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How green are you?

-A study on Baby Boomers and Generation Y

Author

Fajersson, Isabella

Cerrudo Sampol, Macarena

Supervisor

Moulettes, Agneta

Examiner

Ekelund, Christer

Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction..... 6**
 - 1.1 Background 6
 - 1.2 Aim and Research Question 9

- 2. Literature Review 11**
 - 2.1 Sustainability and Sustainable consumption..... 11
 - 2.1.1 Triggers for environment awareness..... 11
 - 2.1.2 Consumers and their values 12
 - 2.1.3 Consumers’ engagement in the environment..... 13
 - 2.1.4 Consumers and the environment..... 13
 - 2.2 Generation Baby Boomers 14
 - 2.2.1 Eco-elders: “What kind of world are we leaving to our successors?” 15
 - 2.3 Generation Y..... 16
 - 2.3.1 Generation Y: a hedonistic and consumption-oriented cohort..... 17
 - 2.4 Summary of literature review: developing a model 18

- 3. Research Method 20**
 - 3.1 Research approach..... 20
 - 3.2 Choice of methodology: qualitative research 20
 - 3.3 Sampling data through focus groups..... 22
 - 3.3.1 Data sampling: Baby Boomers 23
 - 3.3.2 Data sampling: Generation Y 23
 - 3.4 Interview guide and conceptualization..... 24

- 4. Empirical findings and analysis..... 25**
 - 4.1 Introduction 25
 - 4.2 Baby Boomers and sustainability 25
 - 4.2.1 Child labor 26
 - 4.2.2 Transportation..... 26
 - 4.2.3 Organic products..... 27
 - 4.2.4 Green technology 27
 - 4.2.5 Society and infrastructure..... 29
 - 4.2.6 Baby Boomers vs. Generation Y..... 30
 - 4.3 Generation Y and sustainability 30
 - 4.3.1 Economy..... 31

4.3.2 Recycling	31
4.3.3 Emissions and public transportations	33
4.3.4 Organic and sustainable products	33
4.4 Summary of empirical findings.....	35
5. Thesis conclusions	38
5.1 Summary of the thesis	38
5.2 Conclusions.....	39
5.3 Critical review	40
5.4 Practical implications.....	41
5.5 Future research	41
References.....	43
Appendix 1: Interview guide.....	48

Abstract

Sustainability has been an important and discussed issue during the last decades. Sustainability has been defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This concern for the environment includes both the business world as well as individuals. As the green market continues growing, and in order to keep up with consumers’ new wants and needs firms may have to adjust their marketing strategies to them. Marketing practice has taken a new approach towards sustainability and many organizations have started to implement sustainable marketing.

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate Baby Boomers and Generation Y values towards sustainability and if they act in accordance to their own values. Furthermore, the results and the analysis will help to find if there are any similarities or differences between these generations and their values towards sustainability and sustainable consumption. Previous researches have been focused on sustainability, consumer behavior, and only a few of them included the study of a generation. However, there are not any currently researches in academic literature that includes both generations and their values towards sustainability. This study is based on a qualitative research on Baby Boomers and Generation Y. Two focus groups have been conducted in order to get a deeper understanding of these generations’ values towards sustainability. However, it is important to point out that it is not possible to draw general conclusions from the results. The results show that there are common values and differences between the generations.

This thesis has laid a good foundation for possible future research about the generations and sustainability. The results from the study may be of some valuable for Swedish retail businesses and sustainable/organic products manufactures. Moreover, it could help marketers to adapt their marketing strategies to suit these generation’s needs.

Keyword: Baby Boomers, Generation Y, sustainability, sustainable consumption, values

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Macarena Cerrudo Sampol

Isabella Fajersson

1. Introduction

The first chapter presents the background, the aim and the research question as well as the limitations of this thesis.

1.1 Background

Over the last decades scholars, governments, international organizations and the general public have shown an increased interest in environmental awareness. This awareness has paved the way for new concepts like sustainability, sustainable consumption and even green marketing. Sustainability has many definitions but all of them have something in common: the relationship between humans and the global environment (Brown *et al.*, 1987). According to the United Nations (1987) sustainability is defined as: “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own”. Fischer *et al.*, (2007) give a more specific definition of sustainability as they point out that the way to reach sustainability is to take the biophysical limits of the Earth into consideration when achieving social and economic goals. The United Nations in the Brundtland report (1987) gives examples of natural disasters that occurred in a period of 900 days. During this period the Chernobyl nuclear reactor exploded and increased the risk of human cancer; a liquid gas tank explosion in Mexico left 1.000 death victims and thousands homeless; a leak from a pesticides factory in India affected to more than 200.000 people; the drought- trigger environment-development crisis in Africa killed at least a million people; agriculture chemicals, solvents and mercury flowed into Rhine River which was the cause of the death of millions of fish and a the population of Germany and the Netherlands kept pending of their drinking water supply; an estimated 60 million people died of diarrhoeal diseases related to unsafe drinking water (United Nations, 1987). Those disasters occurred during 1984 and 1987 when the world economy was estimated to be around \$13 trillion. World economy growth translates into the harvest of raw material from forest, soils, seas and waterways which mean an insightful effect in the biosphere (*ibid.*). According to the Brundtland rapport (1987) this exploitation of the natural resources has led to an increased in the number of natural disasters.

According to Wright and Lund (2000) “economic and environmental issues appear to be distinct and bipolar concerns, yet sustainability can provide a bridge connecting both systems” (p. 230). This concern for the environment has reached the business world as well. Firms have

to keep up with consumers' wants and needs and adjust their marketing strategies to them. As the green market continues to grow firms must make some changes in order to address sustainability. Marketing practice has taken a new approach towards sustainability and many organizations have started to implement sustainable marketing. According to Fuller (1999) sustainable marketing is defined as: "the process of planning, implementing and controlling the development, pricing, promotion and distribution of products in a manner that satisfies the following three criteria: (1) customer needs are met (2) organizational goals are attained, and (3) the process is compatible with ecosystems." (p. 230). Of Fuller's definition it is possible to reach the conclusion that a good sustainable marketing strategy is the one that is good for the planet, good for people and good for profits (Fuller, 1999). If firms aspire to obtain market share and increase their profit, they would have to satisfy those environmentally concerned consumers and show them that their products are environmentally friendly. New terms like enviropreneurial marketing and envirocapitalists have emerged over the last years (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2010; Baker & Sinkula, 2005; Kuckertz and Wagner, 2010). Those terms are based on opportunities rather than obstacles that firms must overcome on the market. According to Baker & Sinkula (2005) the definition of enviropreneurial marketing "is an entrepreneurial and environmentally friendly strategy that organizations can utilize to satisfy economic and social objectives". This marketing strategy is a way for firms to satisfy economic and social objectives on the market. The second term refers to those entrepreneurs that use business tools but they are still able to develop environmental quality (Kuckertz and Wagner, 2010).

Sustainability has been an important topic of study in the last years. Scholars have been discussing sustainability in terms of health, food and the environment. According to Jansson *et al.*, (2010) there are two types of sustainable consumer behavior: those behaviors that reduce the use of resources and energy, and those behaviors that aim to increase energy efficiency. Behaviors that reduce the use of resources and energy can be anything from waste recycling to reduce use of cars. In rare cases those types of behavior cost money, but a change in consumers' habits, an example is changing from a non-recycling habit to a recycling habit. However, there are behaviors that aimed to increase energy efficiency and those behaviors require an investment. An example of this type of behavior is installing solar panels in order to get greener energy. Since consumers are changing their purchase behavior towards a sustainable consumption, a good green marketing strategy would help firms to gain competitive advantage. Huang and Rust (2010) point out that green and ethical consumers "translate their

needs and core values into their consumption decisions in their purchase of green goods and services” (p. 44) and they are also willing to consume less. However, we live in a consumer society represented by the accumulation of material goods. Acquisition of material goods is for materialist a way to achieve happiness (Banerjee and McKeage, 1994). During the last years consumers have acknowledged that an increase in the individual material consumption may be inconsistent with the measures taken to protect the environment (Huang and Rust, 2010). Today’s consumer society is known for its hedonistic behavior due mainly to marketing practices (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy, 2002). Hedonism is related to values like pleasure, enjoying life and self-indulgence (Doran, 2009). Nevertheless, hedonism is commonly regarded “as a form of egoism where pleasure and the avoidance of pain dominate as motives for action” (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy, 2002, p. 527). This concept has been applied to the consumer society, and a hedonistic society surrendered to consumerism goes against the principle of sustainable consumption.

