Consumer Behavior Theories – Purchasing Organic Food
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Abstract

The aim of the thesis is to improve explanation value regarding consumer purchase of organic food products. By comparing and analyzing existing theories utilized in studies on sustainable consumption the outcome of the thesis will be based on a theoretical framework. Organic food products are generally more expensive and less harmful to the environment than their non-organic equivalents. It is believed that rational considerations will be made in favor of financial benefit, and therefore towards the purchase of non-organic food. Conversely it is assumed that moral considerations will favor the purchase of organic food as the consumer aspires to aid the environment. The conflict between these considerations will be the topic of the thesis, as it aims to develop a theory that incorporates both rational and moral concerns. The first step conducted is to identify theories that have proved to have explanatory value in the field of sustainable consumption. Sustainable consumption is viewed as an approximate to purchasing organic food, as this behavior is one type of sustainable consumption. The identification process concludes that several theories have the ability to grant significant explanation on the topic in question. It is also revealed that the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory are those most utilized and well documented, as well as they represent rational and moral considerations respectively. The thesis then goes on to identify other factors that might have an impact on the purchase of organic food, such as government regulations and personality traits. These other factors serve merely as indications of the sources of influence when the consumer decides upon behavior. Consecutively the thesis analyzes the possible extension of both TPB and VBN with the addition of both moral and rational considerations respectively. Additionally the extensions include the element of reasoning derived from the Behavioral Reasoning Theory (BRT), as it was proven to have great explanatory value of deviations between attitude and intention in purchasing decisions regarding sustainable consumption. These extensions are likely to improve both theories, as they incorporate elements of each other’s framework. The thesis is unable to conclude upon which of the theories are best suited to explain the topic in question, which leads to the final element of the thesis in form of a combination of the two main theories with the inclusion of other factors. This combination leads to the reconstruction of both theories and their incorporation together with other relevant factors such as fear, context and reasoning. By merging the two theories the new collective theory will arguably grant additional explanatory power as a higher number of relevant aspects are covered. The model framework is constructed so that the core values of the consumer will explain how both internal and external factors are interpreted. The interpretation will then lead to the personal view on behavior which incorporates the attitude towards behavior and the personal norm factors from TPB and VBN respectively. The personal view on behavior will also be affected by positive reasoning derived from the BRT. The personal view on behavior and negative reasoning will in turn determine the consumer’s intention and in the end lead to the actual behavior which is also affected by context. This model is made to create a basis for further research on the purchase of organic food.
1. Introduction

In the past decades, consumers have displayed an increased demand for socially and environmentally friendly products (Zander and Hamm 2010). Every day, more products designed to contribute to the preservation of our environment is introduced in the marketplace. In order for them to be successful in aiding the environment, it is essential that consumers choose them over non-environmental products. It is important that the producers of these goods understand the factors that play a role when a consumer is considering an organic food product. There are eco-friendly products in almost every market, some more popular and influential than others. When it comes to the focus of this thesis, it will fall in the category of organic food. Nutrients fulfilling the criteria of being socially and environmental friendly will be labeled as organic food.

In an attempt to illuminate the essence of consumer behavior this thesis will investigate two commonly used theories, namely the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) model. The reason for the inclusion of these models is their distinctions as respectively rational and moral based approaches. This distinction is important, as they define whether the consumer is generally influenced by intrinsic or extrinsic factors when making a decision. This conflict between rational and moral considerations makes the area of sustainable consumption additionally interesting, as personal sacrifice have to be made in order to aid the environment.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen 1991), was developed as an extension to the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). TPB builds upon three variables, defined as attitude towards the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. The first two variables were included in the Theory of Reasoned Action, whilst the latter was introduced with the TPB. The Theory of Planned Behavior is often criticized for its omission of moral considerations.

The Value-Belief-Norm theory (Stern 2000) on the other hand, makes extensive use of altruistic, or by extension, moral values considerations in order to explain consumer behavior. The VBN theory further develops the Norm-Activation theory (Schwartz 1977), in that it includes a person’s ecological worldview and values into the equation. The theory presents personal norms as the main predictor of environmental behavior.

Food consumption has been estimated to account for 20-30% of total environmental impact in the Western world. This number is substantial, and there is certainly room for improvement by increasing consumption of environmentally friendly alternatives.

There has been conducted a vast amount of studies on organic food, seeking to determine the underlying factors explaining the consumers decision to purchase ecologically friendly products. This thesis will review a number of studies, and by doing so, be able to identify the most influential factors driving consumers to
buy more expensive food products, in order for them to be organic. Throughout the process it will be necessary to review the theoretical models used, as well as the underlying presumptions supporting the implementation of the relevant models.

The intention of the thesis is not only to review and identify the findings, but also to criticize and evaluate the studies and theories under examination in order to provide a better understanding of the research conducted in the field.

The thesis seeks to contribute to the understanding of what makes the consumer decide between organic and non-organic food products. By understanding which factors that influence the consumer in making these decisions one can ultimately alter these factors and thus increase purchase and consumption of organic food in order to aid the environment.

- Which models and factors are effective in describing the decision of purchasing organic food?

- How important is the individual's moral versus rational considerations when deciding to purchase organic food?

- Which factors should be incorporated when developing a model that describes the purchasing decision of organic food?

1.1 Definitions

There are a lot of terms related to the topic in question, and this section will define those terms in order to make sense of the content of this thesis.

Organic food – General term for consumable products with nutritional value that, compared to similar products have travelled shorter distance, is not sprayed with chemicals, is produced with moral considerations with regard to animal and labor welfare and must be produced by integrating practices that promotes recycling, ecological balance and biodiversity.

Environmental behavior – Behavior that influence the environment directly, either by aiding or harming the environment and is further termed as pro-environmental and non-environmental behavior respectively.

Pro-environmental behavior – This is behavior that has some level of benefit to the environment compared to the alternative behavior. Example: Driving a hybrid car instead of a normal car or purchasing organic food over normal food products.
Non-environmental behavior – This is behavior that within reason has substitute behaviors that are less harmful to the environment. Example: Driving a normal car instead of a hybrid car or purchasing normal food products when organic food of the same kind is available.

Purchase – The action of acquiring a product against a monetary compensation. This term will throughout the thesis be used interchangeably with consumption as it is assumed that one will consume what is purchased and that what is consumed must have been purchased beforehand.

Consumption – The action of consuming a product in order to gain value in form of nutrition and culinary experience.

Sustainable consumption – The word itself means that the action of consumption does not harm the environment over time. If a lumberman cuts down a tree and plants a new one, that is sustainable consumption. Sustainable consumption may appear in many forms, but the common denominator is that it does not make the environment worse off than before the consumption.

Model – This is used to depict the framework of a theory, and might be used interchangeably with the word theory in some cases in order to excessive repetitiveness in the language.

Theory – The term theory will illustrate the idea of the theory, and therefore used when referring to the concept of the theory more than the graphical setup of the model itself.

1.2 Limitations
This thesis will build upon studies investigating consumer behavior in relation to attitudes towards organic food. There are unlimited possibilities of implementations of the models discussed and the organic food market is chosen based upon a number of arguments. When it comes to the environmental aspect of organic food, it is a topic that is subject for extensive debate. There is no doubt that human consumption has an impact on the environment (Shaked and Jolliet 2011). Regarding the choice of consumer products to examine, the thesis will focus on nutritional products as human beings require food to survive and thus being faced with the decision to buy or not to buy organic products almost every day. Furthermore the thesis will refrain from discussing the statistical analysis presented in the included studies, as it is irrelevant for the purpose of the paper.

2. Method
By reviewing earlier studies in relation to the purchase of organic food, the thesis will evaluate the methods and their success when it comes to providing information about the subject. The thesis will draw upon, and evaluate the theoretical framework and its ability to improve the quality of analysis conducted in the studies. It is believed that the material chosen is sufficient in providing quality information in that it is published and
peer reviewed material from different authors with different backgrounds written at different points in the last decades.

The thesis will include discussions of the implementation of a number of factors that might be of importance in relation to the purchase of organic food. These discussions will draw upon existing literature and reasoning with the intention to implement the most important factors into a model that is fit to describe consumer purchase of organic food. In order to achieve this, the thesis will introduce a series of theories applicable to the issue, and then discuss other factors that might come into play. When this is done, there will be a detailed section on the theories deemed most important, and what other factors might improve those theories. In the end there will be an attempt to combine the theories and their main contributions into a universal theory to explain the behavior of purchasing organic food.

3. Brief description of theories used on sustainable consumption

This section will provide a brief description of some theories of consumer behavior implemented to the field of sustainable consumption. It is assumed that there is a linkage between considerations made when considering sustainable consumption in general and the purchase of organic food, as the behavior of purchasing organic food is one way to conduct sustainable consumption. The reason for describing several theories is to establish a common conception of the theories that will make sure that the terminology and model construction is viewed the same by both reader and author. All theories have been subject of alterations and arguably improvements but will be presented in their original form, and eventual alterations or suggested improvements will be presented later on in the thesis. This section will include some theories that have been used in research on sustainability. These theories presumably have qualities that might provide insight when attempting to develop a model for understanding the purchase of organic food. The first set of theories is rational theories while the second set is based on morale. All theories presented have shown significance when implemented in studies concerning sustainable consumption. A graphic illustration of the theories will be presented in the appendix at the end of the thesis, with exceptions for TPB and VBN whose graphical illustrations will appear in section 6.

