FIFTY SHADES OF GREEN

- A GAP STUDY OF GREEN CONSUMERS & GREEN COMPANIES WITH CASE COMPANY LUSH COSMETICS

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Foreword

Initially we would like to thank the green cosmetics company Lush Cosmetics and Ryan Looysen for taking time to inform us about the company’s marketing activities and allowing us to use the information for our case study. Further we thank the participants of focus groups for providing us with their opinions on the subjects of green products and green cosmetics.

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Abstract

The current green marketing industry is growing due to increasing consumer demand in combination with current environmental issues. Even so a common definition of the term green does not exist which creates both company and consumer confusion. Generally the expression is perceived by consumers to only describe environmentally friendly products but it is also further applied to different activities such as production, distribution and retailing. Due to the consumer lack of knowledge companies are having continuous difficulties satisfying the consumer’s changing needs and simultaneously protecting the environment. Companies are hoping to create awareness regarding environmental issues with the use of green marketing; however some companies are claiming to be green as a concealed marketing ploy, known as greenwashing.

This study’s purpose aims to reveal and analyze whether there are gaps of knowledge in the topic green products and predominantly green cosmetics between Swedish green consumers and green companies. Lush Cosmetics has been chosen as a case company for this dissertations explorative kind and the empirical findings have been collected by a semi-structured interview with a product & people developer at the company. Answers from green consumers have been retrieved through focus group meetings with suitable respondents.

Analysis of the empirical information was subsequently completed through the study’s theoretical framework to find what types of dissents exist between the two parts and why these have been generated. Results of the analysis showed that confusion as well as different opinions is present between the two parts. The knowledge gaps are prominent between the company and the consumers in the subjects of understanding marketing terms, price, ingredients and efficiency.

Keywords: green marketing, green products, green cosmetics, green consumers, gap study
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1. Introduction

This study’s introduction chapter presents the background of green marketing as well as the current occurring problem within the Swedish market in order to provide the reader with understanding of its importance. Initially a background to the subject is displayed followed by a problem discussion, problem formulation and purpose of study.

1.1 Background

Green marketing is the tool utilized by companies to market green products to the main target group known as green consumers. The definition of green marketing according to the American Marketing Association is;

1. (retailing definition) The marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe. 2. (social marketing definition) The development and marketing of products designed to minimize negative effects on the physical environment or to improve its quality. 3. (environments definition) The efforts by organizations to produce, promote, package, and reclaim products in a manner that is sensitive or responsive to ecological concerns. 1

Sales of green products have globally increased in the latest years. Global sales of green products increased in 2010 by 8.8 % with continuing growth in 2011. In a 2006 research publication by the Organic Monitor association, the authors noted that “French sales have boomed since 2005 when media reports highlighted the possible dangers of synthetic substances in cosmetics & toiletries. Green cosmetic products in France have since then gained greater respect by the consumers due to awareness of the effects that come with possibly dangerous synthetic substances used in conventional cosmetics. Further, sales of green products in China has quadrupled in the latest 5 years and analysis predictions show that organic market sales in Asia will grow by 20 % in the next five years. 2 Although multiple retail sales in the United Kingdom which account for 71% of the green market went down 5 %, reasons given for the decline were lack of communication about green benefits as well as reductions of choice in the range of green products. Even so, certain green market parts had an increase; green cosmetics had an overall sales raise by 8.7 %.3 According to the Kline group, the global market growth rate for natural personal care products will be rated at 10% through 2016. In the future truly natural products will be preferred by consumers and natural-inspired brands will become dominate in the natural personal care market.4 The United States is the leading green market globally and shows continuing growth, next to Brazil where the market is increasing by 40 % annually according to Organic Monitor.

The term *Green products* is defined by the Sustainability Learning Centre as listed:

- **Products made with recycled waste content.**
- **Products that contain natural resources.**
- **Products that avoid toxic emissions.**
- **Products that save energy or water.**
- **Products that contribute to a safe, healthy built environment.**

Hence the term green is an expression for products that possess environmental benefits in contrast to conventional products. It comprises the somewhat difficult terms ecological, organic and natural, which are further discussed in this report’s problem discussion, into a broader term. Recyclable waste content refers to pre- and post-consumer material as well as agricultural waste. These materials do contain natural resources and therefore the product will in accumulation degrade faster than counterparts with unnatural ingredients. As stated green products need to avoid the hazard of toxic emissions by reducing, for example, the amount of pesticides used or chemicals that deplete the ozone layer. In total products that follow these instructions contribute to a safer environment and are therefore considered green.

Green cosmetics have become known as beneficial due to low use, or no use of toxic chemicals or synthetic substances. According to a report by CNN, green consumers advocate the push for green cosmetics. The use of parabens, heavy metals and toxic chemicals could have harmful effects on human bodies which will not be revealed in the near future. Larger cosmetic companies such as Johnson&Johnson have pledged to remove possibly toxic chemicals from products by the end of 2015 and this is caused by a raised awareness from consumers that now have started to look from safer options. Common men’s skincare products were examined in an article by Metro, and revealed to contain toxic chemicals linked to infertility and prostate cancer. Whilst the amount of chemicals contained is minute, the long term effects of daily exposure remains unexplored and self-concern is advised.

The increasing awareness of organic cosmetic products shows that consumers are becoming knowledgeable about the benefits. In the Swedish market, a report by Konsumentföreningen in 2009 revealed that Swedish consumers annually spent an average of 153.7 euro on cosmetics but that only 1.5%, 2.3 euro, was put into green products. The study also investigates the possible benefits of these green cosmetic products; usually the marketing puts emphasis on ingredients that are not in the product which is usually shown to be free from silicone and parabens. There are furthermore no exact rules according to the national cosmetic regulations of what amount of natural ingredients a product has to contain to be labeled and retailed as *natural*. As a result of this, the actual benefits of green and natural cosmetics remain unclear for consumers; partly because of the amount of natural ingredients which differs from product to product.

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1.2 Problem discussion

A misunderstanding is generally created among consumers when it comes to the terms ecological, natural and organic, meaning there is confusion about the meanings of these terms. The confusion is created due to the fact that certifying organizations and companies that use these expressions have not specified a common definition. Unfortunately, a large number of companies are using these terms in marketing messages, claiming to represent them. Green labels used by firms are unclear in most cases which make it difficult for the consumers to evaluate their buying decisions. Moreover, the lack of information about the environmental benefits of the product creates further consumer confusion (Zaman et al, 2010). Consequently, the same problem may be appearing in the Swedish market. The low sales of green products and specifically green cosmetics in Sweden could possibly be explained due to the fact that consumers do not have a clear understanding on what the terms stand for as a result of green marketing failure.

The aim of green marketing is to create awareness among the consumers about the environmental issues and help them understand in what ways they can contribute to the helping of the environment (Jacob 2012). Traditional micro-formation of marketing (Sheth et al., 1988) focuses on maximizing the consumers’ individual welfare and pays no attention to the environmental problems (Russell and Russell, 2010). While previous studies might support these statements, Thøgersen explains that the drama used in the traditional green marketing activities regarding environmental issues is not the way to go in order to gain public attention (John Thøgersen, 2006).

An article in the Environmental Leader News, states that successful green marketing is achieved when companies focus mainly on consumer needs. In this case, green marketing aims to improve the environmental quality but more importantly the quality of the customer satisfaction. If the improved quality of the environment is the main subject used in marketing messages, there is a high risk of failure for green companies to reach out to the consumers. This condition is referred to as green marketing myopia which means that companies cannot clearly understand that todays’ consumers are mostly interested in satisfying their own needs. Later on, it is explained that when consumers are satisfied with the non-green benefits of mainstream products they are more reluctant to replace these with green products (Environmental Leader, 2007). Ottman clarifies that companies need to establish new strategies in order to learn from past mistakes regarding green marketing. The author further discusses that the historical misconception of green marketing among the consumer needs to be diminished and that new interesting products need to be invented (Ottman et al, 2006). Makowers view on green companies is similar; he states that green companies’ miscarriages to establish new transformative green strategies have partly resulted in consumers choosing conventional products over green ones. Moreover, he explains that companies’ green marketing efforts are uninspired and humorless. Green products are underwhelming, not worth the price, inconvenient, ineffective and hardly ever available as stated by the author. Lastly, it is discussed that marketers are focusing on overwhelming consumers with feelings of guilt by advising them to “save the Earth” which is not appealing or inspirational among consumers.

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Strengthening the above assumptions regarding green marketing failure is D’Astous statement; consumers are overall proven unwilling to pay a larger amount of money for green products that they believe possess inferior quality characteristics, even with possible sense of guilt considering the environmental damage the products may cause. It is stated that attributes such as price and quality are highly respected among consumers. With price, convenience and perceived value being the emphasized criteria of purchase, consumers have shown interest in green products but not to the point of compromising these variables. A study performed by D’Astous et al (1997) showed that green product attributes had direct relations to perceived value as well as buying intentions. Green marketing increased the product’s desirability but the actual criterion was narrowed down to performance, as if the green marketing led to disbeliefs regarding performance; like an inevitable trade off (D’Astous et al. 1997 see D’Souza et al, 2006).

Due to the above mentioned miscommunications created between green companies and consumers as well as the underperforming green cosmetic market in Sweden, it is of interest to identify whether there are gaps between these variables in terms of interest, knowledge and satisfaction of consumer needs. Sub questions are formed to further develop an answer for the main question.

1.3 Problem formulation

- Can different gaps be identified and analyzed between green cosmetic companies’ market offerings & knowledge about green products, to the consumers’ knowledge & needs regarding these?
  - How aware are Swedish consumers regarding green products and in particular green cosmetics?
  - What specific advantages do consumers look for within these?
  - What are the marketing activities of the case company and what product advantages are highlighted?

1.4 Purpose of study

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the Swedish consumers’ needs, interest and knowledge regarding green cosmetics and whether green cosmetic companies satisfy these with market offerings and knowledge about consumers.
2. Methodology

The upcoming section describes the choice of methodology for the performed study. Parts chosen for this section are study type, selection of informants, data gathering, choice of theoretical framework, validity& reliability, alternative methods and method of analysis. Descriptive information is presented to the reader regarding the reasons behind the focus groups, how the case company Lush Cosmetics is suitable for this study and in what ways the theories selected are relevant.

2.1 Study type

There are two types of methods that can be approached and applied in studies depending on the objective of the research; the qualitative and the quantitative method. The use of a qualitative method is superior when trying to analyze different contexts on a profound level due to its inductive vision (Bryman 2011). This dissertation aims to research how aware green consumers are of green products, what attributes they look for and what attributes green companies market to satisfy consumer needs in order to identify whether there is a gap between these two variables. It is preferred to aim for a deeper level of understanding key information and to create the ability to build theoretical strategies on practical research results. Hence, qualitative method is in advance for this study's explorative kind compared to evaluable ratios derived from a broader mass. In comparison the quantitative method is performed through various measurable statistical variables evaluated and calculated such as consumer surveys. In depth knowledge or evaluation is largely shed using this research method, instead it focuses on an overarching understanding of representative sampling (Bryman 2011).

This report study applies the method of utilizing a company as representative for the green cosmetics industry. The case company with green marketing chosen is Lush Cosmetics. As for the representation of green consumers, the focus group discussion model has been chosen with convenience sampling of green consumers.

2.2 Selection of informants

The focus group selected for this study includes Swedish consumers between the ages of 20-40 who are interested in green cosmetics and are familiar with the case company. The choice of convenience sampling resulted in getting in contact with surroundings that met the set criteria mentioned above. “The original idea of the focus group is that people who have had a personal experience are interviewed in an unstructured way about that specific experience” (Bryman 2012). In this case, the consumers chosen fit the criteria since they have experienced the purchase and use of green cosmetics.

There were no major difficulties in finding informants willing to contribute with their thoughts and ideas for the shape of this study. Two focus groups were created each containing a number of five people. According to Morgan (1998) it is preferred to have a smaller number of participants when the topic requires plenty of information from each respondent due to the management problems that occur with larger groups. In total there was an 80% of female participants and a 20% of male participants who accepted to be a part of a one-hour interview. Participants were able to explain their opinions on the selected topic which they are interested in. In this way, the authors had the chance to observe the individuals behavioral patterns and analyze how they collectively made sense of the green marketing phenomenon and the attributes around it (Hutt 1979). There were two personal meetings between the authors and
the focus groups which were set at two different dates and took place in Borås, Sweden. The questions chosen for the focus groups were formed to help the participants provide in depth descriptive information to the authors.

The case company Lush Cosmetics was contacted through email where Ryan Looysen, retail leader & people developer at Lush Sweden AB concluded that he was the right person to contact regarding questions about Lush marketing activities in the Swedish market. Since there were no other available representatives to be interviewed, Looysen was the only source of information regarding Lush Cosmetics green marketing activities in the Swedish market. An interview with the in-store employees of Lush Cosmetics in Gothenburg was also interesting to the authors but was not taken into action due to the fact that the subject green marketing activities was not as relevant to be discussed with the employees as it was with Mr. Looysen.

2.3 Data gathering

Empirical information is gathered through the semi-structured interview with the case company Lush Cosmetics and as for the green consumers two different focus groups with convenience sampling are performed. The degree of standardization describes the strictness of the performed questionnaire and what type of information the questionnaire therefore will give. (Bryman 2012) The interview and the focus groups performed for this study use a semi-structuration with the motivation of aiming to receive robust answers within the topic of green marketing. Some questions carry a more structured nature due to the reason of remaining in the frames of the topic discussed.

Both questionnaires are attached as appendix at the end of this report. Focus groups were performed prior to the interview with Lush Cosmetics. To begin with simpler questions were asked with the starting topic of green products in general. This was chosen so that the respondents would get comfortable with giving answers and it was additionally important for the moderators to leave the participants uninfluenced and unbiased due to moderators having the task of moving the discussion forward. Respondents of the focus groups were not given the opportunity to view questions beforehand by reason of questions regarding knowledge about marketing terms such as ecological, organic & natural. Interviewing the case company Lush Cosmetics was performed through a semi structured in-depth interview. Compared to the focus groups, the questionnaire was sent to Lush Cosmetics prior to the interview by their request but also so that the answers on the topic of developed green marketing strategies could be as correct as possible.

2.4 Choice of theoretical framework

In order for any author to be able to analyze the empirical results in a study, there is a need of a theoretical framework, which is also used to provide the readers with a clear understanding of the study-subject and analysis. With the help of literature review several questions can be answered; what is already known within the subject’s field, what methods have previously been used in the study of relevant theories and whether there are any unanswered questions that need to be taken into consideration.

Studying relevant literature theories and models was necessary in order to form the interview questionnaire and analyze the findings regarding this dissertation subject. With the help of previous studies, which were stated as scientific articles, a clearer picture was obtained and the dissertation subject was further understood and developed. The theoretical framework was formed based on theories, models, key words and concepts that were found in relevant
literature articles. Thus, related theories were described according to the conclusions of previous authors.

References used in the theoretical framework were mainly found with the use of Summon, a search engine that can be utilized by the students of the University of Borås to discover articles relevant to the subject of study. The use of credible and reliable information such as examined scientific articles is imperative when writing the theoretical framework. Sources such as internet websites and magazines as well as newspaper articles were used to form the problem discussion since these include everyday common issues and not widely accepted theories concluded by studies.

The use of theoretical framework has been described as a way to provide a particular perspective to the examined topic that helps the authors create a deeper understanding by adding focus to the subject the study is based on. Furthermore, theories found in scientific articles were mainly applied to construct consciousness amongst the readers concerning the connection between relevant literature and empirical findings. Thus, the empirical findings can only be supported and strengthened by the use of reliable and credible literature.

2.5 Reliability & validity

These two terms are vital and need to be taken into consideration whilst gathering empirical information. First, reliability considers if the instruments used to collect material are trustworthy with the common example whether the study can be performed once more to retrieve identical results. This qualitative and explorative study has not in ambition to construct a generalizable model. The fact that an informant could give varying responses during a repeated dialogue does not therefore reveal a low reliability; it is more likely that the informant has further developed opinions and reasoning. Validity concerns whether what has been measured as empirical information really reflects the realistic situation of the subject. (Bryman 2012)

Focus groups with participants gathered by convenience sampling do not represent a population in full and it is therefore impossible to further generalize the collected information. A larger number of participants in the focus groups could possibly provide this dissertation subject with more information on personal experiences and thoughts and therefore create a broader and clearer image regarding the attributes Swedish consumers seek in green cosmetics. Also the interview with Lush Cosmetics was performed via Skype, as a consequence of the company’s headquarters for Sweden being located in Stockholm. Interviewing via Skype is regarded as a phone interview because of the lack of observing body language (Shuy 2002).

The use of a case company for the study also drops the generalization model but according to Bryman, studies performed with a qualitative approach commonly aim for a deep understanding of the single case’s complexity and uniqueness. Aspiring for a trustworthy validity of what is measured in the focus groups and the company interview means that questions asked need to be constructed with emphasis put on respondents ability to further resonate due to the nature of focus groups as well as the semi structured company interview. During the process of transcribing the interviews it is further a risk that the author of the report subconsciously adds own values to unclear sentences by the respondents. This in accumulation could warp the information given but to avoid this difficulty all interviews were performed with sound recording. To depict reality as valid as possible this decision was
done to avoid influenced information. Both focus groups were sound recorded so that the authors could transcribe the information correctly without experiencing warped recollection. (Fowler and Mangione 1990)

2.6 Alternative methods

Alternative methods for performing this study could be a quantitative study on a larger scale to research the consumer’s knowledge considering green products as well as benefits and later perform a survey for different companies to answer regarding their marketing activities. As mentioned previously the issue of how a quantitative study portrays a social issue as static becomes evident; mirrored, the empirical findings are measurable and therefore more gratifying to analyze in sense of trying to show evidence of correlation.

2.7 Method of analysis

Knowledge is obtained when the following four elements are used in a dissertation; problem formulation, theory, empirical results and conclusions. Theory has been used as a tool of interpretation throughout this dissertation in order to finally analyze the empirical results gained from the interviews with both the focus groups and the case company. The correlation between theory and empirical results can be categorized in two different manners; the inductive and deductive visions. This report as stated uses the inductions approach to examine the collected data through literature theories.
3. Study framework

The theoretical framework is based on studies of green marketing and green consumers, which are the two parts this study aims to analyze. Theories presented are relevant for the construction of the gap analysis between these two variables.

3.1 An introduction to Green Marketing and Green Consumers

There are a great number of people that misinterpret the term *green marketing*. It is often believed that green marketing is only related to the advertising of products which have environmentally friendly characteristics and attributes. Although this is true, it only represents part of the term. There are many different words associated with the term such as; *recyclable, refillable, ozone friendly and phosphate free* (May 1991, Ingram and Durst 1989).

Hence green marketing is a broader concept than what it is believed to be. It is combined by a range of activities such as; product modification, changes to the production process, packaging changes and modifying advertising. Defining complex terms is challenging and the same concept applies to the field of studied subject. The terminologies used to describe green companies’ activities include: *green marketing, environmental marketing* and *ecological marketing* (Polonsky, 1997, 1994). Today, there is no universally accepted terminology or definition of green marketing which makes it even more complex both for the companies as well as the consumers. The term *Green consumers* has been analyzed and segmented several times, usually connected to consumers purchase of green products. According to Finisterra do Paço, the segmentations are mainly created to identify the level of environmental sensitivity and engagement that different consumers project (Finisterra et al 2009).

3.2 Green Marketing

3.2.1 Green Marketing on a historical perspective

Green Marketing was highly discussed in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, it was first presented in earlier years. The first workshop on *ecological marketing* took place in 1975 by the American Marketing Association (AMA). A year later the book “Ecological Marketing” was published which was based on the workshop findings and was among the first books on green marketing to be published (Henion and Kinnear 1976a). At this workshop the definition of ecological marketing was expressed as followed;” the study of the positive and negative aspects of marketing activities on pollution, energy depletion and non-energy resource depletion” (Henion and Kinnear 1976b). Nowadays a much broader definition is used and as stated by Polonsky; “Green or Environmental Marketing consists of all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment”(Polonsky, 1997).

3.2.2 The importance of todays’ Green marketing

Polonsky, who has been studying the subject of green marketing for several years, points out that the limitation of resources on planet earth is the main problem which contributes to the definition, development and expansion of green marketing. Due to the fact that consumers constantly want to satisfy their needs there has been an urge for companies to satisfy these by offering products, services or both continuously. It is becoming more of a necessity for companies to work with green marketing because of the limitation of resources which partly
contributes to the environmental disaster. It is therefore important for today’s companies to adopt green marketing strategies in order to both benefit from its advantages but also satisfy consumer needs. In order to achieve sustainable development, sustainable marketing is needed. This means that the companies make efforts that are both competitive and ecologically sustainable. The marketing actions trigger the economic activity since these result in stimulate consumption. However, marketing’s role in the aspect of sustainable development will only be accepted and appreciated when it meets this generation’s consumer requests without eliminating the ability of future generations to satisfy their needs (Polonsky, 1997).

3.2.3 Green Marketing Strategies

In order for a company to successfully develop green marketing strategies, green activities must be integrated into the company’s overall marketing activity (Ottman, 1992). One of the main purposes of green marketing is to promote products and services that satisfy the consumers as well as the company’s necessities without harming the environment, and this is achieved through green marketing activities (Polonsky, 1994). When companies choose to promote their green products, there is a necessity for a green marketing plan which is important due to its provision of information on the extent of competitive advantages that can be obtained (Peattie, 1992). The use of green marketing can provide a differentiation strategy apart of the change of competitive rules (Ottman, 1992).

With the use of developed green marketing strategies reduced consumer perceived risk is achieved. Thus, companies must inform the consumers about their products in as much detail as possible to help them compare to other companies’ offers based on the environmental considerations provided by each company (Kalafatis and Pollard, 1999). If companies do not provide reliable and detailed information, it becomes challenging to convince the consumers about the importance and the quality of the products. Therefore, the consumer and environmental advantages of the products should be addressed to the consumer in detail (Jain and Kaur, 2004).

According to Kinoti, green marketing intervention strategies can be divided in:

**Green product**

Green products are the reason behind the opening of a strategic window (Polonsky et al, 1997). These products contain the following attributes: durable, non-toxic, made from recycled materials, made from organic materials, or minimally packaged (Ottman, 1997). Green product based strategies include informative messages to the consumers regarding; recycling, reduction of packaging materials, re-consumption, using sustainable source of raw material, making more durable products that are safe for disposal, as well as making products that are safer and more pleasant to use (Polonsky et al, 1997). (Kinoti, 2011)

**Green pricing**

Some consumers have the preconception that green products are more expensive than conventional products. While this might be the case in several situations, Peattie explains that conventional products are extremely cheap because these do not take into consideration the production, product and disposal social-environmental costs. Peattie also believes that the consumers need a wakeup call and the only way to achieve this is by asking them if it is worth buying inexpensive products that cause damage to the environment they live in.
Knowledge is achieved by continuously informing the customers about the great benefits of green products and explaining the reason of the higher prices (Peattie, 1999; Polonsky et al, 2001). (Kinoti, 2011)

**Green promotion**

Green promotion is described by Polonsky as an activity performed by companies in order to promote products that are not harmful to the natural environment due to the environmentally friendly characteristics within these (Polonsky et al, 1997). According to Kinoti, if a product is stated to be green, it needs to meet one or more of the following criteria:

a) The relation between the product and the biophysical environment is addressed.

b) It promotes green lifestyle no matter if a product/service is highlighted by it or not.

c) It presents a corporate image of environmental responsibility (Kinoti, 2011).

In 1993, Polonsky discussed the importance of green promotion. Stated, green promotion is a helpful tool since it informs the consumers about the environment and therefore helps them avoid the “greatest environmental hazard” (Polonsky, 1997). Zint and Frederick (2001) strengthen Polonskys’ statement by explaining that companies should not treat the consumers as if they are knowledgeable about the environmental issues (Zint and Frederick, 2001).

In order to minimize the knowledge gap among the consumers and the companies’ actions Ottman (1997) suggested a list of green promotion strategies. Companies are responsible for:

a) Educating the consumers about the environmental problems that green products solve.

b) Providing solutions to the consumers by explaining and even demonstrating with sound and image how green products can not only protect the environment, but their own health and the generations to come.

c) Reassuring the consumers about the performance of green products and how they are not inferior to conventional products, as it is perceived by them.

d) Using an appropriate mix of media by using direct marketing, community programs, public relations and attractive packaging.

e) Increasing the actual and potential consumers’ self-interest by further explaining the benefits of green products.

(Ottman 1997 see Kinoti 2011)

**Green Logistics**

A form of green logistic strategy is the reverse channel system, which is responsible for post-consumer recycling. The meaning of the word recycle is “to extract and reuse useful substances found in waste” (Kinoti, 2011). The goal is to achieve a circular flow between the materials and the markets (Fuller et al, 1997). First, the consumers and the manufacturers’ roles reverse, meaning that the consumer is the seller and the manufacturer is the buyer. Second, the function of sorting and accumulation becomes of great importance. Third, recyclable materials have the ability to flow backwards through reverse channels to any kind of industrial market; the original manufacturer, the raw materials producing industries and any other industry that is able to use recyclables as virgin material substitutes (Fuller 1997).
Another form of green logistics strategies is the reduction of packaging used through the distribution of the products. Although there are a number of green logistics strategies, more emphasis has been given to reverse channel systems (Polonsky, 2001).

### 3.2.4 Benefits of Green Marketing

Competitive advantages are gained when companies apply green marketing strategies which enhance the consumer perceived quality and reduce the consumer perceived risk both in favor of the consumer as well as the environment (Chen, 2010). According to Chen (2008), there are five reasons for companies to adopt green marketing which can also be seen as the benefits for adopting such strategies:

a) enhancing corporate images  
b) compliance with environmental trends  
c) taking advantage of green opportunities  
d) obtaining competitive advantage and  
e) increasing product value (Chen, 2008a).

According to Kinoti (2011), the reasons companies choose to use green marketing can be organized in two different categories; improved organizational performance and positive change of the physical environment. These major categories include factors which in turn contribute to sustainable development and therefore provide benefits for the company, the environment and consequently the consumer.

To begin with, the improvement of the **organizational performance** when using green marketing can result in the following benefits:

a) The company’s market share is extended  
b) The satisfaction of the customer needs is increased  
c) The company’s competitive advantages become challenging for other companies  
d) The company’s profitability shows growth  
e) The company’s overall image is improved

Secondly, positive change of the **physical environment** can contribute to the following benefits for the environment:

a) Reduced air and water pollution  
b) Retaining of the natural limited resources  
c) Reduced use of raw materials  
d) Reduction of climate changes  
e) Protection of forests

**Sustainable development; the greatest benefit of Green Marketing**

According to Kinoti, sustainable development occurs when present needs are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The success of sustainable development is achieved by the balance and improvement of the two major variables mentioned above: organizational performance and positive change of the physical environment. The combination and analysis of these major variables provide a better understanding on the development of green marketing strategies that companies are required to adopt. The benefits of these variables are also discussed above. Sustainability, as a benefit of green marketing, is of great concern among academicians and practitioners who believe
that an implementation of strategies is needed in order for sustainable development to be achieved (Kinoti, 2011). There are several factors that affect the choice of green marketing strategies that companies choose. Companies vary in size, technology, and environmental reach. In present, there is no wide accepted template of green marketing strategies. However, there are a number of templates that describe green marketing strategies.

An example of such template can be developed with the approach to the green marketing concept (GMC). According to Camino, there is a need to develop a more précised template with green marketing strategies. The use of the GMC guides the installation of strategies through a marketing mix of: green products/services, communication, price and distribution. Thus, the definition of GMC is based upon vital strategic and marketing-management suggestions. The strategic marketing management includes activities such as; a) an analysis of the green markets potential, b) the actions needed in order to satisfy the green market needs and c) an analysis on how competitors deal with green marketing. These three activities lead into the development of successful marketing strategies (Hooley et al., 2004). The marketing-mix actions used in the green marketing concept are as followed; a) The green design of the product, b) the distribution in a green manner c) the pricing of green products, d) the publicity of products/services using green methods (Rivera-Camino, 2006).

### 3.2.5 Challenges of Green Marketing

As the use of green marketing increases globally amongst companies in different industries, certain problematic issues surface. Companies that decide to use the green marketing concept for their environmentally friendly products have to take into consideration whether the target group in question will respond positively to the change. Companies are trying to avoid the pitfall of investing in a new costly strategy considering that the outcome could alienate or disinterest consumers with no involvement or even dislike and mistrust for green attributes.

According to Kinoti (2011) green marketing strategies include numerous challenges that green companies have to face. First off, these are costly for companies and sometimes problematic to implement in a short term perspective. Thus, small and even medium-sized companies do not obtain the financial resources to do so. Second, the environmental benefits are immaterial, indirect or insignificant to consumers. They do not provide direct benefits to the consumer needs as they are not directly visible or intangible which in conclusion results to the consumers’ rejection. Third, the environmental benefits cannot be measured or quantified after the use of a specific green product or service. There are no exact measurement tools that provide the consumers with a logical explanation on reasons to use a specific green product or service. Consumers are becoming more and more demanding and therefore request evidence in order to trust company claims. Fourth, there are marketers claiming to be environmentally friendly by using promotion as a strategy in a way that manipulates green strategies overall and creates suspicion among consumers on whether these strategies and companies are reliable. Furthermore, the use of green marketing strategies cannot be succeeded solely by the efforts of green companies. Stakeholders such as general public, employees, retailers, government and environmental groups need to work in team in order to achieve visible benefits contributed by the use of green marketing strategies (Kinoti, 2011).

A model developed by Ginsberg & Bloom describes four different company archetype strategies and the problematic companies deal with in different ways; Lean, Defensive, Extreme & Shaded green (Ginsberg et al 2004).
Lean green refers to companies that work with environmental issues “behind the scenes” meaning that it’s not a variable with emphasis in the marketing. An example of this type being beverage companies with developed recycling strategies that are not shown in advertising. Defensive green companies use environmental variables as precautionary due to effort of trying to improve the image. The green activities cannot be differentiated to competitors and therefore a larger marketing campaign is unnecessary and costly. Further, the extreme green strategy refers to companies in which the environmental and social approach is embedded holistically, with niche shops catering to niched consumers. Issues arise of whether this estranges the larger mainstream consumer mass. Lastly, shaded green marketing puts emphasis on the hybrid between green and the stamina of a product. Vehicles with green advantages are an example of shaded green where emphasis is majorly focused on stamina, power and how the buyer would avoid costly and time-consuming chore of pumping gas. Environmental benefits, such as the decreased air pollution, were simply added as a bonus beyond the attributes of performance (Ginsberg et al 2004).

3.3 Green consumers

A detailed typology of green consumption behavior has been developed with the conclusion that four different main types of consumers exist; the activist, realist, complacent consumer and lastly alienated consumer. The activist understands the green marketing message as well as global consumption issues regarding pollution and is most likely to purchase green products for themselves and their children. Realists are the youngest consumers who are more conflicted regarding profit versus the environment. Further skeptical to the green bandwagon and to greenwashing methods used by companies, the realists are unsure whether the climate issues can truly be solved. Third, complacent consumers is an aging group whose children tend to be older. This category is overall a lot more positive about the future of mankind, consumerism and sees climate issues as something to be solved by others than themselves. Ending with the alienated consumers; generally with low education, they see environmental issues as a trend and are pessimistic about possible solutions for something they do not see as a real problem (Benett et al 2011, Peattie 1992).

Environmental responsibility has been shown to differ in gender. The explanation lies in the social psychology context that individuals will more likely increase and develop a different pattern in consumption behavior when they become aware of the dangerous effects their current behavior carries, as well as the feeling of guilt and responsibility when the environment reaches perpetuating damage (Schwartz 1977). Sacrificing ones current behavior and having a larger orientation for the responsibility of other human beings and the earth was an attribute that prominently females exhibited during a study by Gough (1994). Females further tended to have a more powerful sense of morale (Gough 1994).

The choice consumers make when purchasing green products can further be correlated to moral values, but as stated these differ between customers and different industries. A study by Laroche et al. (2001) showed that the motives for buying green products are more of self-interest rather than being benevolent for the environment as a whole. Because of this, the green marketers must state the moral and environmental benefits as well as personal health advantages of green products, and their production. This study also further revealed that married females with children are the most willing consumer segment to pay more for green products since they showed to put more emphasis on functioning relationships with their surroundings (Laroche et al 2001).
Singh (2011) performed a study with the aim of researching the consumption behavior of elder consumer and ultimately what factors affect their buying decisions. A questionnaire research with square-chi2 test study answered by respondents between ages 60 to 85 showed that 85% of the elderly segment of consumers believe in green marketing and green products. Alas only 52% of the respondents answered that they are consumers of green products, with food & drinks, clothing, cosmetics and electronics being the largest sections of green consumption in written order. The factors which proved most important for the elderly segment of consumers regarding the purchase of green products were the quality of the product (35%) and the convenience of buying (31%) The major difficulty of reaching elder consumers could be that green products previously were inferior to conventional alternatives which left the now older population with bad experiences (Singh 2011).

As for green consumer behavior a study by Johansson et al. (2010) analyzes the consumers’ willingness to curtail behavior that negatively affects the environment. The study showed that general factors such as values, beliefs, norms and regular habit strength played a large role in changing consumption behavior. A difference was made within the study between curtailing negative behavior and adopting new green technologies, and the result showed further that personal traits had a large impact on both variables but that consumers were more willing to try new technology, than to completely stop the consumption of an environmentally hazardous product. It was also revealed that people with higher education and income are more adaptive to new technology due to their financial strength and overall better understanding of the environmental topic (Johansson et al 2010).

With the increased debate about environmental issues, green marketing and general consumption, the marketing of products with recycled or reused materials has further gained attention. New international regulations have further provided a platform on which reused and recycled products now have to be implemented which captures the consumers’ attention. A study by Hamzaoui et al. (2010) has been conducted about the matter of marketing products with reused and recycled ingredients, with the mindset to discover what factors influence consumers about purchase and the actual usage of these products. Seven different product types were investigated and the results showed a large difference in both price level and to what matter the consumers could consider switching products to go green. One of the most critical factors proved to be the perceived functional inferiority of a greener product the consumer identified. An example being that a retread tire was perceived to have higher risk in failing for its designated use in comparison to recycled paper which had a higher level of willingness to pay for. The study as a whole provides a technique for green marketers to utilize when pricing and positioning the green products; taking into consideration psychosocial factors regarding willingness to pay (Hamzaoui et al 2010).

Rajagopal (2007) showed ways of measuring variables associated with customer value such as attractiveness, cost of purchase, perceived use value, point-of sale promotions and communication. The actual value of the model is to aid companies in developing new marketing strategies with customer value and maximum profit in mind. Prominently, customer value is a clear indicator for developing profitable strategies within the organization. The reason to why customer satisfaction as well as customer understanding of the marketing is vital is due to its connection to product performance in the given market and the ability to from there analyze the formation of future strategies of buying volume, market share and competition. The study performed with the use of this model and the case product green cosmetics, showed that consumers overall scored the green alternative higher than the regular and that green marketing was a large reason to the consumers understanding of the products and the perceived use value (Rajagopal 2007).
Studies have previously been made based on the behaviors of consumers that favor the purchase of green products. According to the Bearse et al (2009) green consumers are more brand-loyal. Furthermore, the customers tend to be less price-sensitive and there is a high probability of them repurchasing the products. The green consumers tend to stick to a green product once they have adopted it in their life. What is of great concern is the fact that green purchases are by far more extended in more consumable categories such as everyday grocery, and cleaning/household. Even so, the purchase of green cosmetics is relatively minor compared to everyday grocery products (Bearse et al 2009).

In conclusion, Peattie (1992) states that consumers will demand to purchase a larger quantity of green products when they realize the effects that the environmental decline of quality is having on their personal life and overall consumption patterns. The increased consumption of green products will cause less environmental harm as well as focusing on protection and sustainability. Adopting a new consumption pattern that is considered to be green, and hence less polluting than regular consumption, has proven to be more attractive to consumers than just reducing the amount of products and services consumed, something also stated by Johansson et al (2010) (Peattie 1992).

4. About Lush Cosmetics

A shorter presentation of Lush Cosmetics is implied in order for the reader to comprehend the suitability of the case company in this study.

Lush is a cosmetics company founded in 1994 by Mark and Mo Constantine. The first Lush store opened the same year in Poole, United Kingdom where the headquarters are located. Today, there are 830 stores worldwide in 51 countries for example the United Kingdom, Japan, Canada, Sweden, Australia and an online shop for each country. Cosmetics included in the company product line are soaps, shower gels, shampoos, conditioners, hand and body lotions as well as face masks, and makeup which are stated to be handmade and fresh. These products are manufactured by the use of vegetarian recipes and have an approximately shelf life of fourteen months. The company uses ecological fruit and vegetables, essential oils, honey and beeswax as well as a minimum of synthetic ingredients such as glycerine, linalool, and methyl- and propyl-parabens. Parabens are only used in the liquid products and are from plant materials. Lush is known for its ethical campaigns against animal testing as well as the minimum use of packaging, hence reflecting actions of a green company.  

5. Interview and focus group results

Empirical findings from performed interview with Lush Cosmetics as a case company, and meetings with two focus groups consisting of green consumers.

5.1 Meeting with focus groups

Two focus group meetings were performed with the questions attached at the end of this report. The focus groups discussed questions regarding green products and how these are perceived by them. The meetings lasted for an estimate hour where the participants had the chance to express opinions and provide this report with information that is later compared with the information provided by the case company, through the use of the theoretical framework. The questions are based on the understandings of green Swedish consumers regarding green products and the advantages they seek in these.

All participants used the following key words when describing green products; ecological, natural, organic, eco-friendly. At first the members were asked what kind of green products they usually purchase. The two main green product categories mentioned by the focus groups were:

1) Ecological/ Natural/Organic Foods; eggs, vegetables, oats, nuts, seeds, fruit and meat.
2) Green cosmetics; hair products such as shampoos and conditioners, makeup such as mineral foundations and powders, facial creams as well as body butters.
Other products consumed were an eco-friendly car, ecological clothing, green electricity, eco-friendly detergency as well as green household cleaners.

Following this question, the respondents were asked what they like about green products. Attributes mentioned can also be seen as advantages that consumers seek in these products. First off, the health benefits and satisfaction of buying from reliable resources were mentioned. Secondly, a number of participants discussed the beauty benefits that green skincare products provide to their sensitive skin-type and how these satisfy their special needs. The fact that green cosmetics do not include any chemicals or other harmful ingredients was also highly respected among the members. Furthermore, green foods are preferred due to the fact that they feel fresh, taste better, have an early expiry date and less pesticides.

The focus groups were later asked when they had begun buying green products. Answers varied, ranging from shopping green products with their parents as a child, to starting in the last ten months. Conscious consumption began when the respondents found a personal interest in purchasing these products. Variation in answers occurred between the first and the second focus group; the first group replied that they started buying green products a shorter time ago compared to the second group where the purchase behavior was traced back longer. Regarding whether the purchasing of green products had increased or decreased since the beginning, the answers were in majority that it had increased. Main reasons given for the increase were that the availability of green products had grown and that the segment of green had reached a broader group of products compared to earlier. Some answers were unclear. This was mostly due to a somewhat developed skepticism towards green marketing and the newly started labels found on packaging; the less-known labels could be marketing ploys only to create the illusion of a greener product.
A more developed sense of confidence when examining ingredients in products was also expressed; if the respondent found something questionable, he or she would rather not buy the product and therefore not trust any possible green attributes.

Continuing, the most common product categories that the focus groups had not yet tried were also different types of food, clothing, hygiene products and cleaning substances. The reason to why these products hadn’t yet been bought and utilized by the some participants were mainly that the price set on the green alternatives was perceived as too high, as well as alternatives not being available on a larger scale. Some respondents stated that they had less trust in that certain green products would have the same efficiency as regular products. Green cleaning was the example where a chemically absent product could not match the power of a regular but more environmentally dangerous alternative.

Participants could not see themselves sacrificing much of the products actual purpose just for having a green counterpart. Makeup was the second product category mentioned where certain female participants had noticed a lower quality and a shorter lasting finish in green cosmetics, and therefore would not explore further into that segment. As for the issues regarding availability and pricing it was found that the consumers felt that food was the most easily accessible category, but also that the pricing felt somewhat justifiable due to minimization of chemical use. This, in comparison to cleaning products where the price difference was identified as larger for the green alternative, even with a lower efficiency.

Specific advantages that the focus groups see in green products were portrayed as overall more healthy both for their own body but also for the global environment and climate. Advantages pointed out for the participants own health were that green foods taste better and contain more nutrition and less chemicals. Allergies towards chemicals and pesticides were something both focus groups expressed concern over since these may be difficult to identify as the cause of allergic reactions. Another large benefit according to the focus groups were that green products were grown or manufactured sometimes closer, as well as without human exploitation and animal cruelty.

Disadvantages seen in green products were similar to reasons given why the participants had not yet tried green products. Lack of availability of products and lack of a satisfactory range were contributors to irritation when participants were searching for green products. Pricing was also questioned, if the general public really could afford purchasing only green products but also if the companies are just greenwashing products. Both focus groups pointed out that they owned more conventional products compared to green products, besides one participant who owned more green products in the categories of food and cosmetics.

Part two of the interview covered questions regarding green cosmetics. These were chosen due to the relevance of the case company Lush Cosmetics. To begin with, all participants agreed that they currently own or have owned green cosmetics in the past. Sources that influenced the purchase of green cosmetics were family and friends because of their trustworthy promotion and marketing messages that were projected through different types of media. Reasons behind these purchases were mixed among the participants. Some explained that the values and ethics behind green cosmetics are appealing and that the purchases become satisfying when the consumers are aware of the benefits behind the products; people and animals are not hurt before, during or after the production as well as reducing toxic waste from production to not harm the environment.
Regarding whether the consumers had done any research before buying green cosmetics, most answers were negative. The participants of the second focus group that expressed to have purchased green products for a longer period of time also stated that they had begun searching for information regarding what kind of cosmetics and products would suit them well. Green labels on packaging were mentioned as something that certain respondents looked for. The group had divided opinions to whether these labels, such as ecologically grown, were easy to understand. An opinion was that the labels have improved in projecting the message clearly in the later years compared to a decade ago. Reasons to why green labels are favored by consumers were that the cost and examination for receiving well known labels are high and meticulous for companies that have the ambition to do so. In contrary, others had a different opinion about the topic. It was stated by some participants that labels are not at all easy to comprehend and that even if they were, it would still be very difficult to actually know whether the product had a meaningful impact on the environment and the climate. Skepticism was directed to companies greenwashing products by coming up with their own green labels that in turn have no connection to actual scientifically proven results regarding the climate and the environment.

The respondents’ first impressions after using green cosmetic products were difficult to identify. They explained how a first impression is not possible when it comes to green cosmetic products, since the effects of such cosmetics can only be studied throughout a period of time. They however expressed positive results and experiences after using green cosmetics for just a couple of weeks. Despite their positive experiences some participants claim to own a larger number of mainstream cosmetics compared to green cosmetics because of the larger variety and availability in today’s market. Others discussed that they mainly own green skincare products. They later expressed that the innovations behind and the quality and efficiency of mainstream makeup could not be compared with the ones used in the production of green makeup. The price difference between green and mainstream cosmetics was also difficult to analyze due to the variation of brands in today’s markets. While some mainstream cosmetic companies might offer inexpensive products, others may be placed in a higher brand position and therefore use higher prices to their products.

According to the focus groups, the health benefits of using green cosmetics were several. Firstly, the use of natural and little or no chemicals compared to normal counterparts were perceived as better alternatives for the skin and body. The quality of green products, as seen by the participants, is predominantly a lot higher than some conventional brands, but premium designer brands are believed to offer a very high quality and value for money. Motivations that could help these consumers purchase green cosmetics more often were also discussed. Some participants expressed their wishes to clearly understand the differences between green and non-green cosmetics since they believe that this is not common knowledge. A larger variety and selection of green cosmetics as well as increased competition with the designer and premium brands could become a buying motivator for these consumers.

Price was another important buying factor. Majority of opinions agreed that green cosmetics are more expensive than conventional alternatives and if this were to change it could become a motivational force towards the purchase of green cosmetics. The consumers were asked if they will continue to purchase green cosmetics and the answer was fully positive. As for the future the focus groups both expressed positivity about green companies having to compete with conventional brands with the hopeful outcome of products with higher quality attributes.
The focus groups were finally asked about their perceptions of green cosmetic companies and if they believe in what they stand for. Answers were again mixed. The expressed opinions about green companies and green cosmetic companies were similar regarding labels and some members expressed that they cannot trust green cosmetic companies to 100% due to the lack of evidence. Others stated that they would like to trust these companies but still feel suspicious about the claims made. Respondents had previously felt that only some companies truly believe in the ethic regarding non-animal testing whilst other companies just used it as a marketing ploy. In closing, it was suggested by the members that there should be more exposure of companies that don’t work ethically and portray the effects that this exploitation can have on animals and human beings. In addition, more research should be carried out to show the damaging effects certain chemicals can have on human bodies in the long term, to raise awareness of the benefits of natural ingredients in cosmetics.

5.2 Interview with Lush Cosmetics

An interview was actualized with Mr. Ryan LooySEN, retail leader & people developer at Lush Sweden AB. The questions asked, which are attached at the end of this report, are based on the company’s marketing activities in the Swedish market and the product attributes highlighted within these. The interview lasted for an estimate hour and 20 minutes where the respondent also explained the benefits of green cosmetics in terms of the human health. Furthermore a comparison between mainstream cosmetics and green cosmetics was discussed. Another important subject brought up was the company perceptions regarding Swedish consumers.

To begin with, LooySEN was asked the meaning of the term “green cosmetics” within the company. He explained that this term is much broader and not only used to describe the company products. The term “green” is used due to the environmentally friendly choices made in production, packaging and delivery of the cosmetics; from the ingredient source to the consumer. A specific definition is not used within the company since it is believed to mainly represent a marketing term. The green marketing activities in the Swedish market were stated as initiatives that could be considered green and these are as followed:

a) If a consumer brings back five containers of lush products they receive a free fresh face mask.

"This is technically considered to be a marketing method, but the company explains that the reason behind this activity is to recycle the returned plastic pots. It’s a marketing action but it’s the right thing as well”.

b) Sampling is also an important marketing activity used within the company. By providing free samples to the consumers they are given a chance to actually try the products themselves and this helps them decide on whether to purchase full size products.

c) Ethical campaigns take place continuously. The most recent, is a plastic campaign which started in May 2013. The reason behind this is to educate the consumers by asking for their opinions within their use of plastic and in this way raise awareness among the consumers with the use of a friendly conversation.
Social media is the primary source used to broadcast these activities. The problem with this as mentioned by Looysen is the fact that “you're talking to yourself and the people who already know about you.” Furthermore, the store windows, which are created to draw attention, are reaching out to the right kind of media and the company is often represented in newspapers and magazines. The company has no plans of using TV commercials since it is a very expensive marketing method and a higher price in the company products is not desired at this point. “It would be preferred to raise the cost of a product due to improvement of ingredient quality and not a TV commercial.” says Looysen. The main attribute that the firm focuses on when marketing its products is the term *fresh natural ingredients* which is also added in the company’s tagline “Lush fresh handmade cosmetics.” It is later explained that the terms fresh and natural overlap with each other in a sense that the products are not produced in a factory where chemicals are used. Production and ingredients are therefore the key words in the company marketing messages. Another important communication message is the fact that the products do not go through channels where they get tested on animals and are not harmful for the environment. A natural and friendly conversation between the seller (company) and the buyer (customer) is created in this way. “Taking care of the environment and employees as well as being kind to communities will hopefully make people continue to trust us and the brand will grow.” Lastly, by focusing on the ingredients, Lush helps its farmers become organic certified and sell to other companies which contributes to sustainable business operations. Lush states that an issue has been the unawareness about the company’s green actions considering the fact that consumers have mostly been focusing on other attributes such as the humor and smell of the products.

**Green Labeling**

When it comes to green labels such as Fair-trade Looysen explains that there is a need for well-trained and educated staff in order to explain these labels to the customers. Today, there are several companies that use these labels in their products but do not prioritize the training of staff which makes things complicated and difficult for the consumers. Lush does not participate in that kind of labeling because of the high price associated with the purchase of these. He explains that “there is no need to use these stamps if you are already doing the right thing.” The only stamp used on Lush products is the vegan stamp which is seen as more important for the company rather than having mainstream labels which are primal used for marketing reasons.

**Green Cosmetics**

Followed by the green marketing activities of the case company in the Swedish market are questions based on the benefits of green cosmetics. Thus, the health benefits of using green cosmetics are explained. “Since skin is the biggest organ of the human body and absorbs ingredients into the blood it is vital to use reliable ingredients found in green cosmetics.” Looysen explains. He continues “If I get to pick something with toxic chemicals in it or something without 100 times I would choose the one without chemicals, and in those instances where chemicals must be used I will pick the company that chooses the least amount of preservatives. It can be good thing not to mess with the ecosystem of our bodies”. Due to essential oils and natural ingredients used in the cosmetics, a strong scent is created which is often misinterpreted by the consumers who do not know about the company and this becomes a challenge for the company. Lush does use some preservatives in its products and therefore has been questioned by consumers in the past about the reasons behind this. The founders of Lush, as stated by Looysen, explain that the preservatives used in the products contain the
least possible amount of parabens which are necessary for the production of these cosmetics. Thus, the use of parabens is minimal and hardly ever used since the products have a shelf life and are mineral based. “The main reason consumers choose green cosmetics is because they do not wish to use toxic chemicals on their bodies” as explained by Looyesen who continues with the following comment regarding other green products “An organic cotton tshirt is not any longer organic when it is washed in the washing machine with a chemical detergent. In comparison to this, organic cosmetics always stay organic because there is no environmental damaging process that needs to be done with these.”

Whether the company believes that green makeup products have the same quality and efficiency attributes as mainstream products the answer is yes, except for waterproof mascara since it cannot be made in any other way due to the synthetics used in production. Looyesen makes clear that the reason Lush makeup products are not very popular among consumers is the fact that they are more expensive than mainstream ones although the pricing is due to the ingredients used on the products and not the use of expensive mainstream marketing messages.

**Green Consumers**

Lush claims that it does not have a target group, even if this is considered to be a “bad” marketing strategy as explained by Looyesen. Green consumers are therefore not the target group; he further explains that there is something for everyone in the store to pick up even though it has been noticed that the main customers are females whose age range from 20 to 40 years old. Consequently, the company is now working towards gender-neutralizing its products by changing the product attributes such as; name, image and scent as well as reforming the store layouts.

As to why Swedish consumers choose to purchase green cosmetics, Looyesen has the perception that Swedes are generally aware and concerned about what effects the products consumed carry and as a result green cosmetics have become a part of a healthy lifestyle along with other green products. “Swedes are conscious about how the discretionary income is spent with the preference of fewer and efficient products compared to a range of cheaper and lower quality.” Looyesen explains. The Swedish consumers are also very careful to what products are finally purchased and accordingly it’s been clear in the past that some Lush customers with smaller salaries do not prioritize other product category purchases to be able to afford green cosmetics.

In contrary, why some consumers choose not to purchase green products, Lush brings up the example of a survey performed by reseller which showed that whilst consumers actually want to consume green, only 25% bought green items. Price is a main reason given to why this situation occurs, as well as mature consumers believing that green products just a trend. Lush explains that the aging parts of consumers carry perception that green products are always of inevitably lower quality. This belief was usually accurate in the 1970’s where soaps did not clean effectively nor lather and where the scent was largely unappealing whereas these issues have been resolved by technological progress in the later years. Furthermore, it’s a also a cultural shift that occurs with aging; a younger population for example might prefer to own a broader range of cheaper perfumes with different scents compared to a more mature segment that values quality and hence would rather spend their income on fewer and more exclusive products. Concerning that the trend of green products was shed in the past, Lush does not view this as negative action due to the establishment of green products that was able to take place afterwards.
Another issue with Swedish consumers’ perception of green products is described as misplacement of trust as well as mistrust. Unwarily, consumers believe that cosmetics or products are green because of the retailing location, such as pharmacies, but Lush clarifies that this isn’t always the case. Consumers that have been shown to mistrust Lush based their assumptions on the fact that the company uses preservatives even if Lush expressed that only one type of preservative is used and that it is the safest kind available. Essentially, consumers are occasionally uninformed about how unnatural some of their other products described as green truly are, and it becomes an issue for Lush due companies getting away with calling products natural when amount of natural ingredients is minimum. Regarding whether Swedish consumers understand the difference between the terms ecological, organic & natural, Lush responds that they do not believe so. Lush additionally believes that Swedish consumers look for the values of good results regarding product purchases. Beyond the green benefits, efficiency is the major attribute. Swedish consumers most likely compare green products and attributes to conventional products to find any possible differences.

Regarding misunderstandings that have earlier been experienced with the company has tried to communicate its green marketing messages with Swedish consumers Looysen brings out the fact that these are sometimes skeptical about the strong scent and whether the products really are natural. Swedes have shown to be very sensitive to scents which has resulted in the use of special ventilation in Lush shops within the Swedish market. Another difficulty has been the company efforts to explain how products do not have to be boring in order to be green. Whether price is a factor that prevents consumers from purchasing green products and if Swedish consumers are generally price-sensitive was further on discussed. Swedes are willing to pay a higher price if they see value in the product which makes it easier for the educated staff in the shops to communicate and have a natural conversation with them. Moreover, Swedish consumers always think about their needs and Lush as a company satisfies these by providing a large range of different scents and textures to their cosmetics.

Although green products are often described as boring and less efficient among the consumers, the green cosmetics industry is willing to fix this through having good products which are marketed in the right way, as mentioned by Looysen. The first step towards achieving this is having the right products that are effective. The second is to market these through educating the consumers about how they are not only good for their skin, but also for the environment. In this way a bond is build between the consumers and the company as well as trust.

Other green companies

Looysen is rather skeptical on whether companies claiming to be green are genuine or whether it is just a marketing strategy they use. In case of the second assumption, he believes that these will not last since they do not represent the ethics and values they should stand for to be considered as green. Lush Cosmetics main goal is to change the green cosmetics industry in terms of transforming to be more genuine.
6. