respondents consists of undergraduate students from the Stockholm School of Economics, Chalmers University, and Stockholm University. A total of 215 students were randomly assigned one of the two questionnaires. 196 surveys were successfully returned, representing a response rate of 91.16%. There were nine non-responses. Questionnaires not sent back within a timeframe of seven days were excluded (Zheng, 2020). There were four who responded incorrectly to the control question and were thereby filtered out (Söderlund, 2018). Of the collected surveys, 13 questionnaires in total were removed because they were incomplete or missed data. The remaining responses were coded and used for analysis. The survey was estimated to take 3-4 minutes to complete. Responses completed under 1 minute and longer than 15 minutes were declared invalid. The average response time was 4.09 minutes.

The recruitment was based on convenience sampling through friends and acquaintances, which resulted in a limited selection of schools and geographical demarcation. Hence, there is a probability of bias towards urban and suburban residents. However, the selection of respondents can be assumed to constitute a representative sample of undergraduate students in Sweden. Respondents were 112 females, 68 males, 2

[5] Not all cosmetics consumers are studying post-secondary education. Therefore, the sample is not representative of cosmetics consumers in general. However, this selection of respondents can give some indication for the population as a whole and provide insights into the target group.

responded other, and one preferred not to answer, ranging in age from 18-40. See 1.3 Delimitations for more information on the representative sample.

Table 3. Demographic Table (n=183)

Demographics		% of selection
Gender	Female	61.2%
	Male	37.2%
	Other	1.1%
	Prefer not to answer	.5%
Age	18-29	91.8%
	30-40	1.1%
Studying a post-secondary education	Yes	100%
	No	.0%

3.3.4. Survey Design

The study consists of 10 questions divided into six sections: demography, habits, attitude, experiment, knowledge, and control question.

The first block of the survey collected data on demography. The respondents were asked about gender, age, and educational level. There were no questions on marital status or income as the questionnaires targeted undergraduate students. The demographic information is of interest to compare the sample of subjects with the general cosmetics consumer in Sweden. The order of the response options was randomly manipulated to avoid order effects.

The second block concerns buying patterns and were inspired by Winchester et al. (2015) to test how many cosmetics products the respondents purchase annually. The question was aimed to provide insight if the students are consumers and thus relevant to the field of study.

The third block investigated the respondents' self-reported attitudes of a set of attributes: accessibility, brand, efficiency, gentleness (to the body), packaging, price, scent, and sustainability. The classification of attributes is presented in 2.5 Determinants of Consumer Attitudes toward Cosmetics. Each of the variables was measured with a 5-point agree/disagree Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). A 5-point Likert scale to measure each variable was used to increase the response quality and response rate (Babakus et al., 1992). The translations of the attributes were obtained from the interviews.

Additionally, the third block asked questions regarding the price sensitivity of sustainable products, and if the respondents believe in cosmetics' promised effects. The latter question, "I believe in the promised effects of cosmetics products," was to explore their general attitudes toward efficiency. The two questions were measured with the same 5-point Likert scale.

The fourth block concerned the experiment and is explained later under the Test of H3. The experiment question containing different information for the two surveys was inspired by Luchs et al. (2010 and 2015) and adapted for this study.

The fifth block was aimed to explore the participants' knowledge. The questions were inspired by Chiou et al. (2006) questions on product-market expertise. In their study, they asked respondents to state their estimated exposure to cosmetic market-related information as well as their knowledge of cosmetics compared to other people. I formulated the following questions adjusted for this study's purpose, "I think I know the properties of the following ingredients" measured with 5-point agree/disagree Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) and "For the past three months, I have come across the marketing of cosmetics that emphasize sustainability" answered as either yes, no or I do not know.

The sixth block contained the control question to test the respondents' attention to the questionnaire and experimental material.

Table 4. Overview of the questionnaire

Block	#Questions	About
1	1	Questions regarding age
	2	Questions regarding gender
	3	Questions regarding educational level
2	4	Purchasing habits of cosmetics
3	5	Attitudes toward a set of attributes
	6	Willingness to pay more for all-natural ingredients
	7	Belief in cosmetics' promised effects
4		Experiment material and question on which scrub the respondents would choose
5	8	Knowledge on specific ingredients' characteristics
	9	Attention to marketing on sustainable cosmetics
6	10	Control questions to test the respondents' attention

Note: Only the level of information for the experiment varied between the treatment and control group. The other questions presented were equal for both groups.

Test of H1

The first hypothesis aims to measure if there is a negative correlation between efficiency and sustainability. The question "Rate how important the following set of attributes are to you when buying cosmetics" were considered to explore how the attributes relate to each other.

The purpose of using the question was to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the students' attitudes and to assess if there is a correlation between the two attributes. The question was formulated based on Luchs et al. (2010) questions to determine product preference when strength-related qualities are especially valued. This study

used some differing items compared to Luchs et al. (2010) for the attributes to match this study's specific purpose.

Test of H2

The second hypothesis aims to investigate if there is a negative correlation between price and sustainability, similarly to H1, examining the relationship between efficiency and sustainability. The same question used in H1 was, in this case, aimed to test the second hypothesis.

Test of H3

The objective of the experiment is to empirically test whether consumers trade-off sustainability for efficiency. All of the respondents were exposed to the same experimental material – a set of scrubs developed for this study, see Figure 2.
The packaging of one of the scrubs was green, and the other one blue. The labeling on the green scrub read, "Scrub Alpha, Eco-friendly," and the labeling on the blue scrub read "Scrub Beta, Regular." The green scrub is presented as a sustainable alternative (however, it does not make any claims of actually being sustainable) (Luchs et al., 2010). The price and design components such as packaging, logos, and fonts were held constant not to pose confounding variables. The treatment group was exposed to the manipulated version, displaying information "There is no variation in price or efficiency." The control group was exposed to an unmanipulated version "The efficiency of the products may vary. There is no price variation.". Both groups were exposed to the same set of sub-questions following the experiment in order to isolate the independent variable – information on the level of efficiency. Price is held constant for the two groups as price sensitivity may differ between the respondents, which could affect their product preference.

Additionally, a higher price may relate to a higher perceived level of efficiency and could thereby influence the answer when stating that efficiency may differ between the scrubs. Disregarding price was also implemented in consideration with s study performed by Bray et al. (2010), suggesting that price is a main impeding factor to ethical consumption. Therefore, price is held constant as it may influence the likeliness of choosing the regular scrub.

The experiment was conducted in support of Luchs et al. (2010) research on ethical attitudes not always being complemented by subsequent behavior. The choice of product was tailored to the research needs and characteristics. A scrub was selected in consultation with a L'Oréal employee to illustrate a product used by females and males. Using a relatable product is intended to increase the possibility to receive a more accurate result on whether claims of efficiency have considerable influence on sustainable product choices.

The experimental condition in the web-survey was randomly assigned to respondents using a randomizer in Qualtrics. The experiment attempts to explore the relationships between the dependent variable sustainability and the independent variable information on the level of efficiency.



Figure 2. Experiment material illustrating two scrubs with different information on the level of efficiency

Test of H4

The fourth hypothesis aims to explore if there is a willingness to pay more for all-natural ingredients. The survey question was formed based on Winchester et al. (2015) and Laroche et al. (2001) questions in their respective studies on price sensitivity. A 5-point agree/disagree Likert scale was used, anchored by (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) to indicate price sensitivity.

3.4. Analysis of Data and Tests

Analysis of the data retrieved from the survey was processed in SPSS Statistics 24. Descriptive data for all the survey questions are presented in the results section. A Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was used to measure the relationship between the attributes.

To determine if the means of the two sets of data are significantly different from each other, an independent sample *t*-test was conducted examining the differences between the control and treatment groups in relation to differing information of efficiency. Based on the *t*-test, the null hypothesis will either have empirical support or not have empirical support. The sample satisfies the assumptions of the population following a normal distribution since the respondents are obtained through random sampling that ensures independence of selection, as well as the sample size, being larger than 30 (Newbold et al., 2013). The *t*-test was conducted at a one percent significance level, which is considered an acceptable significance level (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Retrospectively, a nonparametric test should have been used instead of a t-test, considering the fact that a nominal scale of measurement was used. A parametric test is limited to only assessing continuous data. Thereby, the collected data do not satisfactorily meet the assumptions of the parametric test. A Chi-squared test would, therefore, be more appropriate to perform instead of the t-test.

3.5. Reliability and Validity

In the following section, the study's validity and reliability are discussed to provide a transparent picture of the conducted research for potential replications.

3.5.1. Validity

This study uses several sources of data to ensure validity and to strengthen the credibility aligned with the recommendations by Bryman and Bell (2007). In order to ensure that a causal relationship between the independent and dependent variable holds. Everything else than the independent variable- information on the level of efficiency was held constant to isolate the effect, see Test of H3 for more information. Thus, changes in the dependent variable are assumed to be caused by changes in the independent variable. Additionally, to ensure validity, the study variables were inspired by empirically tested variables and questions found in previous research.

A randomized sample of respondents was selected to improve validity. However, the question at issue is whether the sample is considered sufficiently large and representative of undergraduate students (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Despite the relatively limited sample and geographical demarcation, the selection is assumed to constitute a representative sample of undergraduate students in Sweden, see discussion on 3.3.3 Sampling and data collection. Nevertheless, a larger sample would be beneficial for improved validity.

Ecological validity was strengthened by exposing the participants to a real product in an existing category of cosmetics (Bryman and Bell, 2007). The product was chosen in consultation together with an industry expert to ensure credibility and relevance. Since the product is not presented under ordinary circumstances in a store, it involves deviations from the real-life environment. According to Bryman & Bell (2015), the exclusion of elements in the scrub context will likely have negative implications of ecological validity. Nevertheless, this manipulation was considered important with regard to the purpose.

To further ensure validity, a control question was used, which read, “What product were you exposed to?” with four response options to test if the respondents actively answered the questions. The respondents could state if they were exposed to a conditioner, shampoo, scrub, or body lotion. There were four who responded incorrectly, thereby, 97.9% of the respondents answered the question correctly.

Moreover, since only one product in the cosmetics portfolio constitutes the experimental material, it may be considered an inadequate representation of the product category. However, the results are believed to be generalizable beyond the specific product in the cosmetics category. With regard to generalization outside the cosmetics category, the results may likely not be fully applicable. However, the results can provide inspiration and theoretical background for future research.

3.5.2. Reliability

The study's reliability pertains to the method and whether the result will be consistent if replicated and if the measure can be assumed stable (Bryman & Bell, 2017). To ensure internal consistency, all the questions are to varying degrees based on variables of measurement in previous research.

The internal consistency of variables is commonly measured with Cronbach's alpha, with a rule of thumb of Cronbach's alpha having a value greater than 0.7 (Newbold et al., 2013). Cronbach's alpha will be measured for three cosmetics ingredients in the current study, which are perceived to measure the same concept.

Concerning the fact that confidentiality will be held throughout the study, complete interview transcripts will not be provided. Thereby only a promise of reliability can be assured. To ensure reliability for the interviews, I have put careful consideration of the data collection. Every conversation was recorded and transcribed verbatim immediately for all aspects of the interviews to be accurately reflected and taken into account.

4. Result

This section presents descriptive data and reviews the results for each of the hypotheses. First, a brief account of purchase habits and attitudes toward a set of attributes is introduced. Secondly, an analysis of the findings and conducted tests for the hypotheses are presented. The section ends with a review of other observations and a summary of the key findings. The APA manual is followed as much as possible.

The data provided in this section is supplemented with additional relevant data found in the Appendix.

4.1. Cosmetics Purchases

The total sample consisting of 183 respondents showed that the students at least purchase one cosmetics product annually. The responses were relatively evenly distributed between the three response options. Purchases of 6-10 products were the most common option (38.3%), followed by 1-5 products (32.8%). Purchases of more than ten products had the least amount of responses (29.0%).

Of the 68 male respondents, 42 (61.76) stated that they buy, on average, 1-5 products per year, whereas only 16 (14.29%) of the female respondents declared that they buy 1-5 products per year. Hence, the results indicate that women buy a higher number of cosmetics products than men. For more information on the distribution between the genders, see Appendix.

The distribution of responses for the eight attributes when purchasing cosmetics are illustrated in Figure 4. Of the total number of responses on the five-point Likert-scale, the majority 130 (71.0%) *strongly agree* that efficiency is an important attribute. Also, price and gentleness had high numbers of responses on *strongly agree* with 69 (37.7%), and 81 (44.3%) answers, respectively. Packaging received the least amount of responses on *strongly agree* with 16 (8.7%) answers, which implies that the factor is of rather low importance to cosmetics consumers. There were 26 (14.2%) people answering *strongly agree* on sustainability being important when purchasing cosmetics, and 44 (24.0%) responding *strongly disagree*. The findings support previous research asserting that efficiency and price are determining factors for cosmetics purchases, whereas people are not necessarily convinced about the importance of sustainability.

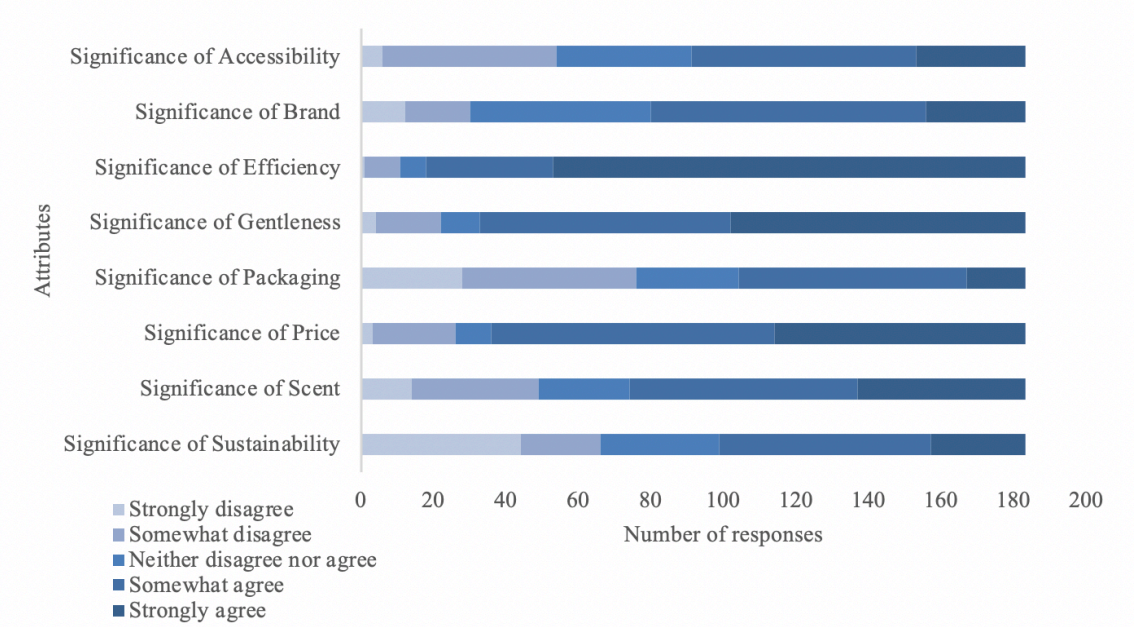


Figure 4. Bar chart illustrating the relationship between the responses of the eight attributes on a five-point Likert-scale

An overarching analysis was completed to assess the distribution of the answers between women and men and the potential outliers in answers for the variables: sustainability, price, and efficiency. There were 3 (1.6%) responses stating *strongly disagree* that price is an essential attribute and 1(.55%) on efficiency. Of those who answered *strongly disagree* for efficiency, the one respondent is a man. For the price, the three respondents were also men. Of the 44 (24.0%) respondents answering *strongly disagree* on sustainability, the responses from women constitute 68.2% of those answers. Sustainability had overall a relatively even distribution on the five-point Likert-scale, which is illustrated in the bar chart above.

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics of the variables explored in this thesis. Efficiency is considered the most important value and measured the highest mean of M=4.55, followed by gentleness M=4.12 and price M=4.02. The vast majority of respondents answered *strongly agree* for efficiency, which is assigned a value of 5. Most of the gentleness responses were between four, *somewhat agree,* and five, *strongly agree,* on the Likert-scale. The same goes for price, except it had 12 fewer answers on *strongly agree* and nine answers more on *somewhat agree*. Figure 4 provides a good illustration of the distribution of responses.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of means and standard deviations for the eight attributes (n=183)

	Attributes	M	SD
Formula related	Efficiency	4.55	.850
	Gentleness	4.12	1.041
	Scent	3.50	1.266
	Sustainability	3.00	1.406
Non-formula related	Accessibility	3.34	1.131
	Brand	3.48	1.068
	Packaging	2.95	1.255
External factor	Price	4.02	1.043

Concerning belief in cosmetics' performance, 6 (3.3%) of the total population answered *strongly agree*, and 73 (39.9%) responded *somewhat agree*. Of these more positive responses, 63 (86.3%) were women, which points towards women having a stronger belief in cosmetics' promise of delivered results than men. The mean value, M=3.07, reveals that the respondents' answers are primarily ranging around the neutral answer. The low standard deviation, SD=1.017, indicates a small spread in the data from the mean.

To conclude, the survey participants neither believe nor disbelieve in the promised effects. They are rather indifferent.

4.2. Hypothesis 1

Pearson correlation coefficient for the total sample was conducted to measure the relationship between efficiency and sustainability. The results reveal a significant negative relationship between the two variables, $r(181) = -.299$, $p = .001$.
The negatively correlated variables suggest that cosmetics consumers' attitude towards perceived efficiency relates negatively to ethical attributes. The result is congruent with previous research asserting that products assessed on their efficiency, such as cosmetics have a negative relationship to sustainability as an attribute. To conclude, there is empirical support for the hypothesis. See Appendix for descriptive statistics.

4.3. Hypothesis 2

Pearson correlation coefficient was also conducted to measure the relationship between price and sustainability. The results reveal a significant negative relationship between the two variables, $r(181) = -.307$, $p = .001$.

The results indicate that cosmetics consumers' attitude towards price relates negatively to ethical attributes. The findings provide evidence that consumers valuing price perceive sustainability to be a less critical factor. The findings show that there is empirical support for the second hypothesis.

4.4. Hypothesis 3

An independent samples *t*-test was used to examine whether there is a difference in product choices between the treatment and control group, with regard to the independent variable – information on the level of efficiency. The assumptions regarding *t*-tests hold, and the result is significant at a one percent significance level. Thereby, the data will be used to determine if there is empirical support for the hypothesis.

The results from the independent samples *t*-test indicate that individuals exposed to additional information stating "no difference in efficiency" ceteris paribus ($M = 1.08, SD = .269, N = 90$) scored higher on choosing the green scrub than the control group, ($M = 1.38, SD = .487, N = 93$), $t(144.411) = 5.153, p < .001$, one-tailed. The results reveal that the difference in the mean is with 99% confidence between 0.147 and 0.450.

The respondents answered which scrub they would choose on the scrub question. The green scrub was assigned a value of 1, while the blue scrub was assigned a value of 2. The results reveal a 27.8% difference in mean values between the groups. The results show that a statement on equal efficiency between the sustainable and the regular scrub affects product choice. Specifically, the result suggests that when consumers are exposed to a performance indicator for a sustainable product, the likelihood of choosing a sustainable product increases. Hence, cosmetics consumers will more likely purchase a sustainable cosmetics product if they are to choose between two products that have been described as equally efficient and priced.

The low values for the standard deviations indicate a small dispersion of the data set from the mean values. Descriptive statistics are provided in the Appendix.
The assumption of homogeneity of variances was tested with Levene's test before running the *t*-test. The assumption of equal variances does not hold. The degrees of freedom are calculated using the Satterthwaite's approximation as unequal variances are assumed (Newbold et al., 2013).

H_0: $\mu_{\text{equal efficiency}} - \mu_{\text{unequal efficiency}} = 0$ ("the difference of the means is equal to zero")
H_1: $\mu_{\text{equal efficiency}} - \mu_{\text{unequal efficiency}} \neq 0$ ("the difference of the means is not equal to zero")

Based on the results, I can conclude that there are significant statistical differences between the two groups' means. Hence, the null hypothesis that the treatment and control groups' means are equal is rejected. To conclude, there is empirical support for the hypothesis. As shown above, the t-test is significant.

4.5. Hypothesis 4

The fourth and final hypothesis aims to examine if cosmetics consumers are willing to pay more for a product that only contains natural ingredients. The respondents were asked to assess their opinion on a five-point Likert-scale. There were 59 (32.2%) who answered *strongly agree* on willingness to pay more for all-natural ingredients, and 64

(35.0%) answering *somewhat agree.* Of the total respondents, 13 (7,1%) answered *strongly disagree.* The mean value, M=3.74, further supports that the respondents are somewhat inclined to pay more for all-natural products. The standard deviation, SD=1.226, is rather low, which indicates a smaller spread in the data from the mean, suggesting that the respondents are relatively unanimous. To conclude, there is empirical support for the hypothesis.

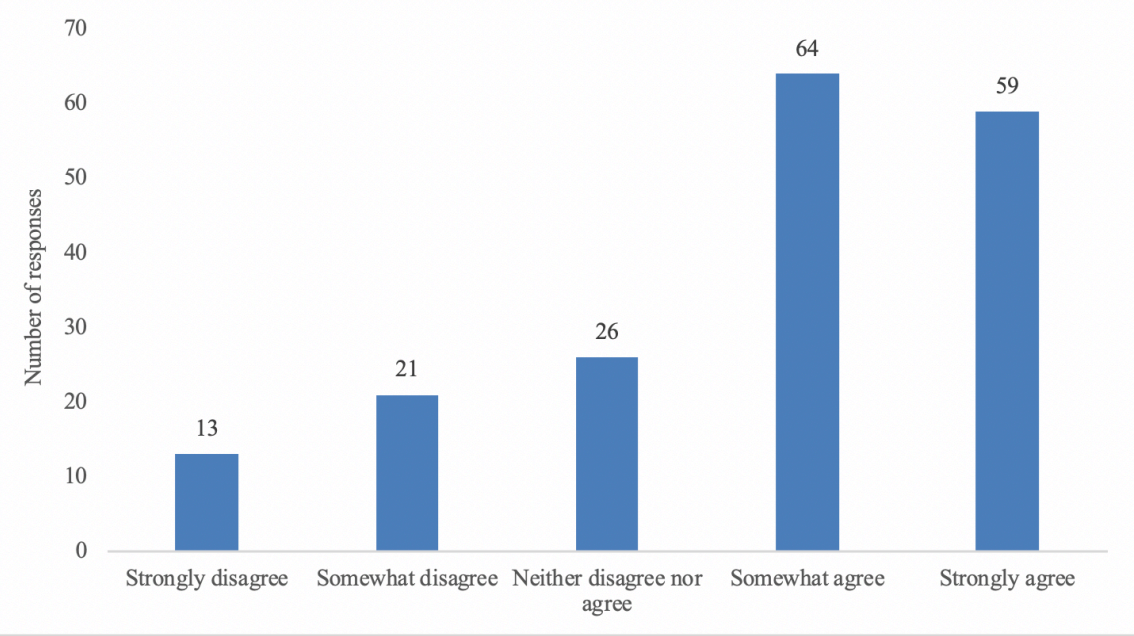


Figure 5. Illustration of the distribution of responses on willingness to pay more for all-natural ingredients

The graph describes the responses for each alternative of answer on willingness to pay more for all-natural ingredients. A left-skewed distribution indicates that the respondents are relatively positive towards paying a higher price for a cosmetics product that only contains natural ingredients. The majority of the answers range between four, *somewhat agree,* and five *strongly agree*.

4.6. Other Observations

Other observed results are the high level of responses on *strongly agree* to gentleness being important when purchasing cosmetics. A mean of M=4.12 was measured on the five-point Likert-scale for the attribute. The result reveals a significant concern among the respondents on ingredients' impact on one's health and body. Despite the high level of consciousness, the knowledge of chemical ingredients is poor. The means of knowledge of parabens, sulfates, and silicones are M=2.32, M=2.49, and M=2.43, respectively. Cronbach's alpha was measured at .836 for the three items passing the minimum threshold of 0.7, which indicates a high level of internal inconsistency.

Additionally, a question was used to determine if the respondents can recall being exposed to cosmetics marketing that emphasizes sustainability. The results show that

119 (65%) claim they have come across such marketing types. This supports that the marketing of cosmetics is highlighting sustainable cosmetics alternatives.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics of respondents answer if they have come across marketing of cosmetics emphasizing sustainability (n=183)

I have during the past three months come across marketing of cosmetics that emphasize sustainability	N	% of selection
Yes	119	65.0%
No	25	13.7%
Do not know	39	21.3%

4.7. Summary of Findings

The data show the following findings:

- There is a relatively even distribution between purchases of one or more than ten cosmetics products.
- Women tend to buy a higher number of cosmetics products than men.
- The top three attributes considered essential for cosmetics purchases are efficiency, gentleness, and price.
- Sustainability is not perceived as highly important.
- Respondents are rather neutral concerning belief in the promised effects of cosmetics.
- Sustainability correlates negatively with price and efficiency, respectively. There is empirical support for the hypotheses.
- The sustainable scrub is more likely to be chosen when there is information on equal efficiency. There is empirical support for the hypothesis.
- The respondents are inclined to pay more for all-natural ingredients. There is empirical support for the hypothesis.
- The knowledge of chemical ingredients tends to be poor.
- The majority of respondents have been exposed to cosmetics marketing, emphasizing sustainability during the past three months.

5. Discussion

This study explores the green-attitude behavior gap in cosmetics and the trade-off between ethicality and sustainability introduced in prior research. This section will discuss the findings for each hypothesis, as well as put the empirical evidence in relation to earlier research. Based on the results, I can conclude that there is empirical support for cosmetics consumers trading off sustainability for efficiency and that there is a negative relationship between the two factors. The section ends with presenting the conclusions, limitations, and the marketing implications of the results for scholars and practitioners.

5.1. Attitudes towards Effectiveness Relates Negatively to Ethicality

The findings on the relationship between the efficiency and ethicality of cosmetics reveal that undergraduate students value cosmetics products' efficiency over sustainability factors. In terms of understanding why this is the case, earlier research provides a comprehensive understanding. Luchs et al.'s (2010) study reveals that the primary product preference for a strength-related product (e.g., car shampoo) is efficiency. The scrubs presented in the experimental material in the current study is categorized as a strength-related product. Furthermore, Luchs et al. (2010), add that a claim of sustainability is likely to harm the perception of efficiency and thereby reduce the attractiveness of the product. The fear of potentially losing cosmetics' efficiency and, hence, compromise on performance may be the primary reason there is a negative relationship between the two factors.

It is a widespread notion among consumers that you can have either sustainability or efficiency (Luchs et al., 2010). For many products, this is not necessarily the case (Trade Marketing Manager, L'Oréal, personal communication, 17 March 2020). Thereby, it is of importance for practitioners to support sustainable claims with marketing efforts describing the effectiveness of products. Otherwise, the green cosmetics segment may continue to be perceived as inferior to regular products by the larger mass of consumers, even though it is not always necessarily the truth (Trade Marketing Manager, L'Oréal, personal communication, 17 March 2020). Practitioners need to be aware of the fact that sustainability is an underprioritized criterion for the category (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000).

Based on the obtained data, ethical purchases seem to be of less importance than initially hypothesized. The results are interesting as the conducted interviews claim that Swedish consumers are perceived to be highly conscious about ethicality. However, the current study's findings contradict this current perception. Based on the collected data, it is evident that Swedish undergraduate students consider ethical attributes of less importance than efficiency. Acknowledging the results is of great importance to manage consumers' expectations and their demand for efficiency in contrast to ethicality.

An important implication to highlight is that the data may indicate deficiencies in the used sample, implying that students, in general, are less concerned than other groups. Conducting research with a representative sample of the Swedish population could potentially generate a more positive view of sustainability. See 3.3.3 Sampling and data collection for a more comprehensive discussion on the sample.

5.2. Attitudes towards Price Relates Negatively to Ethical Aspects

The study explores attitudes towards price and ethical aspects by considering how consumers value the attributes in relation to each other. The results show that price is of higher importance than sustainability to cosmetics consumers. Non-ethical purchasing behaviors continue to lead the growth of cosmetics, which support that it is not a determining attribute in comparison to the price.

Several potential barriers are impeding green cosmetics consumption, two of which are perceived to have the most significant impact are explored in this research – price, and efficiency. Prior research suggests that green products have become increasingly desired in the last decades. However, this thesis' findings indicate that consumers are still very conscious of the price. This suggests that consumers are more price-sensitive than they are sensitive to consuming ethically. The results imply that cosmetics companies should not overlook price as a determining factor for cosmetics' purchase. It is imperative to not disregard price even for cosmetics, which is generally thought to be a product category of less price-sensitive character (Nordic Brand Manager, Coty Inc., personal communication, 12 March 2020).

Extending on the findings, a potential explanation for the negative relationship between price and ethicality may relate to the incurring of a higher cost compared to the benefits gained from ethical purchases. Drawing from the relationship between efficiency and sustainability discussed in the previous section, it is likely that the perception of giving up on price for ethicality also makes consumers hesitant to purchase sustainably. The widespread view of sustainability inferring a trade-off with price limits the motivation for green consumption and thereby likely explains the hesitation among people to consume ethically (Nordic Brand Manager, Coty Inc., personal communication, 12 March 2020).

The results provide valuable insight into price being a principal constraint to sustainable purchasing (Gleim et al., 2013). To conclude, ethicality is neither a prerequisite in comparison to price nor efficiency. An important factor that may have had implications on the result is the sampling of students. The sampling group may be more price-sensitive compared to the general population. With regard to this, there is a potential that the appeal of incurring a lower cost is more important for students than it may be for a representative sample of the population.

5.3. Sustainable Cosmetics Is Chosen When There Are No Constraints on Performance

The results in the previous section reveal that in the presence of sustainability, cosmetics' efficiency has the most substantial influence on product choice. The study does not imply that consumers are reluctant to make sustainable purchases in general. However, when put in relation to efficiency in strength-related categories, ethicality is perceived to influence the performance negatively. As previously mentioned, sustainability as an attribute is regarded to be of lesser importance in comparison to other attributes (Luchs et al., 2010). Recognizing consumers' fear of giving up other attributes for sustainability is vital for marketers to consider, in order to overcome the green-attitude behavior gap.

The experiment provides evidence that there is a significant difference in product choice between providing information and not providing information on the level of efficiency. The results reveal that the treatment group exposed to information about equal efficiency for the regular and eco-friendly scrub was keener on choosing the sustainable one. The explanation we can draw from Luchs et al. (2010) is that when people are not forced to give up on efficiency, they are willing to purchase ethically. Thus, if additional information is not provided, consumers will be less willing to take the risk of potentially having other attributes being traded off (Luchs et al., 2017).

Studying relative preferences within the scrub category demonstrates that undergraduate students are more conscious about obtaining results than concerned about the social or environmental impact their choices have.

Adolescents are becoming increasingly conscious about the environment and are at the forefront of the transition toward ethical consumption. However, the current study's results reveal a different picture. A potential explanation is that undergraduate students are not ready to give up their current consumer behaviors. Another reason may be that many are convinced that today's challenges are not merely because of one individual's actions, but more so a matter of companies and politicians' endeavor. Therefore, cosmetics companies may be ahead of their consumers on sustainability, as they incorporate sustainable products into their portfolios. The transition of becoming thoroughly conscious of ethical aspects may not be applied to consumer goods, at least not yet, and at least not for cosmetics.

5.4. There Is a Willingness to Pay More for All-Natural Ingredients

The results show that there is a willingness to pay a higher price for all-natural ingredients. However, the findings contradict the results obtained on attributes from the five-point Likert-scale, suggesting that undergraduate students do not perceive sustainability as a vital attribute.

A possible explanation may be that the sample group primarily perceives all-natural ingredients to fall into the category of gentleness to the body instead of sustainability. This supports the results that gentleness is recognized as an important attribute. Thus,

the sample group is likely more conscious about the harm to oneself than toward poor ethicality. Hence, the benefits of non-toxic ingredients are perceived to outweigh the higher price. This shows that practitioners should potentially focus on improving perceived gentleness over social and environmental hazards.

Drawing on the research by Luchs et al. (2010), gentleness-related attributes are perceived to be desired for some products that fall in the cosmetics category, such as body lotion. In this study, I assume that the whole cosmetics category is primarily assessed on efficiency based on the interviews and the study by Bray et al. (2011), which in hindsight, is likely incorrect. This suggests that it is likely not feasible to merge and analyze cosmetics as one single category, as there are products primarily assessed on their efficiency, and others which are likely assessed on their gentleness.

5.5. Marketing Implications

Understanding the trade-off between ethicality and sustainability is a particularly necessary condition for achieving successful marketing strategies. Novel insights into the cosmetics field can provide marketers with knowledge and tools to plan which ethical efforts should be pushed and when.

Further, the obtained understanding regarding different perceptions for different types of cosmetics enables firms to adjust their ethical activities for different product categories based on whether efficiency or gentleness is crucial. It will increase the likelihood of creating ethical marketing efforts that enhance or maintain the appeal of a product instead of impairing it. The study will hopefully arouse interest for further research on ethical consumerism and valued attributes for consumers, not only limited to the cosmetics industry.

5.6. Limitations and Future Research

The study has some limitations that open up for further research in the ethical cosmetics area. First, the scope of the data sample is limited to Swedish undergraduate students. In terms of understanding and validating my findings in a broader context, future research should focus on larger samples representing the whole Swedish population. Also, the results would likely differ if the respondents were inherently more conscious about the ethical aspects of the products in question. The fact that young and healthy students were asked may have implications on the result. See 3.3.3 for further discussion of the sample.

Secondly, my study has focused on one product offering to represent the whole product category. Hence, I have not addressed differences that may pertain to different types of cosmetics. The findings from this study should thereby be replicated for other types of products in the cosmetics category, to allow for a general conclusion to be drawn. Such studies would contribute to a fairer view on the relationship and trade-off between ethicality and sustainability.

Further research within the field is required to understand the full spectrum of cosmetics consumers and the different attributes they take into consideration. Efficiency is most likely not the most important attribute for all cosmetics products as initially thought. The results reveal that gentleness is highly valued and, most likely, a determining characteristic for some subcategories of cosmetics. Thus, cosmetics, in this case, cannot be analyzed as one single product category. Research should continue to explore the role of efficiency and gentleness in different cosmetics categories.

5.7. Conclusion

This thesis explores the phenomenon of the green-attitude behavior gap primarily assessed in other product categories, which is perceived to provide useful insights for cosmetics practitioners and scholars. In particular, the study builds on the trade-off between efficiency and sustainability, which is believed to help address some of the challenges that have arisen along with the new trends of ethical cosmetics.

The thesis reveals that for consumers to choose a sustainable product over a regular product, information is required on its level of efficiency. The absence of information on efficiency results in a reluctance to purchase ethically. This is likely a result of the widespread belief that ethical aspects impair the performance of cosmetics. The combination of different theoretical developments on the green-attitude behavior gap, along with the general perception of ethicality in cosmetics, form a basis for further research.

The findings demonstrate that not all types of cosmetics can be evaluated on efficiency, as some are most likely evaluated on gentleness-related attributes. Therefore, future research should investigate the perceived positive relationship between sustainability and gentleness. This study contributes to the emerging body of research on trade-offs between sustainability and other vital factors. With regard to this study not exploring differences in valued attributes between different cosmetics products, no definitive conclusion can be drawn on the potential benefit of sustainability on products evaluated on gentleness.

The question we should ask is maybe not how consumers make decisions about a trade-off, but rather if they actually observe it as a trade-off. For products assessed on their efficiency, consumers do not choose between two desirable but incompatible states, since sustainability is of such low importance when compared to efficiency. Thus, “trade-off” is maybe an incorrect definition to describe the phenomenon for strength-related products. Perhaps, it is instead a matter of compromise for the cosmetics companies, rather than for the consumers.

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Conducted Interviews:

Trade Marketing Manager, L'Oréal, 17 March 2020.

Nordic Brand Manager, Coty Inc. 12 March 2020.

7. Appendix

7.1. Descriptive Statistics

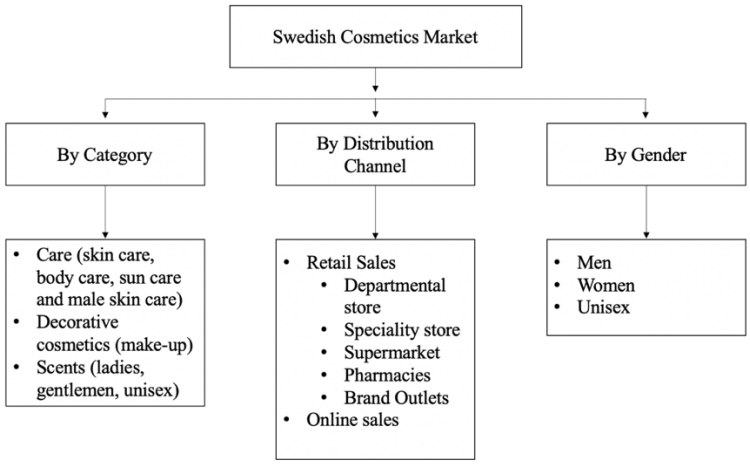


Figure 6. An illustration of the division of the Swedish cosmetics market by category, distribution channel and gender.

Appendix 1. Descriptive statistics on annual purchases of cosmetics divided by gender (n=183)

		Men		Women		Other	
Number of purchased cosmetics products on average per year		N	%	N	%	N	%
Number	1-5	42	23.0	16	8.74	2	1.09
	6-10	23	12.6	47	25.68	0	0.00
	>10	3	1.64	49	26.78	1	0.05

Note: The respondents who answered other and prefer not to answer are grouped together under other.

Appendix 2. Correlation matrix for investigated attributes (n=183)

Variables	Price	Scent	Efficiency	Packaging	Gentleness	Sustainability	Brand	Accessibility
Price	1							
Scent	-.050	1						
Efficiency	.352**	.096	1					
Packaging	.039	.168*	.144*	1				
Gentleness	.185**	-.009	-.031	.169*	1			
Sustainability	-.307**	.160*	-.299**	-.012	.559**	1		
Brand	-.064	.162*	.054	.419**	.219**	.066	1	
Accessibility	.008	.260**	.161*	.151*	.310**	.328**	.174**	1

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Appendix 3. Proportion of responses on each attribute's significance for cosmetics purchases (n=183)

	Strongly Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Disagree nor Agree		Somewhat Agree		Strongly Agree	
Attributes	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Accessibility	6	3.3	48	26.2	37	20.2	62	34.4	30	16.4
Brand	12	6.6	18	9.8	50	27.3	76	41.5	27	14.8
Efficiency	1	.05	10	5.5	7	3.8	35	19.1	130	71.0
Gentleness	4	2.2	18	9.8	11	6.0	69	37.7	81	44.3
Packaging	28	15.3	48	26.2	28	15.3	63	34.4	16	8.7
Price	3	1.6	23	12.6	10	5.5	78	42.6	69	37.7
Scent	14	7.7	35	19.1	25	13.7	63	34.4	46	25.1
Sustainability	44	24.0	22	12.0	33	18.0	58	31.7	26	14.2

Appendix 4. Proportion of responses on each attribute's significance for cosmetics divided by gender (n=183)

	Strongly disagree			Somewhat disagree			Neither disagree nor agree			Somewhat agree			Strongly agree		
Variables	M	W	O	M	W	O	M	W	O	M	W	O	M	W	O
Price															
N	3	0	0	7	15	1	4	6	0	34	44	0	20	47	2
%	4	0	0	10	13	33	6	5	0	50	39	0	29	42	67
Scent															
N	8	6	0	4	31	0	12	13	0	23	39	1	21	23	2
%	12	5	0	6	28	0	18	12	0	34	35	33	31	21	67
Efficiency															
N	1	0	0	1	9	0	3	3	1	16	19	0	47	81	2
%	2	0	0	2	8	0	4	3	33	24	17	0	69	72	67
Packaging															
N	15	12	1	16	32	0	14	14	0	17	45	1	6	9	1
%	22	11	33	24	29	0	21	13	0	25	40	33	9	8	33
Gentleness															
N	2	2	0	7	11	0	9	2	0	26	42	1	24	55	2
%	3	2	0	10	10	0	13	2	0	38	38	33	35	49	67
Sustainability															
N	14	30	0	9	12	1	14	19	0	27	31	0	4	20	2
%	21	27	0	13	11	33	21	17	0	40	28	0	6	18	67
Brand															
N	6	5	1	12	6	0	20	29	1	21	55	0	9	17	1
%	9	4	33	18	5	0	29	26	33	31	49	0	13	15	33
Accessibility															
N	2	3	1	11	37	0	19	17	1	25	36	1	11	19	0
%	3	3	33	16	33	0	28	15	33	37	32	33	16	17	0

Note: The respondents who answered other and prefer not to answer are grouped together under other. Men is represented by M, women by W and other by O.

Appendix 5. Descriptive statistics on belief in cosmetics' promised effects for the total sample (n=183)

Belief in cosmetics' promised effects	N	% of selection
Strongly disagree	10	5.5%
Somewhat disagree	52	28.4%
Neither agree nor disagree	42	23.0%
Somewhat agree	73	39.9
Strongly agree	6	3.3%

Appendix 6. Distribution of responses on belief in cosmetics' promised effects divided by gender (n=183)

	Strongly disagree		Somewhat disagree		Neither disagree nor agree		Somewhat agree		Strongly agree	
Gender	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Men	7	3.8	22	12.0	23	12.6	14	7.7	2	1.0
Women	2	1.0	30	16.4	17	9.3	59	32.2	4	2.2
Other	1	.55	0	0	1	.55	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to answer	0	0	0	0	1	.55	0	0	0	0

Appendix 7. Descriptive statistics on belief in cosmetics' promised effects (n=183)

	M	SD	Min	Max
Belief in the promised effects of cosmetics	3.07	1.017	1	5

Appendix 8. Descriptive statistics and *t*-test results comparing choice of scrub for the control- and treatment group (n=183)

	Efficiency can differ *n* = 93		No difference in efficiency *n* = 90					99% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	M	SD	M	SD	df	T	Sig.	Lower	Upper
Information of efficiency	1.38	.487	1.08	.269	144.41	5.153	.000	.0147	.450

Appendix 9. Descriptive statistics on independent samples test, Levene's test for equality of variances and *t*-test for equality of means (n=183)

								99% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	148.120	.000	5.108	181	.000	.299	5.153	.146	.451
Equal variances not assumed			5.153	144.41	.000	.299		.147	.450

Appendix 10. Distribution of responses on willingness to pay more for a product only containing natural ingredients (n=183)

I am willing to pay more for all-natural ingredients	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
N	13	21	26	64	59
%	7.1	11.5	14.2	35.0	32.2

Appendix 11. Descriptive statistics on willingness to pay more for a product only containing natural ingredients (n=183)

	M	SD	Min	Max
Willingness to pay more for all-natural ingredients	3.74	1.226	1	5

Appendix 12. Descriptive statistics on knowledge of parabens, sulfates and silicones in cosmetics (n=183)

I know the properties of the following ingredients	M	SD	Min	Max
Parabens	2.32	1.303	1	5
Sulfates	2.49	1.300	1	5
Silicones	2.43	1.480	1	5

Appendix 13. Distribution of responses on knowledge of parabens, sulfates and silicones in cosmetics (n=183)

	Strongly disagree		Somewhat disagree		Neither disagree nor agree		Somewhat agree		Strongly agree	
I know the properties of the following ingredients	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Parabens	82	44.8	45	24.6	18	9.8	26	14.2	12	6.6
Sulfates	49	26.8	63	34.4	19	10.4	37	20.2	15	8.2
Silicones	80	43.7	23	12.6	19	10.4	43	23.5	18	9.8

7.2. Questionnaire Development

7.2.1. Selection

The selection of cosmetics companies to interview was based on the KOHF Brand Statistics report, containing sales data on cosmetics companies on the Swedish market (KOHF, 2019). The report does only include the companies which are members of KOHF. Hence, not all cosmetics brands operating in Sweden are included. In total, the list consists of 148 brands. After further examination, the brands were narrowed down to the top 50 brands with the highest sales in Sweden. Out of these 50 brands, seven operate under Coty, Inc and 13 under L´Oréal. With regard to the two companies' market share and influence on the Swedish cosmetics market, one-to-one interviews with representatives from the respective companies were conducted. Based on the study's purpose, the companies are considered to be relevant for the questionnaire development. Additionally, five other companies on the list were contacted. However, they could not participate in this thesis.

7.2.2. Interview Design and Analysis

The interviews lasted for about an hour each and were held at L'Oréal's head office in Stockholm and over the phone with Coty, Inc. Based on previous research and knowledge in the field, a discussion template was compiled with open-ended discussion points to ensure that each interview followed the same structure and that the main objective was successfully addressed. The semi-constructed structure allowed the discussions to emerge freely during the course of the interviews as the interviewees could themselves moderate and change the direction of the questions. Further, the structure ensures improved reliability and consistency of the information. All interviews were audio-recorded and immediately transcribed verbatim afterward. Recording allows focusing on the discussions and the opportunity to re-listen if needed during data analysis. According to Al-Yateem (2012), it provides a basis for reliability and validity. A qualitative method is perceived as the most appropriate for the questionnaire development's objective to gain knowledge of the industry and support its chosen attributes. However, the method comes with certain risks as it is difficult to replicate and generalize. Since the material only poses the pre-study content, I am confident that this method is relevant and the best suited for the purpose.

The questionnaire development revealed that the following set of eight variables is considered crucial for cosmetics purchases; price, brand, gentleness, efficiency, scent, accessibility, packaging, and sustainability.

7.2.3. Coty, Inc

Coty, Inc was founded by Francois Coty in 1904 and is today one of the largest beauty companies globally. The company has an extensive portfolio of brands it manufactures and markets, ranging from more luxurious to less expensive ones. Coty, Inc operates in three different segments; Consumer Beauty, Professional Beauty, and Luxury (Interview Coty, Inc, 2020).

7.2.4. L´Oréal

L´Oréal is the world market leader of cosmetics, with a strong presence in North America, Western Europe and New Markets (Asia Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa Middle East) (L´Oréal, 2019). The French company was founded in 1909 and has since its very beginning continued to focus on innovation through its six research and development centers. With a portfolio of 32 international brands, the company offers a variety of products through its four segments; Professional Products Division, Active Cosmetics Division, Consumer Products Division, and L´Oréal Luxe (L´Oréal Annual Report, 2019).

7.2.5. Interview Template

The interviews started with a brief presentation of the study and its purpose and then continued with the questions below. Since the interviewees are kept anonymous and do not want the interview transcript to be included in this thesis, only a limited part of the interviews will be presented.

Questions	Nordic Brand Manager, Coty, Inc	Trade Marketing Manager, L´Oréal
1) For how long have you worked in the industry?	First seven years at Procter and Gamble and now five years at Coty.	I have worked at L´Oréal for about 1.5 years.
2) What trends do you see in terms of sustainable consumption in the cosmetics industry?	Consumers are more becoming increasingly "demanding" and especially the Nordic consumers who, in general, are more conscious. The global business for natural, nature-based cosmetics, is expected to increase from about $ 35 in 2019 to in 10 years double.	Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of what the products contain. Also, they are becoming more concerned about the entire production chain, from production to transportation, recycling, etc. Additionally, they do not only evaluate the products but the companies as well. They want to know what we are doing to minimize the adverse impact of our products. Vegan products have become more popular. Consumers are also conscious about animal testing. Thus, they are very reluctant towards consuming products which are unethical towards animal and humans.
3) What different attributes for cosmetics do you believe consumers value the most and take into consideration when purchasing?	Previously, it was just about the product's performance. In similarity with food, snacks, sweets, etc. there has been a rise of concern on toxic ingredients. For cosmetics, there has been much attention to parabens, sulfates, and silicones. We see that consumers are demanding more ethical products.	I believe efficiency is most vital. But, ethicality and price are also factors consumers take into consideration. I would say that people are willing to pay a higher price for sustainability. However, only up to a certain point. They are not willing to spend anything on it. The packaging is also vital and especially for luxury products. The scent is important as well; it is included in almost every cosmetics product offering. Consumers really expect a pleasant fragrance.
4) What various aspects of sustainability do you consider essential for consumers today?	I believe natural ingredients and cruelty-free products are highly considered by consumers in the Nordics.	Animal testing and human rights are crucial—also, the ingredients' origin and extraction method. Consumers also pay attention to the packaging if it is plastic or not. They demand packaging without environmental impact.

5) Do you see differences in attitudes towards sustainability today?	In the Nordics, certain conditions have been required for long - for example, vegan and cruelty-free products. The Nordic consumer take that for granted now. There are differences in attitudes toward ingredients origin and extraction methods, etc. Before, people did not care as much of what the products contained. They just wanted immediate results. Moreover, I would say that the concern toward human rights is of greater importance for consumers today.	Before, people did not care as much. Neither were there many companies that paid attention to ethical activities. Both people and companies are getting more conscious of ethicality. Today many firms are working with sustainability practices. Those who do not engage in such activities lag behind. Today, it is a prerequisite to engage in ethical work. I believe consumers care a lot about environmental issues, such as deforestation.
6) Do you see any tangible differences in purchasing behavior concerning sustainable consumption compared to before?	With the whole information society, people are more educated and above all, better at finding information. However, they are not very source-critical. To conclude, I see a difference in the amount of research people do before purchasing cosmetics.	We see that people are thinking more before buying. People are also becoming aware of the impact of shipping. Also, consumers request more information on ingredients and sustainability actions taken by companies. Animal testing and vegan products are also highly requested. Consumers have become pickier with what they buy.
7) How do these differences in attitudes and buying behaviors differ according to segments? For example, age, gender, income, level of education, etc.? Does it vary for product groups?	Those who can afford to make the right choices tend to do so. Many millennials wish to purchase ethically but cannot afford to. Income has a significant impact, I would say. Women are also more conscious and consume ethical products to a greater extent than men. Also, there are more messages pushing on sustainability for products targeting women than men.	Definitely, income is of great importance. Sometimes ethical products are more expensive. If you do not have the economy, you tend not to prioritize those products. Millennials are at the forefront of the transition. They are more educated and put more effort into researching before purchasing. However, they cannot always afford to buy sustainably. We also see that women consume ethical products to a greater extent.
8) Have changing consumer attitudes affected your product portfolio and marketing communications? How?	We have really adjusted to the changing attitudes. We are right now launching a sustainable brand. Moreover, we have become more transparent in our communication.	Yes, definitely. We work a lot with these questions and how to communicate ethical products successfully. We have different brands that are promoted as ethical. We also have products within different brand portfolios that are more sustainable. Additionally, we have several initiatives to become more ethical as a company.

9) What can marketers do to overcome the sustainability liability (when it exists) and, thus, increase the appeal of sustainable products?	For brands where there is no reason to promote sustainability, you do not do it. However, you work with ethical initiatives as a company that will spill over to those brands as well. Our brands for perfume, such as Hugo Boss, Marc Jacobs, and Chloé, have extremely strong brand equity already. If we start to market them as sustainable, the consumer will perceive it as greenwashing.	I think it is vital for marketers to push on the fact that in order to sometimes produce more ethical products, we have to compromise on other attributes. I believe that by the end of the day, consumers understand. Firms and marketers should also continue to educate themselves and engage in questions consumers care about. When it comes to cosmetics, people listen to recommendations. They want to hear about people's experiences, and that is something marketers should take into consideration.
10) Do you have any products/brands that are actively promoting themselves as more sustainable? Do you know how much market share they have?	Yes, we have just launched a brand that is more sustainable. I do not have any numbers on sales I can share. The problem is not to produce a completely natural product. The challenge has been maintaining performance.	Yes, we have several brands that are promoted as sustainable—for example, Biolage Raw. We see that the development is moving toward a more sustainable direction. It is a growing market share.
11) Do you know how many people buy from your sustainable products and series?	I do not have any numbers. But we see an increase in purchases.	I do not have any numbers to share, but it is a growing proportion of sales. However, there are people not following the trend.
12) Do you feel that consumers place higher demands on transparency and sustainability than before?	Yes, I do. The extremely educated customer demands a high level of transparency. As a company, we have also become better at not keeping things in the dark. If there are things that should be kept in the dark, you should rethink your ways of doing business. We cannot build our marketing based on the consumers who will google every single ingredient because they are too few. However, we need to be prepared for them to do it.	Yes, it is becoming increasingly important. Consumers want to know precisely what the product contains and where it comes from etc. The communication from our side can, however, become even more transparent. I think people trust companies more today because now companies have to prove what they do. I believe consumers feel more confident about what they use today than before.

13) Do you think that sustainability plays less role for cosmetics, which is characterized by efficiency, (e.g., anti-wrinkle cream), compared to other types of products (e.g., food)?	Yes, I do. I believe the performance is more important than for many other categories. When we set a price, consumers are expecting the product to deliver results. As the products are priced high, many see our products as a luxury consumption (our consumers are less price-sensitive compared to many other categories), and that is a difference compared to many other consumer goods.	Yes, because when it comes to food, regular products taste just as good as a sustainable one, they are just priced higher. Unfortunately, for cosmetics, many ethical products are less efficient. Thus, ethical cosmetics often "force" people to give up on other attributes, which I do not believe is the case; for example, food.
14) Is there anything else you would like to add or have said before we end this interview?	There is a common understanding of which ingredients are better and worse for you. However, consumers rarely know what the ingredients in question do and how much you must consume in order for it to be bad for your health.	The transition towards more conscious consumers really puts pressure on companies to improve their operations. If you, as a firm, do not engage in ethical activities, you will lose market share. Ethicality has become a top priority for consumers.

7.3. The Questionnaire



Ålder

- 18-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- >60

Kön

- Man
- Kvinna
- Annat
- Föredrar att inte svara

Studerar du för tillfället en eftergymnasial utbildning?

- Ja
- Nej

Hur många kosmetikarelaterade produkter (vård, smink och parfym) köper du i genomsnitt per år?

- 0
- 1-5
- 6-10
- >10

Nedanstående aspekt är viktig för dig vid köp av kosmetiska produkter

	Instämmer inte alls	Instämmer inte helt	Varken instämmer eller instämmer inte	Instämmer delvis	Instämmer i hög grad
Varumärke	○	○	○	○	○
Hållbarhet (social och miljömässig)	○	○	○	○	○
Tillänglighet	○	○	○	○	○
Doft	○	○	○	○	○
Verkningsgrad/effektivitet	○	○	○	○	○
Skonsamhet mot kroppen	○	○	○	○	○
Pris	○	○	○	○	○
Utseende/förpackning	○	○	○	○	○

Bedöm nedanstående antaganden

	Instämmer inte alls	Instämmer inte helt	Varken instämmer eller instämmer inte	Instämmer delvis	Instämmer i hög grad
Jag är villig att betala mer för en kosmetikaprodukt som endast består av naturliga ingredienser	○	○	○	○	○
Jag tror på kosmetiskaprodukters lovade effekter	○	○	○	○	○

Jag har de senaste tre månaderna stött på marknadsföring av kosmetika som betonar hållbarhet

Ja

Nej

Vet inte

*Verkningsgrad mellan produkterna kan variera. Det förekommer ingen variation i pris.





Jag skulle köpa följande djuprengörande scrub för alla hårtyper och hårbotten

Scrub Beta - Regular

Scrub Alpha - Eco-friendly

Jag anser att jag känner till följande ingrediensers egenskaper

	Instämmer inte alls	Instämmer inte helt	Varken instämmer eller instämmer inte	Instämmer delvis	Instämmer i hög grad
Parabener	○	○	○	○	○
Sulfater	○	○	○	○	○
Silikoner	○	○	○	○	○

Vad för typ av produkt fick du tidigare se och bedöma?

Hudkräm

Balsam

Schampo

Scrub