It is important to adopt an approach to sustainability from a consumer perspective, in order to understand how sustainability would affect consumer consumption behavior. Among other things scholars have tried to explore how sustainability affects our values towards the environment, how sustainability affects our consumer behavior or how sustainability affects firm marketing strategies and performance (Kurckertz and Wargner, 2010; Banerjee and McKeage, 1994, Brown *et al.*, 1987). Even if much research has been conducted in this field not many studies address a specific generation and its consumer behavior and sustainability (Wright and Lund, 2000; Hume, 2010; Littrell *et al.*, 2005).

Currently there are two generations that arouse scholars’ interest due to their size and purchase power, and those are Baby Boomers and Generation Y. Among others, scholars have studied this generation from different perspectives, a health care perspective (Buckley *et al.*, 2012), an economic perspective (Flood *et al.*, 2006) and shopping behavior perspective (Parment, 2013). Baby Boomers are those who were born between 1946 and 1964. They are considered to have a more a revolutionary outlook and to be more traveled than previous generations (Parment, 2013). This generation is approaching retirement, which means that their future income will be income from pension (Flood *et al.*, 2006). Several researchers have analyzed Baby Boomers in relation to their aging and their retirement prospects (Flood *et al.*, 2006; Lusardi and Mitchell, 2007; Mitchell, 2004). This generation’s wealth comes in the form of savings, pension and social security benefits (Lusardi and Mitchell, 2007). Another stream of study refers to the

shopping habits of this generation (Worsley *et al.*, 2010; Hunter and Worsley, 2009; Worsley *et al.*, 2011). The future income of this generation will be limited and it will most probably decrease. That is why scholars have studied the relationship between retirement income and the possibility of keeping a healthy diet (Hunter and Worsley, 2009). Hunter and Worsley (2009) point out that Baby Boomers have become more interested in having a healthy lifestyle starting with the purchase of healthy food which to a large extent will help them to live longer and prevent disease.

Generation Y cohort are the children of the Baby Boomer generation (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003). This generation is represented by those born between 1977 and 1994 (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2010) and as future consumers this cohort have been studied first and foremost from the consumer behavior perspective (Roberts, 2005; O’Cass and Choy, 2008; Foscht *et al.*, 2009). This is a generational cohort that has been criticized due to its hedonistic behavior. This generation has been brought up in a world dominated by television, the Internet and global communication (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003). They are used to having access to a great choice of products and a large number of stores and brands. Nowadays their view of what purchasing is has changed and it is closer to a practice related with entertainment or excitement rather than the simple act of buying (Lehtonen and Maenpaa, 1997).

In sum, since both generations had different types of experiences during their coming-of-age years their values in life have been influenced in different ways (Parment, 2013). Therefore the aim of this dissertation is to make a comparison of the Swedish Baby Boomers and Generation Y and their values towards sustainability and to what extent they apply sustainability in order to live a “greener” life. There are already existing studies about sustainability and about generations. However, any research has combined both sustainability and the mentioned Swedish generations. The findings of this dissertation may help marketers and firms to understand individuals and their values towards sustainability.

1.2 Aim and Research Question

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the question: What values do consumers in Baby Boomers generation and Generation Y have toward sustainability? We will also investigate if they act in accordance to their own values.

Since people who belong to these generations are born in different eras, the aim of this thesis is to explore the Swedish Baby Boomers and Generation Y values towards sustainability and how they apply sustainability by sustainable consumption. In the last part of our thesis we will discuss if there are any differences or similarities between these generations and their values towards sustainability and sustainable consumption.

2. Literature Review

In the following literature review, relevant subjects of this dissertation are described. First sustainability and sustainable consumption will be presented. Terms like environment awareness, consumer values, pro- environmental behavior and Ecological citizenship will be explained. The next section consists of a presentation of Baby Boomers and Generation Y. In this section terms like eco- elders, hedonism and consumption- oriented cohort will be presented. Finally, a model is created at the end of the chapter.

2.1 Sustainability and Sustainable consumption

Sustainability has many definitions but the most common definition in scientific articles and the one this thesis will be based on is: “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations, 1987). In 2009 a climate conference was held in Denmark, with the main goal to reach an agreement on emission control (Huang & Rust, 2010). The outcome of the conference was an increased awareness that resources consumed around the world are not equally distributed and that wars could be a result of unequal consumption. The following section will bring up: the triggers for environment awareness, consumer and their values and consumers and the environment.

2.1.1 Triggers for environment awareness

Our planet has only limited resources and those living here consume the resources too fast (Thorp *et al.*, 2008). Whilst the planet rich countries consume as much as they do, more the poorer countries will struggle with poverty and limited food and water. High income countries account for the “largest ecological footprint” (Svensson, 2012, p.369). Many scholars debate in scientific articles different reasons why there is an increased interest and awareness of the environment and sustainability. Scholars such as Wicker and Becken (2012) debate that there are three reasons for the increased awareness of the environment; firstly it is the high oil prices in 2008; secondly a limited progress on international agreements to combat climate change and thirdly the Global Financial Crisis. The awareness of climate changes have overall increased around the world, but according to Wicker and Becken (2012) this concern has decreased over the last years. The authors claim that this could be as a reaction of political failures, weather disasters and tiredness. Wicker and Becken, (2012) also point out some reasons why consumers choose to buy environmentally friendly products: governments promote products; saving money; healthy food; or consumers want to enhance their social status. Other scholars argue

that some reasons for caring about the environment are: ecological modernization; promotion of ethical and political education of the environment (Svensson, 2012).

Energy, economic situation and climate change are according to Wicker and Becken (2013) the main reasons why consumers show pre- environmental behavior. This behavior is also named Pro- environmental behavior (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2010). Pro- environmental behavior is defined as: “behavior that consciously seeks to minimize the negative impact of one’s actions on the natural and built world (e.g. minimize resource and energy consumption, use of non-toxic substances, reduce waste production)” (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2010, p. 240). This behavior is influenced by different factors like: institutional, cultural and economic social, environmental knowledge, awareness values, emotion, attitudes, priorities and motivation (*ibid.*).

2.1.2 Consumers and their values

Values are according to Dietz *et al.* (2005), assumed to influence the decision-making process. The scholars discuss also that values are one of the reason of individuals influence on the environment. Furthermore, the scholars point out that values are most frequently related to: “(a) self-reported behaviors (e.g., “Do you usually recycle newspapers?”), (b) behavioral intentions (e.g., “Would you be willing to sign a petition in favor of stricter environmental protection?”), or (c) other measures that express concern for the environment” (Dietz *et al.*, 2005, p. 337). Peattie (2010) makes a differentiation between consumers with strong and weak environmental values. Those consumers with strong environmental values are more predisposed to recycle. However, those consumers with weak environmental values are more predisposed to use low-energy light-bulbs.

Dietz *et al.* (2005) debate that there are three ground values for environmental concern: self-interest, humanistic altruism and biospheric altruism. The self-interest and humanistic altruism values draw notice to how consumers related to other species in the environment while the last value identifies intrinsic value (*ibid.*). Dietz *et al.*, (2005) explain the link between values and decisions concerning the environment through the values-beliefs-norms theory. The theory gives an explanation on how consumers’ value chain is divided. First, the theory insinuates that consumer’s values about the environment are influenced by the worldview. How individuals perceive the world around them influence consumer’s beliefs on the results of environmental change. Their beliefs in turn, influence how consumers act to reduce the threats to the most possessions valuable for them. Finally and in order to protect their possessions, consumers take

action and establish some norms (*ibid.*). The hardest values to change in the short run are the three mentioned above since they are the most stable determinants of environmentalism during an individual life. However, in the long run value changes have the most impact on the decision-making process regarding the environment.

2.1.3 Consumers' engagement in the environment

The literature available about environment mention often engagement, what is engagement and how is it defined. Wolf and Moser (2011) use a definition as: “a personal state of connection with the issue of climate change, in contrast to engagement solely as a process of public participation in policy making” (p. 550). Further on, the scholars assume that consumers contribute to the climate change, encourage and apply climate solutions. To this extent involving consumers is not an option; it is essential (*ibid.*). Further on, Wolf and Moser debate that a consumer can be engaged in three levels: their hands, heart and mind. Many consumers show keenness to make changes in their consumption for the sake of the environment. However, consumers face constrains and barriers such as lack of government leadership and policies (*ibid.*).

2.1.4 Consumers and the environment

Many scholars have studied who the typical environmental friendly consumer is and how these consumers adapt to sustainability. According to Svensson (2012) Swedish households are less willing to adapt to a more environmental living. Scholars have shown a weak connection between attitudes, knowledge and ideology. This gap is called value- action- gap (*ibid.*). This gap is a response to routines and practical problems. Those who are the most environmental friendly consumers are according to Svensson (2012), well educated, elitist traits and women. “Ecological citizenship” is a modern system for citizens to participate in politics in order to find solutions to protect the environment.

Consumers are able to influence producers' products and services through political consumerism. Environmental friendly products are often certified and labeled fair trade; this helps consumers to take a step in the right direction into purchasing environmentally friendly products and services. Eco- labeled products should provide the consumer with signals of information and tools for the consumer to make decisions (Rahbar and Wahid, 2011). Further on, Rahbar and Wahid (2011) say that the existent of eco-labeled products do not always make consumers to purchase the products. Consumers may recognize the labels but it is not always an automatic response to buy them. According to Gustavsson and Elander (2013) consumers

are affected on daily basis by global production of products and services. Consumers have change towards a more global lifestyle and a multilevel consumer has emerged (*ibid*). A change made at a global level of provision affects every consumer daily life.

2.2 Generation Baby Boomers

Scholars disagree on setting a year interval for Baby Boomers. According to Flood *et al.*, (2006) this generation comprises those who were born between 1940 and 1950; Parment (2013) sets this generation between 1946 and 1955 and Williams and Page (2011) between 1946 and 1964. However, something that all of them have in common is that the boom of this generation started just after World War II. The end of war resulted in an increased in the number of marriages and therefore the number of births in Europe and in USA increased as well (Gitlin, 2011). In Sweden as of December 2012 this cohort was in the 48-66-age range and their members accounted for nearly 24% of the Swedish population (Statistics Sweden, 2013).

Baby Boomers grew up in a period after World War II where Western countries experienced a period of expansion and economic prosperity. Scholars have named this period the Golden Age of Capitalism (Marglin and Schor, 1990) or the Golden Age of European growth (Alvarez-Cuadrado and Pintea, 2009). A number of events in the early 1970s contributed to the downturn of this golden period in the world economy. Some of those events were the collapse of the Bretton Wood system in 1970, the 1973 oil crisis due to the oil embargo by the OAPEC countries and the stock market crash during 1973-1974 (Reinert *et al.*, 2008; Alpanda and Peralta-Alva, 2010). Besides the economic world situation some events that influenced this cohort were the Vietnam War, civil rights defense, the Cold war and the sexual revolution. This generation was the first generation that experienced internationalization and globalization of trade, food and culture (Parment, 2013).

According to *the generational cohort theory* individuals born in the same period would have similar characteristics (Petroulas *et al.*, 2010). A cohort that has had similar experiences in a macro-level during their coming-of-age years would have similar preferences and attitudes in their adult years (Noble and Schewe, 2003). However, a generalization can be misleading as differences in a cohort individuals' socialization will create exceptions on their attitudes, values and preferences (Petroulas *et al.*, 2010). According to scholars this cohort's common characteristics are linked with the events and experiences during Baby Boomers childhood and

young adulthood years (Noble and Schewe, 2003; Petroulas *et al.*, 2010). Baby Boomers are considered a revolutionary generation prone to challenge authority (Parment, 2013; Williams and Page, 2011). An example of this generation clash with authority was the student revolts in Paris during 1968. Other characteristic related to this cohort is individualization (Williams and Page, 2011; Petroulas *et al.*, 2010). This generation in comparison with its predecessors is considered a more individualistic generation that focused in self-expression and personal fulfillment (Mitchell, 1998; Norum 2003). Baby Boomers worked hard to achieve recognition and economic independence which allowed them to have discretionary income that invested in retirement saves and on socially responsible investments (William and Page, 2011; Okere *et al.*, 2008).

Baby Boomers have developed an important environmental awareness that has made that this cohort is nowadays known as eco-elders. Next section reviews the characteristics of this new segment of Baby Boomers.

2.2.1 Eco-elders: “What kind of world are we leaving to our successors?”

The future of our planet depends on the decisions taken towards a more sustainable way of living. The global financial crisis that started in 2008 has turned into many years of recession for most Western countries. However, the green economy is a sector that still generates new jobs. The younger cohort of Baby Boomers that still has many years of working life can be critical to make the change. They have the experience and the skills needed to accomplish this difficult task. Their talents can be applied in these so-called “green-collar” jobs that have flourished in the last years (Snyder *et al.*, 2011). Individuals of this generation are in a privileged position to implement sustainable strategies that will attract the attention of new consumers as well as will create new business opportunities.

The older cohort of this generation is approaching retirement and they are becoming more environmentally aware and interested in health and wellness (Williams and Page, 2011). Their awareness for health and wellness translates into an increase in the purchase of organic and ecologically sustainable food (Worsley *et al.*, 2011). A Swedish research about attitudes towards organic foods came to the same conclusion. According to Magnusson *et al.* (2001) health related motives are the main reason to buy organic food followed by environmental concern motives. Since organic and ecologically sustainable food are more expensive than regular food not everybody can afford it. Because of the fact that Baby boomers are brand loyal

and are willing to spend premium prices if they rely on the product they are a good segment (Williams and Page, 2011).

Baby Boomers are known in literature as eco-elders (Moody, 2009). They are a generation with high moral priorities and environmental issues are one of their priorities (Smith and Clurman, 2007). They have been the first generation that raised the question: “What kind of world are we leaving to our successors?” (Moody, 2009, p. 71).

2.3 Generation Y

Generation Y, also known as Millennials, are those individuals born between 1977 and 1994 (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2010; Williams and Page, 2011). This generation has attracted both marketers and retailers due to its size and purchase power (Parment, 2013). In Sweden as of December 2012 this generation was in the 18-35-age range and their members represented 22% of the Swedish population (Statistics Sweden, 2013). The older cohort of this generation came out of age in a period where global economy was still growing (Parment, 2013). Events like the 9/11 attack in New York have had great impact in this generation. They were born in a “wired world” where the use of internet and social media happen on daily basis (Smola and Sutton, 2002). Accessibility to different communication channels and technologies has promoted that this generation is considered international and multicultural as global boundaries seems to be fewer and fewer (Williams and Page, 2011). According to Parment (2013) “one third of Swedes born in the 1980s have a foreign background, meaning one or both parents were born in countries other than Sweden” (p. 191). This is a clear example why this generation is considered as a multi-ethnic generation.

Williams and Page (2011) list eight key values that represent Generation Y: choice, customization, scrutiny, integrity, collaboration, speed, entertainment and innovation. However, individuals in this generation are to a large extent children of Baby Boomers which may suggest that parents transfer their values to their children. According to Twenge and Campbell (2008) Baby Boomers were an individualistic generation and this characteristic has followed and even increased in Generation Y. Hewlett *et al.*, (2009) identify another common characteristic between Baby Boomers and Generation Y, as individuals in both generations aspire to give back to society and contribute to have a better planet. In order to have a healthier planet generation Y individuals are ready to pay premium prices for environmentally friendly products because they “care about environment” (Smith, 2010, p. 442). However, scores on test

of empathy have shown that this generation lacks empathy which impedes them to care about others (Stein, 2013). Generation Y has been exposed to a capitalist driven environment where China has risen as a global power nation. The fact that they grew up in a world of product and service abundance has led to that generation Y individuals are considered conspicuous consumers (Hume, 2010).

Scholars like Hume (2010) and Sullivan and Heitmeyer (2008) have pointed out that two of this generation characteristics are its hedonistic and consumption-oriented attitudes. The next section takes a deeper look into these two characteristics of Generation Y.

2.3.1 Generation Y: a hedonistic and consumption-oriented cohort

Generation Y consumers represent the future of our society (Hume, 2010). They grew in a world of multiple possibilities for instance more brands and services, more new communication channels and more opportunities to make a career are available (Parment, 2013). Higher increased household income and the availability to credit cards also make it easier consume for young adults (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003). Individuals in this cohort are highly individualistic and they try to express their personalities and lifestyle through the purchase of brands (Parment, 2008). Brands are important for Generation Y. Bakewell and Mitchell (2003) take into consideration a positive link between television viewing and materialism among individuals in Generation Y. All these factors combined have led this generation to over-consumption (Hume, 2010)

According to scholars Generation Y is a hedonistic and consumption-oriented cohort (Hume, 2010; Sullivan and Heitmeyer, 2008; Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003). Hume (2010) describes consumerism as “the effects of gathering and purchasing material possessions to increase happiness and social position” (p. 386). Hedonic shoppers seek “joy which is felt by using purchased products or through pleasure and new experiences gained while shopping” (Kazakeviciute and Banyte, 2012, p. 533). Furthermore, these authors claim that one of the values linked to a hedonistic shopping behavior is the social value (*ibid.*). The Social value factor translates into the need of communicate and belong to a specific social group. Following Kazakeviciute and Banyte footsteps, Parment (2008) identifies Generation Y individuals as *emotional shoppers* who are more conscious about what they want and how they want it. According to before mentioned authors Generation Y has challenged with its hedonistic consumer behavior previous generation utilitarian and rational shopping behavior. However, Parment (2008) makes a differentiation and highlight that Generation Y used to be more

rational when searching and taking purchase decisions. According to Stein (2013), this generation is well informed about what happen around them; however, they are inactive.

According to scholar like Connolly and Prothero's (2003) study, it is Generation Y's knowledge in relation to their consumption and its affect on the environment is reflected in their shopping and recycling habits. Furthermore, Connolly and Prothero's study showed that Generation Y does not link their own consumption to environmental damage; instead the problem lies in the waste of non-green products and not in the consumption levels. This study is supported by a study made by The Harwood Group in 1995. The result were the same in this study, the consumers in Generation Y apprehend a vague a link between the environment and consumption and issues such as pollution and recycling is more relevant (Connolly and Prothero, 2003).

It will be difficult to reach a future sustainable society if Generation Y continues with its massive consumerism and with its motto "to have is to be" (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003, pp. 97).

2.4 Summary of literature review: developing a model

The aim of this thesis is to explore the Swedish Generation Y and Baby Boomers values. The study also examines how the different generations apply sustainability through sustainable consumption. According to the literature Generation Y overconsumption and hedonistic behavior could be a problem in order to achieve a sustainable future. On the contrary, Baby Boomers are changing their consumption habits and becoming greener and more sustainable consumers. However, this study does not intent to allocate a priori any values or perceptions regarding sustainability and sustainable consumption to these generations. This study will explore Generation Y and Baby Boomers values using focus groups which will allow us to acquire a deeper knowledge of their values and attitudes towards sustainability. Furthermore, this study will present if there are differences or similarities between how generations perceive sustainability since Generation Y are children of Baby Boomers.

Figure 1 is displayed in order to illustrate to aim of this thesis and it is a simplification of this thesis.

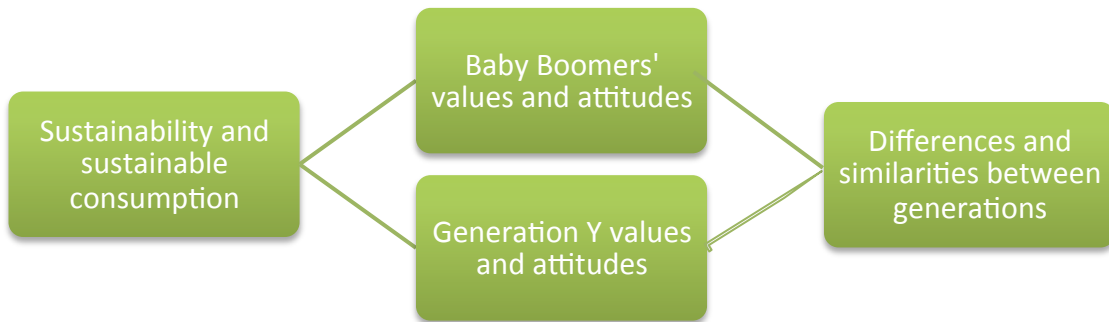


Figure 1 Generations values towards sustainability

3. Research Method

The third chapter of this thesis will present the method used in the study. This chapter is divided in research approach, choice of methodology, sampling of data, interview guide and conceptualization.

3.1 Research approach

The research approach chosen in this study was an abductive reasoning approach. The abductive reasoning is used when there is an event that needs to be explained, and what are the causes that make that event to be true (Ardagna *et al.*, 2008). According to Aliseda (2006) an abductive reasoning “relies on a background theory to construct and test its abductive explanations” (p. 35). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to go back and forth to theories and an empirical basis while analyzing the data collected. Abduction is intended to help create new findings in a methodological and logical ordered way. According to Josephson and Josephson (1996) “the abduction transcends the information of its premises and generates new information new information that was not previously encoded there at all” (p. 13). This reasoning is a logical process that brings things tighter, which one had never associated with one another (*ibid.*).

3.2 Choice of methodology: qualitative research

This thesis aims to explore Baby Boomers and Generation Y values towards sustainability and how they act according to these values, namely how they live up to their values on daily basis and if their values and actions go in the same direction. There are two ways to carry out a research through a quantitative approach or a qualitative approach. According to Aliaga and Gunderson (2000) a quantitative research tries to explain phenomena through numerical data that is analyzed using statistics. Researchers use this type of approach when the purpose of their study is to test hypothesis. A qualitative approach is useful when the purpose of the study is to obtain information about individuals’ values, motivations, behaviors and opinions. In order to achieve the purpose of this thesis a qualitative approach was chosen. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) qualitative researches try to understand people, their meanings and the social aspects of our world and not to predict the future.

There are different techniques to collect data and information when choosing a qualitative approach. The data analysis is to a large extent interpretative (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Those methods can be used as a unique way of collecting information or can be combined. According to Silverman (2006) some of the most important qualitative techniques used to collect data are: observations; analyzing text and documents; audio and video recording; interviews and focus groups. The methodology chosen to carry out this study has been a qualitative approach and the primary data for this study has been collected through two different focus groups. The reason for choosing focus groups is the convenience of gathering all eligible candidates at the same time and discussing the same topic. The time to carry out this study was limited, and that is why focus groups were the most suitable option to reach the aim of this study. Focus groups are a small amount of people that have been selected by a moderator to the purpose of examining attitudes, values and feelings within a special subject (Denscombe, 2009). A focus group exists of three specific features: the gathering has a focus; special emphasis on the interaction within the group; the moderator's role is to facilitate the groups' interaction and encourage all participants to participate (Denscombe, 2009). Some of the advantages of a focus group are that they are easy and economical to carry out, the fact that all participants share their opinion with the rest and the data collected can be very valuable even if the participants were just a few.

The discussion will be led by a moderator. According to Krueger (1998) "the moderator role is to guide the discussion and listen to what's said but not to participate, share views, engage in discussion, or shape the outcome of the group interview" (p. 5). The moderators should behave naturally and not interfere too much during the discussion. According to Denscombe (2009) it is important to create a trustful environment within the group and it is up to the moderator to promote a situation where the participants feel safe in a way that they can express their feelings openly. The interaction within the group helps the moderator to understand and analyze reasoning behind the participants' comments. Group discussions can lead to togetherness where the participants develop a common opinion or the discussion can split the participants in different opinions and perceptions. The moderator who led the sessions with Generation Y and Baby Boomers acted most of the time as an observer. Only when it was silence in the group the moderator took part to keep the discussion going.

It is important to consider the interviewer effect when using a focus group (Denscombe, 2009). Occasionally the moderators' personal preferences and the participants' preferences affect the possibilities to develop a good relationship and trust during the interview (*ibid.*). The fact that participants may be influenced by the moderator's identity can affect the information collected

during the interview or the focus group. Moderators could have influenced participants in both focus groups since there is a connection with the participants. It is plausible that the moderators influenced participants in Generation Y since all of them study in the same University. It is also plausible that moderators would have influenced the Baby Boomers' participants since one of the moderators is in a relationship with one of Baby Boomers group. Interviewer effect can also imply that the participants tend to customize their answers so they might please the moderator and make him or her happy (*ibid.*). Moderators cannot change our personal characteristics as gender, age, ethnical heritage but they can affect the way interviewees behave. It is important that moderators are neutral, responsive and try to foster a comfortable environment so the participants can "express themselves without fear of disclosure or negative evaluation" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 50; Denscombe, 2009). In this study moderators had some kind of relationship with participants, either as friends or as partners. This fact could have influenced participant's responses.

3.3 Sampling data through focus groups

The aim of the focus groups is to evaluate what Generation Y and the Baby Boomers' values are towards sustainability and sustainable consumption. The choice of participants in both focus groups has been a subjective and a convenience selection. Subjective selection is when the scientist "handpicks" the participants in the awareness of that the participants will provide the most valuable data (Denscombe, 2009). However, this is also related to convenience sampling, when the scientist picks the most accessible participants. The reason is often limited resources, such as time and money (*ibid.*). Participants for this study have been picked based on availability and proximity.

Some individuals who belonged to Generation Y and Baby Boomers were asked to participate. However, only a few were available for the date and time suggested for the sessions which narrowed the possibility of having more diverse groups. Before the sessions started and in order to create a more familiar feeling within the group and to get familiar with the moderators, both groups were provided with coffee and snacks. Everyone in the group was asked to present themselves giving their names, age, occupation and hobbies before the discussion about sustainability began. The questions asked during the two focus group sessions were open ended questions. Once the discussion had begun the moderator's task was to ask more questions to

evoke new discussions, to encourage the participants to discuss the questions with each other as well as to avoid silent moments.

Due to the limited number of participants in each focus group, the result will not be conclusive and representative for the total of both generations. This study is based on what participants said about the topic at hand. During the sessions they spoke about their own views of sustainability, their own truth. That is the reason why it is not possible to draw any general conclusions. Both focus groups were held in Swedish, the mother tongue of all the participants. This would help participants to express their opinions more freely. The two sessions were translated and transcribed as accurately as possible.

3.3.1 Data sampling: Baby Boomers

The focus group session with Baby Boomers took place at Volvo IT headquarters in Olofström where all participants worked. The group was comprised of four women and four men. Participants were born between 1958 and 1964. That means that they belong to this generation younger cohort. The session started with breakfast which helped the participants to get more information about the research and about the moderators. The moderators started the session with a brief presentation of the topic of the thesis and mentioned the following keywords: sustainability, sustainable consumption, Generation Y and Baby Boomers.

The session was active and many ideas were discussed about sustainability. Some facts that helped to create a relaxed environment were that the participants knew each other, they are used to get involve in discussion together and the session took place at their work place. Despite the fact that participants knew each other, they were asked to present themselves. All participants except one, who had Norwegian background, had a Swedish background. Participants came from villages in the region of Blekinge.

3.3.2 Data sampling: Generation Y

Generation Y participants belonged to the younger cohort and all of them are currently students. The choice of participants was made due to the convenience that all participants could easily be gathered at the University of Kristianstad and due to the belief that students could have a better knowledge about environmental and sustainability issues. The participants were asked to find themselves at the University at 12:30 to start the session. The group consisted of four women and two men. Their age was between 22 and 24. Two of the participants came from Stockholm; two from Malmö and two from a smaller village called Eslöv. Two of the participants have a Russian background; one has a Bosnia background; two have a Swedish

background and one has a Polish background. In addition to their studies, two of them also have part time jobs. Some of the participants knew both moderators and some of them knew each other. The moderators started the session with a brief presentation of the topic of the thesis and mentioned the keywords: sustainability, sustainable consumption, Generation Y and Baby Boomers. At the beginning the participants were slightly shy and it took a while until the session was fluent. However, as the session went on they became a bit more talkative and open in their answers.

3.4 Interview guide and conceptualization

The questions asked in the two focus groups were developed in order to evoke discussions. The questions were formulated in a simple and direct way so that participants were not mistaken about the topic of discussion. There was not a limit of time for the discussion of the questions; however, each question was discussed about 15-20 minutes. The session with Baby Boomers was longer than with Generation Y. Focus group with Baby Boomers lasted approximately a bit more than one hour, focus group with Generation Y lasted around 40-45 minutes.

In an opening question participants were asked to present themselves. They were asked to give their names, year of birth and hobbies. The main motive behind this was to help to create a relaxed environment, as well as, help participants to get to know each other better. The discussion about the topic started when participants were asked about what sustainability meant for them and if they were interested in sustainability questions or not. This question would help to clarify what participants in both generations stand for regarding the main topic. A second question was formulated once participants had discussed their own values towards sustainability. The aim was to get more information about if participants did something on a daily basis to live up to their values regarding sustainability. It was important to get information about the practice of sustainable consumption. For this reason, participants were asked the following follow-up questions: if doing nothing, can you do something about it?; but why are you not doing anything?; is there any reason to why you choose not to do anything?; if you are doing something, can you do something more?

The participants were asked if they would accept that the sessions were recorded and with their consent the discussions were recorded so it would be easier to analyze the results. Since there were two moderators one of them took notes and the other one, who acted as a real moderator, lead the session and asked the questions.

4. Empirical findings and analysis

The forth chapter presents a briefly introduction of the three pillars of this thesis: sustainability, Baby Boomers and Generation Y. It also presents and analyses the results of the focus groups sessions with Baby Boomers and Generation Y.

4.1 Introduction

One of the most extensively used definitions of sustainability is the one given by United Nations (1987) which explains sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. However, it seems that present generations are not likely to follow United Nations recommendation. Consumers’ consumption behavior, mainly in Western countries, is finishing limited natural resources. Literature has focused in two generations: Baby Boomers (1946-1964) and Generation Y (1977-1994). The first one is a generation which is approaching retirement and which is becoming more environmental aware. The second one is a young generation which is known for its hedonistic behavior and its over-consumption.

Moreover the following sections will be organized into themes that the generations considered the most relevant issues regarding sustainability and sustainable consumption.

4.2 Baby Boomers and sustainability

During the discussion with Baby Boomers participants showed interest in sustainability and sustainable consumption and all of them agreed that sustainability is nowadays an important issue for our society. Participants were aware about sustainability and all mentioned that they think more and more about it. All of the participants agreed that sustainability is partly about recyclable materials and how to use those materials. However, they also mentioned more issues that are important to consider when talking about sustainability. The more relevant themes for Baby Boomers were: child labor, transportation, organic products, green technology, society and infrastructure, and Baby Boomers perception of Generation Y.

4.2.1 Child labor

Since participants have children in different ages that could be the reason why they mentioned this issue. They thought that is very important not to buy products that use child labor for their manufacturing, for example for the manufacturing of clothes and during the harvest of coffee beans. One participant argued that some companies can afford to sell cheaper products since they use child labor to produce them. Buying products that do not use child labor can be included in fair trade. When discussing child labor a participant raised the following question: *“How do we know if children do not make the product?”* Many of the participants admitted that they do not actively search for information about this issue when they are shopping clothes; instead they hope that the company produces its products in a fair and sustainable way. If there would be a list over all companies that use child labor, then the decision to choose products would be easier when shopping. The participants knew about child labor; however, they did not take any actions to avoid it although they would like to. Kollmus and Agyeman (2010) point out that community social marketing has been a successful approach to overcome “the gap between knowledge to action” (p.240). Companies which would implement community social marketing to their marketing strategies would appeal to Baby Boomers. The participants were disappointed because when the media highlights child labor in large retail chains many reacts, but their reactions are temporary and fade away in a short time. Baby Boomers awareness of child labor is not only a question of being sustainable but as Smith and Clurman (2007) shows the high moral priorities of this generation.

4.2.2 Transportation

The participants also raised the question of transportation costs. Transportation costs should make products’ prices higher when shipping long distance. However, when shipping large amount of products transportation costs decreased. Products that claim to be manufactured in a sustainable way should take shipping and transportation cost into consideration and also how they affect the environment. One of the participants, who is active in politics, gave the following example:

In my municipality the municipal council decides which producers are allowed to deliver their products to local schools. The municipal council chooses the more convenient suppliers from those that send a request to sell their products. However, it is not always the more convenient food suppliers that are the closest to my municipality. Larger producers are able to deliver goods at lower prices

but sometimes the transportation distances are longer which means environmental damage”.

This participant pointed out that food suppliers are chosen according to how cheap they sell their products and not if they are local producers. This example evokes the question about how important it is that governments and municipal councils promote sustainable/organic products. Baby Boomers wondered if there was a way municipal councils could change their regulations in order to achieve what Svensson (2012) describes as “ecological modernization” (p.371). Baby Boomers follow Svensson (2012) train of thought when they agree that politicians, in cooperation with experts in sustainable issues, are the key to create environmental policies that will improve the society.

4.2.3 Organic products

Participants thought that buying ecological and sustainable products is a luxury. However, they were willing to pay higher prices for organic food prices since they rather emphasize on the products’ quality that they will offer to their families. When it comes to food they agreed that it is important to know where the food comes from. All participants agreed on buying KRAV labeled products (KRAV is a Swedish label for Organic products) as they thought it is a way to support sustainable and environmentally friendly production. The participants follow the thread of thought of Rahbar and Wahid (2011) who claim that eco-labeled products should provide consumers with enough information in order to make a purchase decision. However, a label does not guarantee the purchase of the product (Rahbar and Wahid, 2011), and as some participants claimed meat producers were hard to trust and when shopping meat all of them wanted to know the animals’ country of origin, one participant said *“we cannot trust where the meat comes from since there have been many scandals regarding the sale of horse meat as beef.”* According to Rahbar and Whadir (2011) if consumers lose faith in eco-labels products then as a consequence, they will not trust those regulations that allow producers to set those labels. In order to restore Baby Boomers consumers’ trust Rahabr and Whadir (2011) suggest that green marketing tools will enhance consumers’ trust for organic products and their quality.

4.2.4 Green technology

The discussion went into green technology, appliances and their lifetime. All of the participants agreed that today’s appliances lifetime are not as long as they used to. One participant said: *“back in the 70’s I read in the magazine Teknikens Värld that cars were built to last; nowadays, cars are built for a sustainable planned deterioration.”* Moreover appliances build

today cost not so much as they did when the participants in the group were younger. Participants claimed that today's appliances components are too expensive to be replaced and it is much cheaper and convenient to buy a new appliance. Nowadays a printer ink cartridge is very expensive and it is much cheaper to buy a new printer. The combination of purchase facilities and technology development create wants in consumers to buy new products more frequently. An example that most of the participants agreed on was that they would not mind to buy a new TV every ten-year since new technology development and design change often. A participant pointed out that this is not sustainable consumption.

According to one participant advances in technology have made possible money saving for households. This participant claimed that at home *"we have now 40 LED-lamps that we have changed from halogen. LED reduces costs and this is maybe a more appealing reason to change light-bulbs than environmental reasons."* Although participants were willing to pay premium prices for organic food, the main reason to change to low-energy light-bulbs was an economic reason rather to reduce climate change. New technologies have helped to develop new products from material that otherwise would not have any use. A participant gave as an example that *"there is a residual product from the mines that is used to make batteries due to its high levels of sulfur"*. That participant thought that it was important to take advantage of those initiatives that produce new products from disposal.

There is a mismatch in what participants said and their actions. In one hand, they are willing to try new technologies if that benefits the environment. On the other hand, they would not consume less since they pointed out that they would not mind to change their TV every 10 years just because of the new technologies. According to Svensson (2012), their acts are typical of the western consumption society which *"consume different rather than consume less"* (p.372).

Participants did not believe that green cars are the solution to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and they are on average more expensive than regular cars. However, they thought that electric cars are more sustainable than green cars but they are too expensive, as one participant said: *"I would like to have an electric car but I miss 300.000 Swedish crowns"*. Although participants agreed on how harmful carbon dioxide emissions are for the environment, they assured that around 75% of those who work at Volvo IT commute by car". Participants showed with their opinions that there is a value-action gap (Svensson, 2012). Their values towards reducing carbon dioxide emissions do not match with their routine of commuting by car. The discussion

was focused about the reasons to use the car instead of bus and train. They thought that the alternatives were not suitable for their needs. According to Svensson (2012) the reason to choose the car over public transportation could be a “socio-cultural disposition” (p.370). Svensson (2012) suggests that in order to change socio-cultural dispositions a change in the collectivity must happen.

4.2.5 Society and infrastructure

Baby Boomers have been described as an individualistic generation (Williams and Page, 2011; Petroulas *et al.*, 2010). However, the participants in the focus group showed a deeply concern about our society. All participants live in small cities which are not planned to deal with the needs of a greener population. On one hand, they claimed the bus service in Olofström is not enough and buses to other cities are few and they not go all the time so it takes twice the time to arrive somewhere. According to Dietz *et al.* (2005) the constraint of public transportation limited availability would change our behavior, regardless of our values. Furthermore, the poor communication between the different public transportation companies makes things worse. One participant gave this example:

If you need to go to the airport in Copenhagen from Olofström, first you have to take the bus to Bromölla where you only have about 3-4 minutes before the trains come. If an old lady takes that bus and she needs help then the bus will not arrive on time to Bromölla and you will miss the train. The train will not wait for the bus since communication between those companies is none. That makes people prefer to drive their own cars instead.

On the other hand, participants were aware that smaller town’s infrastructure is worse than in bigger cities. Big cities have more frequent public transportation services. They pointed out that if a majority of the population in smaller cities would take buses then the investment in infrastructure would have been a socioeconomic advantage. Participant suggestion to improve small cities infrastructure showed, according to Dietz *et al.* (2005) that their environmental values are their motives influence not only their individual decisions but also when taking decisions that would affect to the collectivity.

They insisted that money was not the most important reason to do not take public transportation. One participant said: “*nowadays a commutation ticket costs more than 800 SEK. However, I spend in gas around 1700-1800 SEK a month. Time is more decisive when choosing public transportation.*” Time, in combination with convenience, was definitely a

decisive motive to make some decisions instead of others. One participant repeated that they were willing to pay double as much to drive a car than to take the bus if they can save time with that.

4.2.6 Baby Boomers vs. Generation Y

Baby Boomers thought that younger generations, including Generation Y, are more careful regarding waste recycling and the use of organic products. Their perception is based on that Generation Y has grown up with the knowledge of sustainability and sustainable consumption. However, Kollmuss and Agyeman (2010) do not agree with Baby Boomers. They argued that there is a difference between direct and indirect experiences. Baby Boomers have directly experienced how the environment has been changing during the years which may have influenced their values and behavior. These scholars consider learning in school about sustainability as an example of indirect experience which would not have the same influence in consumers as a direct experience.

Our study agrees with Kollmuss and Agyeman. After the two focus groups sessions, Baby Boomers were more deeply aware about sustainability than Generation Y and they took the discussion to a higher level. As it is shown in the next section, participants in Generation Y were well informed about sustainability and sustainable consumption; however, their answers did not reach the same level of knowledge and involvement as did the answers of the Baby Boomers.

4.3 Generation Y and sustainability

Some important findings were made during the focus group with members of Generation Y. Overall the participants in Generation Y focus group were aware of environmental issues. However, it is important to point out that one participant was not as much interested in environment issues and sustainability as the rest of the group. Participants mentioned recycling, fuel efficiency and pesticides reduction as a way to become more sustainable. According to Hume (2010) overflow of information on television and social media would lead Generation Y to over-consumption. According to Gustavsson and Elander, (2013) globalization is also a reason why Generation Y is to a more global lifestyle that can lead as well to over-consumption. However, any hedonistic and consumption-oriented behavior was not found in the Generation Y focus group because they are students with limited resources. The more

relevant themes for Generation Y were: economy, recycling, emissions and public transportation, and organic and sustainable products.

4.3.1 Economy

When they were asked about their thoughts about sustainability participants associated sustainability with environmental issues and economy. According to participants their actions regarding sustainability and sustainable consumption aimed to a large extent to save money instead of protecting the environment. Generation Y is according to Mitchell (1998), and Norum (2003) a generation focused in self-expression and personal fulfillment. One of the participants gave an example, he/she turns off the lights in order to save money and not to save energy and protect the environment. The rest of the group responded positive to this measure. According to the group the primary reason to not choose environmentally and organic product is the lack of resources, such as money, to buy them. It is important to keep in mind that all the participants in Generation Y's focus group were students with limited resources. Another one mentioned that he/she took part in several environmental-related projects at high school that raised his/her interest in sustainability. According to them, the environmental awareness has flourished in the last 5-6 years and people has started to be more sustainable because is a new trend. Wicker and Becken, (2012) points out that consumer buy organic and environmentally friendly products for the reason to enhance their social status.

4.3.2 Recycling

The discussion about recycling was as a highlight of the session since the participants were more involved about the topic. All of them were positive about recycling. A distinction has to be made between those participants who live at home with their parents and those who live independent, and how they put into effect their values. The participants who live at home with their parents claimed that they follow their parents routine regarding recycling. One of the four who still lives at home with their parents said that they do not have a well-organized system for recycling. The other three households followed the most common recycling system in Sweden: organic, paper and plastic. The values regarding sustainability of the participants who live at home are affected by factors like cultural, attitudes, awareness values and so on (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2010). These participants learn from their parents and live like them.

The two participants, who live independently, and currently on campus, claimed that they are not very careful when they recycle their waste. The main reason for not recycling as much as they would like to is that their dorms do not have the facilities to recycle all their waste. The

only garbage bins available are for organic and plastic which means that they throw the rest (paper, glass and burnable garbage) in the same bin. The value-action gap that Svensson (2010) suggests is also clear in Generation Y. This group has enough information about recycling however, and due to convenience, they do not improve their recycling habits. Their dorms may not have the best facilities to recycle properly but they do not do anything to find a solution; however, they suggested the placement of more wasted bins. Wolf and Moses (2011) point out that by encouraging and applying sustainable solutions consumers can contribute to the climate change.

All participants agreed on returning their soda cans and PET bottles in the Reverse Vending Machines available in most supermarkets around Sweden. From a global perspective participants mentioned that undeveloped countries did not take care of their waste. According to this participant, in those countries there are not waste disposal units which means that they “*burn their garbage out in the forest and that is not good*”. This remark suggests that Generation Y members were concerned about sustainability in a more global context. However, participants did not realize that Sweden belongs to the high income countries which, according to Svensson (2012) account for the “largest ecological footprint” (p. 369).

One of the participants raised the issue about the waste station in Eslöv. According to the participant the inhabitants are only allowed to throw away a certain amount of waste. If they want to throw more they would have to pay a fee. The participant awoke this issue since his/her family owns a farm with horses and have a lot of plastic wrapping that needs to be sorted. Their only chance to get rid of the waste is to drive to Lund and throw it at this town’s recycling station. According to this participant this solution is not convenient since people in order to avoid a trip to Lund instead would throw their waste in the forest. This participant wondered “*why is there a restriction when people are willing to throw/recycle their waste?*” When addressing this question all the other participants were surprised to hear that there is a restriction in how much waste people can throw. All of them thought this restriction will not encourage people to recycle. This participant’s father had to drive now and then to Lund to throw their waste, which increases the cost in gas and carbon dioxide emissions. This discussion led to the comparison between cities and towns. A participant suggested that towns should be developed in order to avoid transportation to cities since “*there are not many who want to live there anymore*”. According to this participant transportation is one of the most relevant factors that negatively affect the environment. According to Svensson (2012)

consumers that are concerned and environmentally friendly consumers could participate in politics to discuss and distress the environments well being. This action is called Ecological citizenship and is a way for the participant's father to make him heard.

4.3.3 Emissions and public transportations

Participants' approach towards sustainability went in the direction of the need to take actions in order to achieve a sustainable future. One of the participants mentioned the fact that biking is a way to avoid carbon dioxide emissions, which would help to prevent or reduce air pollution. However, the reason for this participant to bike is because he/she does not have a driving license. Furthermore, one participant mentioned that the lack of money to buy a car is the reason why he/she bikes. According to their affirmations, those participants would rather drive than bike if they could. Scholars such as Wicker and Becken (2012) state that there are many reasons why consumers do not choose to buy environmentally friendly products. One of those reasons is that environmental friendly products are more expensive; however, participants rather spend their money in a car and gas than in a bike. This egotistical approach is according to Stein (2013) a characteristic of what this generation is all about, a generation who lacks empathy that impeded them to care about others. All participants saw more benefits of a car instead of public transportation.

Another solution given to the problem of carbon dioxide emissions was the frequently use of public transportation. Participants agreed on how economical it is to go by train and bus, and how positive this measure is for the environment. However, not all participants agreed on implementing this solution since they thought it was inconvenient as a lot of time is wasted while waiting for the train or bus. Furthermore, they thought prices for public transportation are too high.

4.3.4 Organic and sustainable products

The group had mixed opinions regarding the purchase of sustainable products. Most of them were willing to occasionally pay a bit more for products like low-energy light-bulbs that would help at the same time to save money. As an example a participant said *"I can spend 40 SEK more for a low-energy light-bulb as it holds 2 years. Spending 40 SEK will not make me poor."* Generation Y were willing to make single-investments like changing a light-bulb. This action represents a step forward in to a more sustainable future and it gives the impression of willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly products. However, Peattie (2010) points

out that those individuals with weaker environmental values are more predisposed to use low-energy light-bulbs rather than recycling.

Another participant said that he/she only cares about price and quality when purchasing a product. Most of Generation Y participants claimed that at some point they bought organic food. The most named organic food products were milk, meat, vegetables and fruits. However, those participants that now lived independently claimed that they have not enough money to buy organic products, as their prices are premium. The participants from Stockholm complained about the availability of organic food in towns like Kristianstad. The general opinion was that the food industry does not give enough information about organic food and the use of pesticides. A participant said “(...) *and when I buy meat I would like to have more information about where the animal comes from and about the slaughter process*”. It was very important for all participants to know where the meat comes from and the slaughter process. They said that media has uncovered that some food producers have sold beef as horsemeat. Generation Y was aware of the intense discussion in the media about this issue and where meat actually comes from. According to Stein (2013), this generation is well informed about what happen around them and the fact that they were aware of the meat scandal showed it; however, they are an inactive generation.

The purchase of clothes also triggered discussion between the participants. The female participants led the discussion about how expensive clothes made in organic fabrics are. They claimed that it feels contradictory that customers are encouraged to buy that type of clothes when in fact they cannot afford them. During the discussion participants also claimed that shoes have a ridiculous price margin as “*a pair of shoes cost 70 SEK to produce and we buy them for 700 SEK.*” This statement indicates that Generation Y is aware of mass production and its benefits and disadvantages. Not only that, Generation Y has been also exposed to a capitalist driven environment where China has risen as a global power nation (Hume, 2010).

According to participants sustainability is going to be even more important for society in the future. Furthermore, they foretell that “*everything is going to be organic*” which would increase sustainable consumption. Participants claimed that private customers do as well as they can; however, it is the multinational companies that have to shape up. A participant thought that there are theories that allege that global warming has stopped and has even started to decrease, although “*they are conspiracy theories*”.

4.4 Summary of empirical findings

The following tables represent a summary of Baby Boomers and Generation Y values regarding sustainability and sustainable consumption.

Table 1 Results from Baby Boomers focus group

Baby Boomers	
Values towards Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy • Use of public transportation • Waste recycling • Use of recyclable materials • Cans and PET bottles return • Reduce consumption of long-distance transported products • Technology development • Corporate and media accountability
Feasible actions towards sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-energy light-bulbs (LED) • Purchase organic products • Purchase KRAV labeled products • Avoid manufacturers that use child labor • Green and electric cars • Recycling
Actual actions	<p>Baby Boomers do not fully live up to their values towards sustainability. Of all the feasible actions they avowed that they could carry out in order to achieve a sustainable future, they just put into practice the purchase of low-energy light-bulbs (LED), the purchase of organic food and recycling.</p>

Table 2 Results of Generation Y focus group

Generation Y	
Values towards sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy • Use of public transportation • Waste recycling • Organic products • Cans and PET bottles return • Carbon dioxide emissions • Environment • Corporate accountability • Biking
Feasible actions towards sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-energy light-bulbs • Purchase of organic food • Purchase of clothes made in organic fabrics • Biking
Actual actions	<p>Generation Y do not fully live up to their values towards sustainability. Of all the feasible actions they avowed that they could carry out in order to achieve a sustainable future, they just put into practice the purchase of low-energy light bulbs, organic food and biking.</p>

During the two focus groups the main topics were sustainability and sustainable consumption. Table 1 and 2 show Baby Boomers and Generation Y values and actions regarding the topics presented. The column “Values towards sustainability” represents these generations’ interpretation of sustainability. The column “Feasible actions towards sustainability” represents the possible actions to achieve a sustainable future. “Actual actions” embodies the generations’ actual sustainable consumption.

As tables illustrate, both generations identified more or less the same issues with sustainability and sustainable consumption. Swedish Baby Boomers have a deeper understanding of what sustainability means, as an example they were aware of the new green technologies and

recyclable materials. Swedish Generation Y has more basic information about the environmental problem.

5. Thesis conclusions

In this chapter a summary of the thesis and a conclusion will be presented. In addition, a critical review, practical implications and finally suggestions for future research will be presented.

5.1 Summary of the thesis

This thesis aimed to answer the following research question:

“What values do consumers in Generation Y and Baby Boomers have toward sustainability?”

The research question is based on previous research on Generation Y, Baby Boomers and sustainability. This thesis used a qualitative approach with focus groups to collect data. The research has been conducted in order to investigate Generation’s Y and Baby Boomer’s values towards sustainability. Furthermore, this study attempted to fill the gap in academic literature since no studies have been done about these two generations’ values concerning sustainability and sustainable consumption. The research would provide enough information to be able to investigate if there are possible similarities and differences between the generations and if the generations act in accordance to their own values.

An analysis has been conducted through comparing previous research articles with the results from the two focus group sessions. It was found that Generation Y and Baby Boomers have both similarities and differences with each other. The analysis also showed that there are differences between theory and empirics.

The results from the Generation Y focus group do not quite agree with existing research. Generation Y has been labeled as an egocentric and an over-consuming generation. But the session’s discussions showed that this generation do not consume as much as they are considered to do. The findings also indicated that Generation Y is more concerned about their own economy than to take actions to protect the environment. However, they put into practice the actions they avowed because these actions are easy to carry out and do not imply any major cost. As an example, the participants from the session turned off the lights in a room to save money and not because of environmental awareness. Generation Y is well informed about the

environmental damage around the world, but the session's findings showed that even if they are aware of environmental issues they do not completely understand how serious the problem and its consequences really are.

Baby Boomers are known in scientific literature as the parents of Generation Y. They are known as individualistic and focused on self-expression and personal fulfillment. The generation is working hard to get recognition and economic independence. However, they are also known in literature as "Eco-elders", since they have developed important environmental awareness during their years. The discussion with Baby Boomers indicated that they are interested in environmental issues such as carbon dioxide emissions, public transportation deficiencies and green technologies. Baby Boomers have adapted their consumption habits and they have become gradually sustainable consumers. However, they do not fully commit to the actions they avowed because these actions imply major costs and to large extent these actions require that the whole society engages in the journey to achieve a sustainable future. The results from the Baby Boomers focus group session presented that even if this generation is concerned about the environment they would rather spend more money on gas rather than use public transportation. The reason for this behavior is that for this generation sometimes convenience is more important than the environment.

5.2 Conclusions

To conclude, to a large extent Baby Boomers associate sustainability to child labor, transportation, organic products, green technology, society and infrastructure. They believe that younger generations are better informed about sustainable problems and more proactive regarding environmental issues. Baby Boomers were aware of how sustainability can help society to achieve a better future and how the efforts of the society can help to achieve a better environment. Generation Y associates sustainability to a large extent to economy, recycling, emissions and public transportation, and organic and sustainable products. The result from the Generation Y focus group session showed that this generation has been informed about environmental issues since their school years. However, this group takes minor actions to prevent environmental damage. The results showed that their sustainable behavior was mainly aimed at saving money.

The conclusion of the thesis is that Baby Boomers and Generation Y have similarities and differences regarding their values towards sustainability but also how they live up to their own values. Figure 2 illustrates the model developed after our findings.

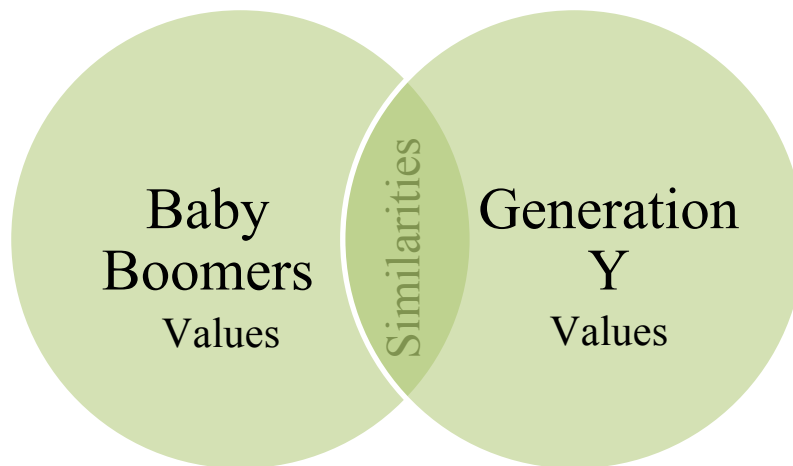


Figure 2 The developed model

Baby Boomers and Generation Y share common characteristics toward sustainability: both are well informed about environmental issues, both recycle and return their cans and PET bottles, both are willing to pay for green technologies like low-energy light-bulbs. However, this study has identified a value-action-gap in both generations. This gap means that even if both generations' values are positive towards sustainability there is a difference in how they implement their actions towards sustainability. The main reasons for this contradiction are convenience and resources (time and money).

5.3 Critical review

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate Baby Boomers and Generation Y values towards sustainability. The purpose was also to investigate if members of these generations act in accordance to their own values. The findings from this study show that Baby Boomers and Generation Y members are aware of sustainable issues but they do not always live up to their values. However, due to the reduce number of participants in both focus groups; the results are not conclusive and representative for the total of both generations. Therefore, it is not possible to draw general conclusions about the two generations.

A critical reflection is that the selection of the participants was a combination of subjective selection and convenience. Generation Y participants were students at the same University with

the moderators of the focus group. Baby Boomers participants were acquaintance of the moderators. This factor may have influenced participants who unwittingly could have customized their answers. Participants in both generations live in South Sweden and they may not represent the whole Swedish population. In addition, participants in both generations belonged to the younger cohort of each generation which means that older members in these generations may have different values.

Time constrains during this study were a reality. If the time horizon would have been wider this study could have gathered a larger group of participants. Some in-depth interviews would have help to generalize the results.

5.4 Practical implications

The aim of this study was to investigate Baby Boomers and Generation Y values towards sustainability and sustainable consumption. Furthermore, the results would help to find differences and similarities between the two generations. Previous researches have focused on sustainability, sustainability and consumer behavior, and sustainability in a specific generation. The majority of the previous researches were American and only a few were European. This study has focused on the Swedish members of Baby Boomers and Generation Y and their values towards sustainability, and to some extent it fills up the academic gap in the research field. Therefore, the study has some academic value.

The analysis and the conclusions of this thesis may have some value for companies that produce organic and sustainable products. This study can also be used by marketers in order to know what triggers consumers to purchase organic products.

5.5 Future research

The limitations of this study were time, resources and availability of the participants in both focus groups. It would be interesting to carry out this study on a large scale with participants from different regions in Sweden as well as participants from different cohorts. Another aspect that would be interesting for future research is the inclusion of in-depth interviews which would help researchers to have a better understanding of these generations and their values towards sustainability. Furthermore, future research can also include a survey which may help to clarify

questions like how frequently members of these generation practice sustainable activities and sustainable consumption.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

1. Initiating a discussion where the participants say if they are interested in sustainability questions or not. Based on this the participants' are asked to discuss what sustainability is for them.

2. What are the participants doing (if they do something) to achieve their values?
Following questions was asked:
 - if doing nothing, can you do something about it?
 - but why are you not doing anything?
 - is there any reason why you choose to not do anything?
 - if you are doing something, can you do something more?

3. At the end of the discussion the participants are asked if they want to add something about sustainability and sustainable consumption.