3.1 Rational theories

Rational theories base themselves upon the assumption that consumers conduct a cost-benefit analysis when making a decision. This means that the consumers aim to achieve utility maximization in that they seek to maximize their outcome and minimize the cost related to the outcome. From this basic assumption, there have been developed theories seeking to determine which factors consumers evaluate in order to achieve their goal of utility maximization.
3.1.1 Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior consists of three variables. *Attitude towards the behavior* (AB) is the first variable and it describes how the consumer views the behavior in question. The second variable is *subjective norms* (SN), and it considers factors in the surroundings of the consumer, such as the viewpoint of friends and family. Finally there is the *perceived behavioral control* (PBC), which illustrates ease of completion of the behavior that the consumer believes to have. The relative weight of factors within these variables is determined by the believed outcome’s subjective value in direct correlation with the perceived probability of this outcome. The following example is made to illustrate the theory in a simple manner. John has $1000 to live for each month and he has two interests in life that he would like to fulfill; saving the eco-system and living in a two-bedroom apartment. He weighs the behavior of being able to save the eco-system as 10, and to live in a two-bedroom apartment as 1. Buying a month’s worth of organic food costs $500, while the same amount of regular food costs $200. Renting a two-bedroom apartment costs $800 a month, while a one-bedroom costs $500. John concludes that the likeness of him alone saving the eco-system through the purchase of organic food is 5% and simultaneously the probability of him living in a two-bedroom apartment while renting it as 100%. In his mind, normally without knowing it, he calculates that 10*5%=0.5 and that 1*100%=1, and in the end that 0.5<1. As a result he intends to rent the two-bedroom apartment and eat regular food. This example only included the *attitude towards the behavior*, and by including a girlfriend that is an environmentalist (wants and need of family and friends in *subjective norms*) and an organic food store that delivers groceries to his door (ease of completion of behavior in *perceived behavioral control*), the outcome could be different. These variables seek to explain *behavioral intention* (BI) which is the direct antecedent of behavior.

The factors of TPB are dependent of each other. The reason for this is that for example ease of access in form of behavioral control, might also have a positive impact on the attitude of the behavior and social norm, as well as behavioral intention.

3.1.2 Behavioral Reasoning Theory

Behavioral Reasoning Theory (BRT) was developed in order identify new linkages underlying intentions and behavior (Westaby 2005). The theory proposes that reasons serve as important linkages between beliefs, global motives, intentions and behavior. The BRT theory was created upon the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior, as the creator identified a gap in the model construct. As such, the BRT theory would be a reasonable concept to include when trying to improve the TPB. When investigating a gap between attitude and behavior with values of respectively 40% and 4% (UN 2005), the Behavioral Reasoning Theory yielded explanatory value (Claudy, Peterson et al. 2012). When it comes to the VBN theory, the concept of reason is not directly included in the model, and it is therefore a candidate for implementation and possible improvement of the original model.
3.1.3 Protection Motivation Theory

The Protection Motivation Theory (Rogers 1975) builds upon threat identification and response in order to understand behavior. The model consists of two parts, known as the threat appraisal process and the coping appraisal process, where the first is the process of understanding a threat and the latter describes how the threat is coped with. In a study on organic food (Scarpa and Thiene 2011) the threat factor was identified as possible harmful pesticides in non-organic food as well as the possible harm to the environment. The study was able to identify three classes, the largest of which displayed coherence with the theory. The theory suggests that the cognitive process of threat identification and means for threat avoidance obtained through communication will enable the theory to predict behavior. The driving element of protection motivation is fear appeal (Scarpa and Thiene 2011), and it can be articulated in three main components: (1) the dimension of the single danger, (2) the chance that the single event will happen if nothing is done to prevent it in terms of protective behavior and (3) the effective possibility that coping behavior can be practiced. In an organic food example it could be as follows: (1) relatively low danger, (2) it is difficult to determine the effect of pesticides when it comes to a single consumption situation, but let’s call it high with regards to the possibility of the body absorbing the contents of the consumed product and (3) the coping behavior in form of buying organic food is very possible to conduct. This example would be very different if the motivation was not driven by the danger of contamination of the body, but rather the contamination of the environment. According to the theory it is important to communicate the threats in order for the consumer to develop their fear appeal, and thus change a maladaptive behavior (eating contaminated food) into an adaptive one (eating organic food). The concept of fear would be applicable to both TPB and VBN, while it would arguably be covered by attitude towards the behavior and beliefs respectively.

3.1.4 Attitude Behavior Context Theory

The Attitude Behavior Context (ABC) theory (Guagnano, Stern et al. 1995) can be characterized as an environmental model, as it accommodates for the surroundings of the consumer. The ABC theory builds upon the framework of a standard means-end theory, meaning that the consumer acts upon expected functional and psychological gain from a given behavior. The reason that ABC is included in this section is the before mentioned attribute of context. In relation to purchase of organic food, this can mean a lot of things. As a main argument it would be reasonable to consider the availability of organic products to be the contextual factor accounting for the majority of external impact. But factors such as interpersonal relationships and trends will for some also influence behavior. The theory was implemented in a US study on organic food, where it enabled researchers to split consumers into sub-groups in order to gain insight concerning their consumption of organic food (Nie and Zepeda 2011). The concepts of attitude and behavior in ABC are fairly similar to those in other theories while the context factor is described as follows: “External conditions are conceived of broadly to include all external sources of support or opposition to behavior,
whether physical, financial, legal or social. They can range from extremely negative (unpleasant or barriers) to extremely positive (pleasant and supportive).” (Guagnano, Stern et al. 1995).

3.2 Moral-based theories
Contrary to the rational theories the moral-based theories involve that the consumer considers moral implications in their decision-making process. These theories of course, only have application value where there are moral considerations in play such as with regards to purchasing organic food. There are fewer theories that are moral based, and therefore this section will only contain two theories. These two theories are also related to each other, as the first theory presented is an extension of the latter. However moral-based theories are essential to this thesis following the nature of purchasing organic food, a behavior that has implications for both other people and the environment itself.

3.2.1 Value-Belief-Norm Theory
By contrast to TPB, VBN considers altruistic considerations as measures to predict behavior. This model is especially constructed to deal with issues concerning environmental behavior. The theory was introduced in order to develop a conceptual framework to predict individual conservationist action (Stern 2000). The VBN theory links the value-theory, norm-activation theory and New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) through a causal chain of five variables leading behavior; personal values (PV) (especially altruistic values), NEP, awareness of adverse consequences (AC), ascription of responsibility to self (AR) and personal norms (PN) for pro environmental action. NEP, AC and AR are beliefs about the general condition of the bio-physical environment.

Personal values fluctuate a lot between individuals, and it is important for the theory to recognize this in order to provide relevant information. The core values are defined as biospheric (concern for the planet), altruistic (concern for the wellbeing of others) and egoistic (concern for one self). There are, according to Stern, evidence that traditional values have a negative correlation with pro environmental behavior.

When it comes to the belief section of the theory, it is the key to understand behavior. NEP describes how the consumer views the world ecologically, in other words what state and situation the environment is in. If the consumer does not believe that cutting down trees will harm the planet, there are no incentives to reduce paper consumption, regardless of that person’s altruistic value. AC describes the identification that the behavior influences objects that the consumer values, while AR is the perception of the individual’s ability to reduce the identified threat posed by the behavior.

Finally one identifies the personal norms with regard to the sense of personal obligation to undertake pro environmental behavior.
These considerations may lead the consumer to take upon themselves several distinctive forms of pro environmental behavior. The behavior focused on in this thesis is the non-activist public sphere behavior of purchasing organically produced food.

3.2.2 Norm-Activation Theory
The Norm-Activation Theory (NAT) (Schwartz 1977) has been used to explain the way an environmental concern is transformed into behavior. It considers external factors that are processed through a norm filter in order to predict behavior. The behavior may be influenced through personal and subjective norms. (Matthies, Selge et al. 2012) found the NAT model to have predictive power when studying recycling behavior in children aged eight to ten in Germany. The study showed that both the subjective norm of parents as well as the activation of personal norms through communication of the problem had influence on the children’s behavior. In another study, (Biel and Thøgersen 2007) describes the activation of norms in social dilemmas. They find that the activation of norms is typically unconscious, and once established it will create a basis on which further decision making will rely upon. The Norm-Activation theory has been applied to the extended Value-Belief-Norm theory as the final antecedent of behavior.

3.3 Section conclusion
All theories included have in common that they have shown explanatory power in studies regarding sustainable consumption. When researching earlier studies on sustainable behavior, it is apparent that Theory of Planned Behavior and the Value-Belief-Norm theory are those most commonly applied. It seems that rational theories are most commonly applied, despite of the moral considerations presumably undertaken when deciding upon acts influencing the environment. This lack of moral theories is the reason for including the Norm-Activation Theory despite of its appearance in the Value-Belief-Norm theory. Moral and rational considerations of respectively rational and moral-based theories will be discussed later on in the thesis.
## 4. Table 1: Literature overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Aim of study</th>
<th>Summary of results</th>
<th>Theory and method</th>
<th>Important findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Kaiser, Hübner et al. 2005)</td>
<td>Contrasting TPB and VBN in explaining conservationist behavior.</td>
<td>TPB beats VBN in explanation value. Moral is possibly integrated into attitude in TBP. VBN is also successful.</td>
<td>TPB and VBN. N=468 students in German university.</td>
<td>TPB: PBC explains the largest amount of BI. VBN: PN was the most influential variable on behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Arvola, Vassallo et al. 2008)</td>
<td>Predicting intentions to purchase organic food by applying moral the TPB.</td>
<td>Positive moral attitude, defined as self-rewarding for doing the right thing had an impact. Respondents were more positive towards organic apples than pizza.</td>
<td>TPB N=202 in Italy N=270 in Finland N=200 in UK</td>
<td>Attitude, subjective norm and moral attitude all showed significance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(López-Mosquera and Sánchez 2012)</td>
<td>Predicting WTP for suburban parks using TPB and VBN.</td>
<td>TPB beats VBN in explanation value and predicting power. Socio-economic profile was very influential on WTP. WTP diminishes with age (egocentric?).</td>
<td>TPB and VBN. N=194 visitors in suburban Spanish park.</td>
<td>TPB: PBC explains the largest amount of BI. VBN: Biospheric values beat altruistic values in explaining the NEP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Claudy, Peterson et al. 2012)</td>
<td>Exploring the gap between attitude and intention</td>
<td>TPB and VBN cannot explain the gap. Introduction of the Behavioral Reasoning Theory (BRT) provides understanding.</td>
<td>BRT. N=254</td>
<td>Reasoning for behavior affects only attitude, while reasoning against affects only intention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Study Description</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nie and Zepeda 2011</td>
<td>Studies purchase of organic food based on motivations of specific consumer groups</td>
<td>The study identified four consumer groups: rational, adventurous, careless and conservative/uninvolved. Adventurous consumers bought more organic food.</td>
<td>ABC. N=956 US food shoppers Proves that segmentation with regards to income and lifestyle might contribute to improve marketing of organic food.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power and Mont 2012</td>
<td>Review of studies on sustainable consumption from 2010 to 2012</td>
<td>The establishment of organic food as the new default choice when it comes to purchasing a food product is important in order to aid the environment.</td>
<td>A meta-analysis of studies on sustainable consumption from 2010-2012. Identifies the change of default choice towards sustainable consumption to be important to induce change.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarpa and Thiene 2011</td>
<td>Study on willingness to purchase organic carrots.</td>
<td>Threat recognition and fear appraisal proved significant when studying motivation to purchase organic food.</td>
<td>PMT N=240 Italian consumers Validates threat and fear as important motivations. Suggests health protection as incentive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


5. Other elements affecting the purchase of organic food

This section will evaluate elements likely to be considered by the consumer other than the obvious environmental damage presented by purchasing non-environmental food. While the theories presented in the overview section produces a number of model factors that arguably will have good explanation power regarding the purchase of organic food, this section will focus on elements directly related to organic food purchase and sustainable consumption in general. This is an important step in order to identify influences on decision-making that are distinctively related to organic consumption and thus give the developing model an edge when considering relevant factors compared to the existing models.

5.1 Social forces affecting organic consumption

There is currently an increasing awareness of consumption's impact on society (Jansson 2009). While ecological consumption has been studied for several decades, recent studies criticize the existing literature of viewing human behavior as exclusively rational and economical, represented by the Theory of Planned Behavior. The reaction, in form of the Value-Belief-Norm theory focuses on personal values, beliefs and norms to explain behavior. This section will focus on underlying causes of environmental friendly behavior.

5.1.1 Organic food consumption as a social dilemma

Jansson argues that the problem of people not purchasing organic food should be viewed as a social dilemma. The prisoners dilemma (Dawes 1980), is a good illustration of this subject. Consumers are mutually dependent of each other to make the ‘right’ choice in order to get a good outcome, in other words a sustainable environment. If one consumer takes the ‘cheap’ route, and buys normal food products, the person making the ‘right’ choice will suffer. While all consumers might want to make the ‘right’ choice, many don’t, believing that other consumers will do the same thing. By thinking this way, the long term loss of the group will be substantial, in form of a destroyed planet (or equal long sentence, with regard to the prisoner’s dilemma). The fact that some consumers still buy organic products, favors the Value-Belief-Norm theory over TPB. By this argumentation there ought to be moral considerations and altruistic values included in the equation. Following this train of thought, it would be essential to convince consumers that other people are purchasing organic food.

5.1.2 Organic food consumption as a trend

On the other side one might argue that environmentalism, and especially the purchase of high cost organic products to be influenced by a trend and image factor (Black, Stern. et al. 1985). They suggest that an alteration in consumer attitude can contribute to the purchase and consumption of environmentally friendly products. The relatively high cost of organic food may increase consumption as some view it as a symbol of wealth and provide them with the increasingly valuable image of a guardian of the environment. The benefits of this label, although creating a market amongst the financial elite, may be target for criticism. For the
environment to benefit, it is important that as many as possible buy organic products. Some people may be inclined to stop purchasing organic food if it became a mainstream adoption.

5.1.3 Sustainable lifestyle in an unsustainable world
A strong trend in current research is analysis of the barriers faced by consumers who identify themselves as “green”, which means that they have knowledge about sustainable lifestyle, are highly motivated and are taking some action (Power and Mont 2012). All research show that these people are not able to conduct all the environmentally friendly behavior they aspire to. Research also finds that green consumers find it difficult to lead a lifestyle different from their peers. In addition it is clear that leading an unsustainable lifestyle is not associated with any taboo, and often the reverse is true which leads green consumers to feel obliged to justify their choices. There are also reports stating that green consumers found it easier to conduct sustainable behavior when residing in an “eco-village” with likeminded inhabitants. It is therefore reason to believe that society as a whole will have to change in order for sustainability to have a significant effect on the environment. (Power and Mont 2012) suggest that social advertisement in order to change consumers’ attitude towards environmentally friendly products will be important in order to establish sustainable consumption as the default lifestyle option.

5.1.4 Laws and regulations
Many argue that governments have taken little action in trying to change consumer behavior. The policies that do exist focus mainly on the promotion of green consumption, rather than fighting unsustainable consumption (Power and Mont 2012). It is argued that green consumption yields a higher impact on the environment than no consumption at all. While it would be possible for government to force people into sustainable consumption, this is likely to trigger massive protests. Therefore it is likely to yield more of a result if government policies were aiming at reconstructing social norms in order to diminish social barriers and future resistance on restrictive policies on unsustainable behavior. In extension to the previous section on a sustainable lifestyle in an unsustainable world, there is reason to imply that laws and regulations should enforce organic consumption as the default option.

5.1.5 Media and entertainment
While impact from media and entertainment businesses are not as direct as government policies, they are arguably just as intrusive and powerful when attempting to change consumer behavior (Power and Mont 2012). The consumer’s values and perceptions are shaped constantly through the day, and as the consumption of different forms of media is a common occurrence in many lives, there must be a significant amount of potential for the media to aid the environment. On the contrary, the greatest ten business movies ranked by Forbes all depict nature as a resource that should be exploited for financial gain. There is no doubt about the power possessed by the media, and it does undoubtedly contribute to the establishment of values and beliefs in the general public.
5.2 Individual traits influencing organic consumption

There is reason to believe that personality traits may influence the consumer’s attitude towards purchase of organic food. When it comes to technological products, there is for example a group of people characterized as early adopters. It is logical to believe that people that refrain from trying new things will have problems adjusting to purchasing products of a new kind, in this case organic food. Identifying personality traits and their relation to organic food purchase would presumably enhance understanding of purchasing decisions in relation to organic food.

5.2.1 Neophobia

Neophobia is defined as the fear of new things or experiences, and might act as a barrier for people to engage in organic consumerism. As an example the low intake of fruits and vegetables by children has found to be based upon neophobia. Neophobia is defined as a low food involvement trait, and is likely to have a negative impact on attitudes and intentions towards purchasing organic food. It is suggested that information about organic food is promoted to mitigate food suspicion for those who are affected by food neophobia (Chen 2007).

5.2.2 High food involvement

People with high food involvement are people who are genuinely interested in food and pay much more attention to their attributes. It is believed that consumers who care more about food will generate a more positive attitude towards the benefits of organic food than of those with low food involvement exemplified by neophobia (Chen 2007). The reason for this is that people with high food involvement tend to eat healthier and spend more time preparing and consuming food products.

5.3 Reduced consumption versus organic consumption

This section is presented as critique to the demand for organic consumption. The reason for including this section is to illuminate the alternative to organic consumption. While the purchase of organic food is initially a good thing, some researches argue that a reduction in consumption will have as much of a positive impact on the environment. Imagine writing on both sides of a normal piece of paper as opposed to only using one side of an organic piece of paper. The environmental effect of reduced consumption has potential to make a great impact in itself. When considering organic food which due to the lack of chemicals often has a shorter expiration date, there is a tradeoff between going to the grocery store two times a week to buy organic food and going once a week to buy regular food products. The consumer might end up harming the environment more by driving to the grocery store an additional time instead of buying regular food. Research has proved to disregard unintended sustainable consumerism in form of lower consumption and values often displayed in by former generations in form of thrift and frugality. Looking at the issue from this point of view, the purchase of organic food is not necessarily sustainable consumption (Power and Mont 2012).
5.4 Section conclusion

While definitely relevant for the purchase of organic food, these elements act like guiding indicators of what might influence a purchasing decision. As an example, laws and regulations will influence behavioral control in the Theory of Planned Behavior, and by extension there is no need to include laws and regulations directly into the model. When it comes to individual food involvement traits, they are not easy to change, and will undoubtedly have an impact on the consumers attitude towards organic food. While not influential enough to become variables in a model, several of the elements discussed in this section might be included in a questionnaire, as respectively questions on contextual factors and attitudes for the examples given here. The diversity and intricacy of the elements presented in this section clearly illustrates the magnitude of considerations possibly affecting the purchase of organic food. This also calls for an extension of the existing models in an attempt to illuminate this issue.

6. Elaboration on the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Value-Belief-Norm theory

When studying the vast amount of material on consumer behavior with regard to sustainability in general as well as studies on behavior regarding organic food, it is clear that there are two theories used much more frequently than others, namely the Theory of Planned Behavior (Kaiser, Hübner et al. 2005, Arvola, Vassallo et al. 2008, López-Mosquera and Sánchez 2012) and the Value-Belief-Norm theory (Stern 2000, Kaiser, Hübner et al. 2005, López-Mosquera and Sánchez 2012). In this section the two theories will be elaborated on beyond the description presented in the introduction and in the brief description of the theories.

6.1 Evaluation and extension of variables in the Theory of Planned Behavior

In this section, the aim is to elaborate on and evaluate the variables in order to identify alterations and implications that might enhance the performance of the model in relation to studies on organic food consumption. When it comes to moral as a factor, it is excluded from the model. One might argue that moral implications will be covered to some degree by the existing variables, but when it comes to the issue of organic food, which implies personal costs in order to serve the greater good of society, one might argue that the introduction of moral is essential. By this assumption, this section will cover the possibilities for the inclusion of moral considerations as well as other aspects into the model.
6.1.1 Attitude towards behavior

The consumer’s attitude towards a behavior is traditionally through TPB, portrayed as a cognition process where the rational consumer evaluates pros and cons associated with the behavior in question. Studies criticizing the use of TPB in moral-related issues, such as the consumption of organic food, argue that the model does not incorporate morale in its equation. Others argue that moral evaluations are incorporated into the variable of attitude towards behavior, and that the model is suited for studies without alterations.

6.1.1.1 Moral considerations as a part of AB

From a philosophical point of view, a situation is considered to be morally relevant when one’s self interest and the interest of others are at odds with each other (Kaiser, Hübner et al. 2005). Given the rational-based nature of this variable, it will be relevant to look at the consequence of a moral breach, rather than the moral consideration itself. This is a logical implementation in accordance with the rational nature of the TPB, although it is a soft a practically immeasurable value. The argument is that the rational human is also aware of emotions and their impact on their wellbeing, and thus the bad feeling related to an immoral action will be taken into consideration. This argumentation works towards negative moral implications, and it has been shown that positive moral attitudes have significance beyond general attitude towards behavior (Arvola,
Vassallo et al. 2008). This implies that instead of inducing guilt as a motivation to purchase organic food, consumers must be made aware of the positive aspects of purchasing organic food, rather than the negative consequences related to not engaging in the behavior.

6.1.1.2 Attitude-behavior gap

Research has identified a gap in sustainable consumption where the consumer’s attitude does not reflect their behavior when it comes to purchasing and adopting environmentally friendly products (Claudy, Peterson et al. 2012). This presents a definite problem for the Theory of Planned Behavior and its successful implementation in areas concerning green consumption. It is definitely important to detect the cause of this mismatch, and either eliminate or discover a way to navigate around it in order for producers of green goods to sell their products. There are also arguments (Claudy, Peterson et al. 2012) that the void discovered between attitude and behavior is caused by perceived or actual barriers relating to convenience, product performance (in the case of green food, conservation date, taste etc.), benefits to environment and of course cost. The factor regarding benefits to environment is especially significant, as one is not likely as a consumer to notice a decline in pollution after purchasing an organic cucumber because effects on the environment are only noticeable on the aggregate, i.e. when many consumers perform the same behavior.

When it comes to explaining the gap between attitude and intention, (Claudy, Peterson et al. 2012) found that by including reason as a variable by using the Behavioral Reasoning Theory (Westaby 2005) influencing both attitude and intention in different ways, the gap could be explained. The peculiarities of the findings are intriguing and it shows that reasons for behavior influenced attitude positively, but had no impact on intention. Conversely reasons against behavior have no impact on attitude, but have a negative impact on intention. There is a possibility to include the aspect of reasoning into the TPB model, and by doing so hopefully improving its explanation power.

6.1.2 Subjective norms

When it comes to subjective norms, it is arguably the most altruistic variable of the TPB. It focuses on the expected reaction of behavior of significant individuals in the consumer’s surroundings. In the example in the brief description presented earlier, this variable is likely to have a major impact if one or several of the significant individuals were environmental activists. On the other hand, this variable could be insignificant or even have a negative impact if those significant others have predisposition against organic food. With this consideration in mind, the variable might not be positively correlated to altruistic values at all.

6.1.2.1 Moral considerations as a part of SN

Drawing upon the arguments of the last section, there seems to be no impact of moral when considering individuals important to the consumer. However, when considering the wellbeing of the significant others, moral evaluations might come into play. If one defines social norms as the consideration and care of loved ones, there is a presumably a wish from the consumer that people they care about live in a healthy
environment. In this sense there is reason to believe that social norms are likely to have a major impact on consumer behavior in relation to purchase of organic food and other environmentally friendly behavior for that matter. The likeliness that a parent would like to suffer a nominal financial expense in order to brighten the future of their offspring must presumably be very high.

6.1.3 Perceived behavioral control

Behavioral control is initially the consumer’s perception of one’s physical and financial ability to conduct a behavior. When it comes to organic food, this determinant would appear to rely mostly on financial ability, in order to bear the economic burden of additional costs. In addition, physical circumstances may come into play in form of accessibility to organic food in the local supermarket, and the additional distance traveled in order to obtain organic food.

6.1.3.1 Perceived behavioral control as two separate constructs

Some argue that perceived behavioral control consists of two separate constructs (Sparks, Guthrie et al. 1997). The concept behind this is that the variable is made up of two factors, namely perceived difficulty and perceived control. Perceived difficulty involves the skills and abilities that the consumer has, and is believed by them to influence the degree of personal control over the behavior in question. Perceived difficulty on the other hand, covers the effect of external factors, such as time, availability and recognition (Chen 2007). In other words, PBC can be split into external and internal factors. Examples of this when it comes to organic food might show themselves as the additional time required seeking out and purchasing organic products and as the individual’s ability to handle and prepare a meal based on unfamiliar ingredients.

6.1.3.2 Moral considerations as part of BC

There is reason to believe that the consumer’s morale might present itself as a barrier when it comes to controlling behavior. As an example, the consumer might have trouble buying a non-organic apple while an organic apple is placed right next to it. In this sense, loss of behavioral control in form of the consumer’s moral attributes might have a negative impact when it comes to the process of purchasing non-organic products. In other words, it will contribute to the consumer buying organic food.

6.1.4 Extensions to the Theory of Planned Behavior in relation to the purchase of organic food

Based on the analysis conducted in the previous sections, there are indications that both moral considerations and reasoning would be able to produce a significant contribution to the TPB-model when it comes to analyzing decision-making in relation to organic food.
Figure 2: Extension of TPB-model with regards to the purchase of organic food

6.1.5 Section conclusion

The Theory of Planned Behavior certainly leaves room for moral considerations in the model. The question is whether or not moral considerations are made within the construct of the original model. The success of the original theory in explaining behaviors strongly related to moral considerations point in the direction that it is able to incorporate moral into its framework. However, this does not mean that an introduction of moral will be unsuccessful in granting additional explanatory power. In addition, the inclusion of positive and negative reasoning on attitude towards behavior and intention respectively will likely improve the model.

6.2 Evaluation and extension of variables in the Value-Belief-Norm theory

When evaluating these variables one has to take a different initial stance, as the theory is developed to deal with cases concerning moral dilemmas. The new stance is going to evaluate how the lack of rational thinking might influence the model negatively when predicting the purchase of organic food, because there is no doubt that rationale will affect a decision that has strong financial consequences.
6.2.1 Values

Values can generally be classified as biospheric, altruistic and egocentric. The two former values will in general benefit the environment, as they are values towards the wellbeing of respectively our planet and nature and other people. The latter value will in general induce non-environmental behavior, as the definition of environment is all existing entities except for the individual. The non-environmental behavior described as a consequence of egocentric values might not be true in all situations. As described earlier some might purchase organic food in order to show financial muscles and gain social recognition.

6.2.1.1 Biospheric values versus altruistic values

While somewhat similar, biospheric values have proved to be more influential than altruistic values when it comes to considerations regarding the wellbeing of the environment (López-Mosquera and Sánchez 2012). This is somewhat peculiar, since one of the most used arguments for environmental conservation is the encouragement to “think of the children” that will inherit the environment we create. The previous example is of altruistic character, and this is in conflict with the earlier statement of the importance of biospheric values. Biospheric values are grounded in the consideration of nature as an external entity, and its existence separated from the contribution it makes to enhance the lives of ourselves (egocentric) and others (altruistic). There seems to be no rational foundation for this phenomenon to exist, and as it does, this emphasizes the importance of moral-based factors when explaining environment-related behavior.

6.2.1.2 Rational considerations as part of values

The rational considerations as part of values may present itself in several ways. Altruistic versus egocentric values might be modified by the considerations of actions of others. For example if a person with strong altruistic values keeps getting oppressed because everyone else has strong egocentric values, that person might come to realize that in order to ‘survive’ he or she would have to alter their values.
6.1.2 Beliefs

In the case of organic food, belief will in the case of the ecological world view (NEP) be towards the consumer’s understanding of the environmental impact food production has on the planet. While some might believe that the whole world should eat organic produce in order for the environment to survive, others might think that the world does not have the capacity to supply every person with organic food. These beliefs differ a whole lot, and while they both might be true, the former is definitely more likely to purchase organic food. When it comes to the adverse consequences of valued objects (AC), it focuses on the adverse consequences of not eating organic food. While some might believe that the world will become uninhabitable in the near future if people don’t eat organic food, others might believe that the temperature and sea level will rise, bringing their home closer to the beach and provide more beach-going weather. The latter example is of course not very reflected upon, but it illustrates the impact of perceived consequences. In the end there is the perceived ability to reduce threats (AR). While some might strongly believe in the bandwagon effect, and assume that for every new organic food consumer there will follow two more, those individuals are likely to perceive to have a great ability to have an impact on the situation. On the other hand, some will think that they by purchasing organic food will have no impact but their own minimal contribution will probably not purchase organic food.

6.1.2.1 Beliefs versus reasoning

The belief section of the VBN theory focuses merely on general beliefs and not so much on particular cognition and reasoning on particular subjects. When faced with a particular decision, the consumer is, according to the VBN model, drawing upon their general beliefs when forming their personal norm on the matter. (Claudy, Peterson et al. 2012) argues that this weakens the explanation power of the VBN theory, as individuals will reason and make a mental list of pros and cons regarding any decision. According to the Behavioral Reasoning Theory (Westaby 2005), reasoning is done based on beliefs, and that this calls for an extension of the VBN model in form of the introduction of reason as a result of beliefs and as a predecessor of norms.

6.1.2.2 Rational considerations as part of beliefs

Beliefs are already arguably the most rational variables in the VBN theory, as it considers explicit cognition in the shape of NEP, AC and AR. By this statement there is bound to be a conflict between values and rationale inside the belief variable. The conflict would be to what degree rational thinking and deduction is distorted by the consumer’s values. If someone is particularly egocentric, and is trying to form their beliefs against the NEP, and extensive knowledge about the individual’s role in aiding the environment is presented, there would presumably emerge some sort of alteration in favor of the environment. This is of course dependent on the individual’s openness for new information and other determinants, but it is unlikely that every individual will form an ecological worldview based solely on their own intrinsic values.
6.2.3 Norms
The norm variable describes the consumer’s self-ascribed obligation to act. In conjunction with the theme of this thesis it would be the obligation to choose organic food whenever available. A consumer’s norm is thought to be the direct antecedent of intention, which in turn leads to behavior. By this train of thoughts a norm towards purchasing organic food would lead the consumer to do just that, but that is not always the case. Other, more likely personal norms would be to purchase organic food when it does not impact the consumer financially. This is a more likely scenario, as there is bound to be an individual price limit for each consumer, which in turn leads to the abandonment of the organic food product and the purchase of a non-organic alternative which is illustrated in the following section.

6.2.3.1 Rational considerations as part of norms
One of the things differentiating human beings from other creatures is the ability to have several agendas at the same time. A hungry dog will generally think only of means to acquire food, while humans will to some extent be able to tend to other matters simultaneously. Say for example that a consumer feels obligated to purchase organic food, which is reasonable to believe that applies to everyone to some degree. That same consumer might also be interested in paying down on their mortgage or having their favorite product brand at the same time. The consumers self-ascribed obligations towards their personal economy and taste buds might be stronger than the one towards the environment and as a result the consumer will choose the low cost or commercial alternative. By following this logic there is clear evidence of rational thinking within norms and in the VBN theory in general.

6.2.4 Extensions to the Value-Belief-Norm theory in relation to the purchase of organic food
The VBN theory has a strong moral framework, but it fails somewhat with regards to the complex nature of the human cognition and decision process. Considering aspects from both the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Behavioral Reasoning Theory, they each contribute with another dimension for the Value-Belief-Norm theory.

6.2.4.1 Reasoning
The process of reasoning when making a decision is described in the BRT and it makes sense to add it into the VBN model as well. As reasoning has proved to be a relevant variable that forms on the background of beliefs, it makes sense to integrate it into the model. In the VBN model, norm is described as the direct antecedent of behavior, but as attitude in TPB and norm in VBN are somewhat related, there is grounds to include intention into the VBN model. The reason for this is simply the evidence claiming that reasoning affects attitude and intention differently, and therefore norm and intention cannot perform optimal as one variable. As mentioned when discussing the Theory of Planned Behavior, reasoning for a behavior has a positive impact on attitude (norm) and negative impact on intention. Therefore it will be added a joint into the model in form of intention and the impact of reason in relation to norm and intention respectively.
6.2.4.2 Rationale

When it comes to rational considerations in the VBN theory, there is reason to believe that it will have an influence in every stage of the process. The argumentation behind this statement is straight forward, as there is bound to be some degree of rational thinking in a decision process. Under rationale there are three forms represented by cognition, external factors and conflicting interests. Cognition will simply be described as consideration of factual knowledge presented and then recognized by the consumer which will lead it to be taken into consideration. External factors are a representation of the behavior of others in other words how other people act on environmental issues and the influence on their behavior on the behavior of the consumer. Finally there is the issue of conflicting interests, where other desires may come in conflict with the environmental behavior in question.

Figure 4: Extension of the VBN-model with regards to the purchase of organic food

6.2.5 Section conclusion

As mentioned earlier, the purchase of organic food is somewhat a moral dilemma, but as it includes a financial burden as a consequence of behavior, there is reason to claim that rational considerations are also to be made when deciding upon the behavior. Intention is included to incorporate both rationale and reasoning as the consumer is likely to deviate from personal norms to some degree when making rational considerations.

7. Towards a collective theory

The purpose of this section is to establish a framework containing the most important determinants for organic food consumption. Based on the findings of this thesis, there has been constructed a model containing influential variables. The model is presented at the end of this introduction and will be followed by individual sections for each variable in order to offer an understanding of the underlying arguments for
the construction of the model framework. The variables will be described in reverse order, from purchase decision and all the way back to the intrinsic principles of the consumer. This is done in order to enhance the ease of explanation of the model, similar to a family tree where one starts at the current person and counts backwards to understand the cause of a purchase, in this example the parents of a person, until all relevant causes of the purchase is uncovered. The model builds to a great extent on the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Value-Belief-Norm theory, with some additions from other theories that have proved influential in situations of purchase behavior related to environmental impact and is therefore deemed applicable to the purchase of organic food.

![Diagram of the model framework]

**Figure 5: New collective theory**

### 7.1 Model overview

This is an extensive model containing a high number of factors with the potential to grant explanatory power in an analysis. The model may be considered a draft, where the variables not granting further insight are removed. It is presumably better to include excessive variables rather than excluding significant ones. The links included between certain variables in the model are also suggestive, as to an indication of where there might be significant correlations and with some arguments as to why a correlation might appear.

### 7.2 Model framework

The model itself consists of a number of main factors created on the basis of several sub-factors derived from other theories, mainly the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Value-Belief-Norm theory. The basic thought behind the model is the idea that general values impact the way the consumer interprets both internal and external factors when forming an opinion. This opinion is named personal view on behavior, and is the direct antecedent of intention and ultimately behavior. However there are some sub-factors having an individual influence on intention and behavior respectively, namely negative reasoning and actual context. The reason for this will be elaborated on in the model description below.
7.3 Purchase organic food (behavior)

According to studies examined and the models explained in the thesis, there are two main causes for purchasing organic food, namely intention and context. The process of purchasing organic food is defined as the exchange of currency for a product developed in accordance with local regulations concerning production of organic goods. According to the ABC-model (Guagnano, Stern et al. 1995), the combined yield from attitudes (approximated to intentions in this model) and context will determine the execution of a behavior. To exemplify we give these to parameters numeric values, with 0 being neutral. If the consumers attitude towards purchasing organic products ends up at -0.2 after considering financial (negative) and environmental (positive) impact, and the context variable is 0.3 after considering people impacted by environment (positive), time spent and dismay suffered from acquiring the product (negative). The consumer will then end up at 0.1 and therefore purchase the product. This is of course if the consumer pays similar attention to both intention and context, and if the consumer weights their intentions twice as strong as context, the result would be -0.1 and the consumer will not purchase the product.

Intention → Behavior

In the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen 1991), intention is considered the direct antecedent of behavior because it is the desired behavior of the consumer. Intention is considered the best predictor of behavior (Ajzen 1991, van Hooft, Born et al. 2005). To exemplify the validity of intention as a predictor of behavior consider the following question: Are you going to buy organic milk the next time you are grocery shopping? If the recipient of the question replies positively, then the consumer will arguably purchase organic milk, and the opposite is of course the case if the reply is negative. For some reason this is not always the case, clearly illustrated by the mentioned 40% attitude and 4% actual behavior in relation to the purchase of organic food (UN 2005). This mentioned gap is of course between attitude and behavior, but as intention originates in some degree from attitude there is reason to believe that other forces come into play. To illuminate this gap, the model contains the context factor derived from the ABC model (Guagnano, Stern et al. 1995).

Context → Behavior

In the TPB there is some influence from the factor named perceived behavioral control, which relates to the context factor in this model. When considering the example from the last section concerning the gap between intention and behavior, contextual factors such as limitations of availability and time will all have a possibility to influence the purchase of organic food. Say a consumer grows hungry and desires a hamburger, said consumer might favor an organic home-made burger but will instead seek out a nearby fast-food restaurant to get a hamburger that is already made. If on the other hand, the consumer still goes for the organic alternative, he or she will have to travel to a grocery store that offers all of the hamburger’s ingredients in organic products and spend time preparing the meal. Context may also include other external factors in form of other individuals involved in the purchasing process, mental and physical obstacles and
time barriers presenting themselves when seeking to conduct a behavior. The reason for having context influence both personal view on behavior and behavior is that there are, according to TPB, behavioral control and perceived behavioral control. Behavioral control will be translated to actual context, and this is the context that exists regardless of whether the consumer realizes it or not. Perceived behavioral control will be translated to perceived context and will be elaborated on later. Following this logic, the actual context will affect behavior while the perceived context will affect personal view on behavior.

7.4 Intention

Intention is by many theories believed to be the main predictor of behavior, but as mentioned there might be some obstacles between intention and behavior. Nonetheless intention, as it is what the consumer wants, will still be an important factor in predicting behavior.

Negative reasoning → Intention

Negative reasoning has, conversely to positive reasoning, proved to have an impact on intention. (Claudy, Peterson et al. 2012) This has some implications and is likely to be responsible for some of the often seen gap between attitude and intention. A consumer might reason that if they purchase organic food, they will not afford to pay rent.

Positive reasoning → Personal view on behavior → Intention

This section is included here to clarify what happens to positive reasoning. Positive reasoning has shown to have significant impact on attitude towards the behavior, but not on intention. On the contrary the negative reasoning has no impact on attitude but solely on intention (Claudy, Peterson et al. 2012).

Personal norms → Intention

Personal norms affect intention in the way the consumer view themselves as well as the way they believe they should act (Schwartz 1977, Stern 2000). A person may feel obligated to undertake a certain action based on their personal norms. If the consumer’s personal norms point in favor of purchasing organic products, this is going to increase intention and ultimately lead to the consumer being more likely to purchase organic products. Personal norms are not likely to change, and is therefore an important factor when trying to make people change their habits.

Attitude towards behavior → Intention

Attitude towards behavior differs from personal norms in that the attitude is made up for each separate behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975, Ajzen 1991). When it comes to organic food as opposed to an environmentally friendly car, it is arguably not as important to shape the attitude towards the behavior. The argument behind this is that for this model, attitudes will fluctuate and therefore it will be more important to shape personal norms as opposed to attitude. However, attitude will have a significant impact on the behavior in question, and if positive, is likely to induce behavior. When considering the environmentally
friendly car, which is a purchasing decision with a higher impact on the environment, a positive attitude leading to purchase will have long term effect. All in all, the attitude towards behavior is likely to influence intention, as the consumer is more likely to want to buy something it likes rather than something it dislikes.

7.5 Personal view on behavior
This term is derived when incorporating personal norm and attitude towards behavior into one common description fit to predict intentions. Personal norm represents the moral obligation to act while attitude towards behavior incorporates the rational process behind the consumer’s personal view on the behavior. The weighting of personal norm and attitude towards behavior will vary between individuals based on personality. Spontaneous individuals will be more inclined to shape their intentions more on the specific attitude perceived towards a given behavior compared to people that are more norm-induced in their actions.

7.5.1 Personal norms
This factor is drawn from the Value-Belief-Norm theory, and it follows the same basic principles. It is as mentioned, the consumer’s self-ascribed obligation to act. These obligations are not likely to fluctuate too much as they build upon intrinsic values of the consumer. Therefore, personal norms are often shaped in advance of the occurrence of the decision making process, and is therefore more deeply rooted in the consumer. The process of shaping the consumers personal norms arguably requires more profound impressions.

Positive Reasoning → Personal Norms
As discovered (Claudy, Peterson et al. 2012), only positive reasoning has an influence on attitude towards behavior, which is the Theory of Planned Behavior’s equivalent of the personal norms factor. By this deduction positive reasoning will also have an impact on personal norms. Following the example given in the reasoning section, the reasoning that one’s personal contribution is negligible will not impact personal norms, while the reasoning attributing the bandwagon-effect will affect personal norms.

Fear → Personal Norms
This factor, originating from the Protection Motivation Theory (Rogers 1975) utilizes fear as a tool in order to understand and ultimately alter consumer behavior. The way that fear impacts personal norm, is that it induce a need to take action to reduce the threat resulting in fear. The consumer might be afraid of pesticides, and is therefore more inclined to purchase organic food in order to cope with the threat.

Beliefs → Personal Norms
As in the VBN theory, beliefs shape the personal norms. If someone believes that the world is about to go under if nothing is done in terms of environmental action, that person is likely to feel obligated to consume in a way that does not harm the environment, in this case purchasing organic food. On the other hand, if the person believes that the environment is not in danger because of ill consumption, he or she is not likely to
ascribe themselves the responsibility to consume in an environmentally friendly way. This is the reason that personal norms are not likely to fluctuate, as beliefs generally does not change a lot when first obtained.

*Social norms → Personal norms*
Social norms relate to personal norms in that they are norms, in other words that they describe the default considerations. If the opinion of others are important to the consumer, they are likely to incorporate other peoples thoughts, and by extension norms, into the equation when forming their own personal norm. This can easily be illustrated by a relationship where one part is purchasing organic food by personal norm. If the other part is indifferent about organic food but considers social norms to any degree, that person will likely form a personal norm towards purchasing organic food.

*Perceived context → Personal norms*
This correlation is presumably weaker, as context relates more to situational aspects of the behavior, while personal norms are formed over a period of time. However, if the perceived context seems to constantly disfavor purchasing organic food, the consumer might incorporate this into their personal norms, establishing the perception that it is difficult to acquire organic food.

### 7.5.2 Attitude towards behavior
In the Theory of Planned Behavior and other rationale based theories on consumer behavior, attitude towards behavior is regarded as a solid influence on intention. This variable contains all of the consumer’s presumptions about the behavior and the following consequences of the behavior. For instance the consumer might perceive that consumption of organic food improves health and benefits the environment, but that it in turn will make a significant dent in their budget. Their attitude will then be formed based on the weight of the respective variables set by the consumer. If health and environment is relatively unimportant compared to financial strength, the consumer’s attitude will lean away from organic food purchase.

*Personal norms → Attitude towards behavior*
Personal norms, while to some degree the equivalent of attitude towards behavior, covers the sense of obligation discussed earlier. If the consumer feels that it should act in a certain way related to the behavior, this will presumably influence their attitude towards said behavior. Personal norms are formed prior to the recognition of the behavioral decision. This is the reason for including the link from personal norms to attitude towards behavior instead of excluding it or linking it the other way around.

*Positive reasoning → Attitude towards behavior*
As discussed earlier, only positive reasoning will have an effect on behavior. This means that attitude as well as personal norms will be artificially high before considering intention, as intention is directly influenced by negative reasoning and only indirectly influenced by positive reasoning through personal view on behavior.
When considering fear and the Protection Motivation Theory in relation to attitude towards behavior, they operate in different time spans. The PMT seeks to provide means to change behavior permanently, and therefore links better with personal norms. Nonetheless fear might also be a temporary occurrence and occasionally be triggered in relation to a certain situation, whether it is related to a certain product or the means utilized to conduct a behavior.

Beliefs → Attitude towards behavior
Beliefs are in some sense related to personal norms in that they build on existing presumptions on factors related to the behavior. The way beliefs influence attitude towards behavior is that the consumers form their attitude according to their beliefs about how their behavior may influence the environment. This is quite similar to the impact of beliefs on personal norms, but they will differ in the sense that attitudes are likely to fluctuate more than personal norms. When acting on this presumption, it is possible to infer that beliefs will not only impact attitude through social norms, but also directly in any occurring behavioral decision. Say that an individual believes that the environment is in danger, and that their consumption behavior will impact the environment only through the bandwagon-effect. When shopping for groceries online the consumer is faced with the decision to purchase an organic apple versus a normal apple. The consumer plans to consume the apple when it is delivered, and recons that no one will see it. Therefore the consumer, contrary to their personal norms to purchase organic, will be inclined to purchase the normal apple as their behavior will according to their belief not affect the environment.

Social norms → Attitude towards behavior
Derived from the Theory of Planned Behavior, social norms are the impact of attitudes and influence of significant others when forming an attitude towards a behavior. It is clear that if a consumer is surrounded by people who regard the purchase organic food as an important behavior, he or she would be more inclined to form an attitude towards organic products based on how much regard they take to the opinion of said significant others.

Perceived context → Attitude towards behavior
This is again associated with the perceived ease or difficulty of conducting a behavior. Context will influence attitude towards behavior, since consumers are likely to put their surroundings into the equation when forming an attitude. This attitude is based on the perceived context as actual context only have an impact when performing behavior. When forming an attitude towards purchasing organic food, the consumer might evaluate their perception of such factors as trends and other positive incitements created by the context, as well as barriers presented by anti-trends or perceived physical limitations towards conducting the behavior.
7.6 Internal factors

This section will focus on internal factors and the influences that affect them. Internal factors are those influences on the personal view on behavior that are held by the consumer themselves. One can define them as beliefs and cognitions that are existent even if the individual has no interaction with others.

7.6.1 Reasoning

In the model, reasoning is divided into negative and positive reasoning, but these will be discussed simultaneously in this section as the outcome of the reasoning has nothing to do with the process. Reasoning can be defined as argumentation based on facts or premises (Westaby 2005). By definition reasoning has no antecedents, as it is presumed to be based upon factual premises. This is of course not always the case, as an individual’s perception of truth is subject of cognition, and will by some degree be influenced by that individual and its presumptions. Reasoning represents the utter rational concept in the model. When considering organic food, an individual might reason that their own consumption will not influence the global environment or that following the principles of the bandwagon-effect their consumption of organic products might have an impact after all. The reasoning process might therefore prove to be quite influential depending on the reasoning process and its conclusion.

General values → Reasoning

The general values of an individual will arguably make an impact on the reasoning process. If this was not the case, every individual in the same situation and context would end their reasoning process on the same conclusion. Egocentric values rooted in the consumer will have the possibility to steer the reasoning process into an outcome favoring their personal gain, while individuals with altruistic values would consider other entities when reasoning. The biospheric values will in the case of purchase of organic food have on the way the consumer views the possible impact from behavior.

External factors → Reasoning

When conducting a reasoning process, the consumer will be likely to take external factors into consideration. What the behavior would mean for other people and what other people do that will influence the outcome of the behavior will be reasonable elements to consider in any situation. If purchasing organic food will improve relationships with significant others, this will favor positive reasoning. On the other hand, if the non-environmental behavior of others limits the effect of the consumers own pro-environmental behavior which is likely to induce negative reasoning.

7.6.2 Fear

The realization of threats and consecutive establishment of fear is a strong human emotion. Change is often driven by fear and may therefore prove to become an important tool when seeking to change human behavior.
General values → Fear
Egocentric and altruistic values are not likely to induce fear directly, but they are in a good position to aid the consumer in realizing a threat. Biospheric values on the other hand may trigger fear of the environment suffering from the behavior. If for example the consumer believes that the world is about to suffer gravely from environmental damage, they are also likely to activate their egocentric and altruistic values in relation with their concern of the wellbeing of the environment as well as that of their own and others respectively.

External factors → Fear
According to the Protection Motivation Theory it is important to introduce the threat, when trying to alter the behavior of others through fear. When it comes to the purchase of organic food, this threat may be environmental destruction, consumption of pesticides or even social disapproval as a consequence of consuming non-organic food.

7.6.3 Beliefs
Beliefs are originally a part of the Value-Belief-Norm theory and it is built upon the consumer’s interpretation of adverse consequences of behavior and the perceived influence of their behavior in controlling these consequences.

Egocentric values → Beliefs
Also drawn from the VBN theory, egocentric values are those personal values that benefit the individual. A basic egocentric value could be that one self is more important than everyone else. Such values are likely to influence beliefs in that the recognition of consequences of others is disregarded either entirely or to some degree.

Altruistic values → Beliefs
Contrary to egocentric values, altruistic values are those personal values benefiting other entities than the individual. In the model, altruistic values are considered to contain aspects from biospheric values, where the values benefit the environment as well. An example of an altruistic value is that an individual believes that she or he should do whatever they can in order to aid those who are in trouble. Values are generally not this black and white, and every individual is likely to feature both egocentric and altruistic values with fluctuations regarding their respective weights.

Biospheric values → Beliefs
Depending on the way the consumer views the state of the environment will presumably have a great impact on the formation of their beliefs. Beliefs related to their own control of the outcome of the behavior will most likely originate in the ecological paradigm when the purchase of organic food with intent to aid the environment is considered. If the consumer cares for the environment, they will presumably form beliefs benefiting it.
**Social norms → Beliefs**

The influence of social norms on beliefs will be the beliefs held by significant others. If significant others believes and acts on the belief that their consumption of organic food is making a positive impact on the environment, this is likely to alter the behavior of the consumer in the same direction.

**Perceived context → Beliefs**

The society and its expectations are bound to influence beliefs to the degree that it is unanimous, in other words that the majority agrees that organic products will aid the environment. The facilitation of organic production by governments will also have the potential to alter beliefs in that the consumer recognizes the broad concern by society.

**7.7 External factors**

External factors are those influences coming from the surroundings of the consumer. The relative weighing between internal and external factors will vary between individuals. These influences may come in form of opinions of others or as physical barriers such as distance.

**7.7.1 Social norms**

Social norms is taken from the Theory of Planned Behavior and incorporates the consideration of significant others while deciding upon a behavior. The influence of others while deciding upon organic food purchase and environmentally friendly behavior in general has to be of importance, as an impact on the environment will affect everyone in it.

**Egocentric values → Social norms**

Egocentric values will have a negative impact on social norms because people with strong egocentric values are less likely to consider the opinion and wellbeing of significant others.

**Altruistic values → Social norms**

One important definition regarding influences on social norms, is that the opinion of significant others is not subject for change, but merely the considerations of these opinions and the wellbeing of significant others made by the consumer. It is easy to infer that people with strong altruistic values are more likely to add credibility and consideration to other people, especially those who are close to one self.

**Biospheric values → Social norms**

When the consumer is in possession of biospheric values, they will be more inclined to consider social norms benefiting the environment. Biospheric values must be considered very important in the case of purchase of organic food, and its impact on how the consumer perceives both external and internal factors is likely to be dependent on the care they give to the environment.
7.7.2 Context

Context in this model is divided into perceived context and actual context. The reason for doing this is the apparent gaps that might exist between what is perceived by an individual and what is actually the case. The elaboration of the context factor will somewhat more extensive as it consists of elements from the ABC-Theory (Guagnano, Stern et al. 1995), the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen 1991) and the Value-Belief-Norm Theory (Stern 2000).

ABC Theory → Context

Other than the name, the context variable inherits the attributes of those influential aspects that are uncontrollable for the consumer. Contextual factors can be both negative and positive according to the ABC Theory. Trends have the possibility to influence context in both directions dependent on the nature of the trend. Trends are of course just suggestive indications of what behavior that should be conducted. On a more concrete side the organic food retailer might be closed on weekends, disabling the consumer from purchasing organic food in that period of time.

Theory of Planned Behavior → Context

Although quite similar to the context variable of the ABC Theory, perceived behavioral control attributes more influence to the impact of behavioral control on the ability to perform behavior. As an example, people who believed that they were in control of whether or not they would be able to learn to ski, were significantly more successful in doing so (Ajzen 1991). One might argue that people who believed they would be able to master skiing might know that their motor skills are sufficient to conduct the behavior in question. The difference between ABC Theory and TPB is in other words that the former considers exterior factors as concrete and unenviable, whereas the latter views exterior factors as interactive and changeable. Behavioral control will influence the context of the behavioral decision making process, in that it offers a description of control factors hindering the consumer in undertaking behavior. Say that an individual would like to force everyone to purchase organic food, but unless said person is a dictator, he or she will have issues conducting this behavior. In a little less extreme example, a wife might desire certain organic products but is not responsible for the grocery shopping in the marriage, and is therefore in a weaker position than the husband when deciding on groceries.

Value-Belief-Norm Theory → Context

The perceived ability to reduce risk is somewhat similar to perceived behavioral control as it relies on the perception of the consumer. Conversely, the ability to reduce risk is also reliant on the ability of the action in question to have an impact on the matter of which the behavior is conducted in order to change. In other words, it doesn’t matter if it is very easy to access and purchase organic food, if it is not to the benefit of the environment. This brings depth to the context variable and it connects well with the ecological paradigm of the consumer as in the VBN model.
**Perceived Context**

Perceived context is simply described as the surrounding factors related to the behavior in question perceived by the consumer prior to the enactment of the behavior. Some behaviors are not generally influenced by context, such as switching off the light when leaving a room, and similar tasks. The perceived context factor is partly derived from the ABC model, but it also relies heavily on perceived behavioral control and perceived ability to reduce risk, from the Theory of Planned Behavior and Value-Belief-Norm theory respectively. When looking at this in an organic food example, there is the immediate perception of how easy or difficult it would be to acquire organic food. If one does not know where to shop for organic food, finding all desired groceries in organic alternatives might be difficult, or is perceived by the consumer to be difficult, and therefore weaken intention ultimately. Another point of view is to look at the reason for purchasing organic food, whether it is in benefit of one’s health or the environment. The perceived behavioral control of rescuing the environment is likely to be slim, and it is difficult to point out the difference of organic products on one’s health situation. Also, the perceived context is not necessary correct, and it is therefore a question of how this is formed. There is also room to argue that perceived context should be integrated into internal factors or even personal view on behavior, as it is the personal view on contextual factors. This however, is not done because of the ultimately external nature of context.

**General values → Perceived context**

The perception of context for every consumer is likely to be subject of distortion from general values held as well as the way they view the world and what they value in it. If they value only themselves, they are likely to perceive a great amount of barriers when considering purchasing organic food. On the other hand, if the consumer has values of compassion both with other people and the environment, they are more inclined to oversee barriers hindering themselves in taking action towards the greater good.

**Actual context**

This factor is not subject of any direct influence of the consumer, and describes the context as it is met by the consumer when attempting to conduct a behavior. The greater the similarity between perceived context by the consumer and actual context met by the consumer, the better the chance that the consumer can cope with contextual barriers. When undertaking research on consumer behavior regarding the purchase of organic food, it would be interesting to examine the relationship between perceived and actual context. This may reveal that many refrain from purchasing organic food due to large perceived barriers that does not exist to the degree imagined by the consumer.

**7.8 Section Conclusion**

Following the argumentation in this section, the new model should be able to grant additional explanatory power to a study of consumer behavior with regards to the purchase of organic food. The incorporation of reasoning together with the merger of the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Value-Belief-Norm theory
create a foundation for a strong theory when considering topics related to behavior concerning sustainable consumption and especially the purchase of organic food. The only way to grant the model credibility is to utilize it successfully in an actual study. Because of limitations surrounding the development of the thesis it is not possible to conduct a supportive study. Therefore, the validity of this new model is based solely on its theoretical abilities according to earlier studies.

8. Discussion
This section will consist of three subsections, namely results, critique and conclusion. The results section will draw upon the discoveries made and include a discussion of possible expansions to the thesis, as well as applications to other fields. The critique section will discuss the limitations of the thesis. Finally the conclusion will consider the outcome of the thesis and to what degree it has been successful in answering the research questions.

8.1 Results
When considering the research question, a number of valid theories fit to be included in a study on purchase of organic food were found. The Theory of Planned Behavior and the Value-Belief-Norm theory were most commonly utilized and consistently displayed significance. These theories however are not perfect, and through reviewing studies on sustainable consumption as well as other theories on consumer behavior, the thesis argues that there is room for improvement I both models. When it comes to important factors, there has been identified some external to the main theories mentioned earlier. Reasoning has been discussed and even integrated into TPB and VBN in the thesis. This was done based on the substantial gap discovered between attitude and intention (Westaby 2005, Claudy, Peterson et al. 2012). There are of course other influential factors, such as fear and context. While influential, and thus included in the new model presented in the thesis, fear and context may arguably be somewhat covered by beliefs and behavioral control respectively. When it comes to factors already in the theories, several studies on sustainable consumption show that perceived behavioral control is the most important determinant of behavior in TPB (Kaiser, Hübner et al. 2005, López-Mosquera and Sánchez 2012). In the VBN model, when it comes to values, it seemed that egocentric values was more important than altruistic values when looking at sustainable behavior (López-Mosquera and Sánchez 2012). It was also found, as the Value-Belief-Norm model implies, that personal norms were a strong indicator of behavior (Kaiser, Hübner et al. 2005).

Most studies utilizing the Theory of Planned Behavior ends up with attitude towards behavior representing the highest significance when predicting behavior. Studies on sustainable consumption however, yield significantly higher explanation value to perceived behavioral control. This might be an indication two things. One might argue that the TPB-model performs well, and that the alteration in factor weightings is a
sign of its versatility. On the other hand this shift in structure might indicate shortcomings, and that the model is in need of some extension to perform as intended.

When it comes to what was the most important of moral and rational considerations, the result is less conclusive. While the rational considerations, represented by the Theory of Planned Behavior, displayed the highest degree of significance when explaining behavior, the argument of moral considerations implicitly being a part of the TPB may be valid. Of course the same situation might be true for the Value-Belief-Norm theory, and this leaves this question without a definite conclusion other than both rational and moral considerations being significant.

While seeking to determine factors important for determining purchase of organic food, it became possible to combine the relevant variables into a new framework. The new model presented in the thesis is possibly applicable to several areas, while its main area of expertise should be deemed the purchase of organic food following the topic of discussion throughout the thesis. The model contains both rational and moral considerations, combined into one model to take into account the complex nature of the issue. The following figure is a simplification of the model, omitting the graphical illustration of the sub-factors of each category.

![Simplification of the new collective theory](image)

**Figure 6: Simplification of the new collective theory**

### 8.2 Limitations and further research

The target of this section is to identify limitations and shortcomings of the thesis when it comes to the use of sources, method and framework.

The sources build heavily on earlier developed theories and studies which have utilized these theories in order to confirm their hypothesis. While all sources are published peer-reviewed articles, they are, except from a few comparative studies (Kaiser, Hübner et al. 2005, López-Mosquera and Sánchez 2012) and some reviews (Biel and Thøgersen 2007, Power and Mont 2012), most of them are focused on one subject and one method, making comparative analysis difficult. By extension it is difficult to significantly prove what theories and factors outperform each other in predicting purchase of organic food.

The method used in the thesis is based solely upon existing material as mentioned above. The problem with this is that the potential for new discoveries are limited to theoretical alterations. If the thesis was based upon field research it would arguably have the potential to uncover additional information. The explanation of
existing theories and their influences may be existing knowledge to the seasoned market analysis, and by extension the thesis will bring less new knowledge to those individuals. The production of a new model as the thesis product is based on logical deduction grounded in earlier studies, and thus it does not bring something entirely new to the table.

Following the discussion concerning the limitations of the thesis, further research may be conducted on a practical level. Utilizing the new theory presented in a study on consumer behavior while considering the purchase of organic food would not only grant new knowledge but also grant validity to the developed model.

If considering conducting further research in the theoretical field, an expansion of the model to other fields regarding moral implications should present themselves. Fields presenting similar considerations in terms of moral responsibility versus financial gain not related to sustainable consumption could be issues of tax avoidance and considerations concerning charity donations.

8.3 Conclusion
Arguably the most important consideration when drawing a conclusion upon the thesis is its success in answering the research questions presented in the introduction. The main target of the thesis was to identify those factors and models most effective in describing consumer behavior related to the purchase of organic food. Throughout the thesis there has been presented a number of models and factors proven to add explanation value in studies concerning sustainable consumption, which must be deemed fit to be applied to purchasing organic food as it is itself one way of sustainable consumption. However it is difficult to identify exactly which models and factors that are the top performers on the subject covered in the thesis. As a result, many models and factors have been presented in order to give an overview of their strengths and weaknesses. When considering the main theories presented in the thesis, namely the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Value-Belief-Norm theory, perceived behavioral control and personal norm respectively were identified as the strongest factors in each model. Because of the difficulty of distinguishing between the respective strength and significance of both factors and models, it is reasonable to conclude that all those granting explanation value are deemed effective in understanding the purchase of organic food.

It is hard to identify the relative importance between moral and rational considerations of the consumer when purchasing organic products. However, it is clear that both aspects play a significant role in the decision making process over purchase of organic food, clearly illustrated by the validity of both TPB and VBN.

The validity of both moral and rational considerations established the foundation of the new model developed in the thesis. This model includes morale and rationale, as well as other factors considered important for the decision making process with regard to the purchase of organic food. The model combines moral and rational considerations in an attempt to create a catchall framework for the topic in question.
Based on earlier studies, there is reason to conclude that this model would be fit to deal with a variety of behavior and that the purchase of organic food with its two-sided nature will suit the model very well. The inclusion and omission of different factors in the model is also based on earlier studies and on the validity of each factor in studies regarding sustainable consumption. All of the factors from both the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Value-Belief-Norm theory are incorporated into the model, and this is done based on the before mentioned validity of both theories. The inclusion of fear, context and reasoning is made based on their abilities in granting explanatory value in cases relating to the purchase of organic food.

This thesis concludes that both the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Value-Belief-Norm theory are sufficient theories that cover different aspects of the behavior that is purchasing organic food. Combining these theories would arguably increase explanation value, and the new collective theory should therefore add value to market research on consumer decision making regarding the purchase of organic food.
9. References


10. Appendix

1. Behavioral Reasoning Theory (Westaby 2005)

2. Protection Motivation Theory (Floyd, Prentice-Dunn et al. 2000)
3. Attitude-Behavior-Context Theory (Guagnano, Stern et al. 1995)

![Attitude-Behavior-Context Theory](image1)


![Norm-Activation Theory](image2)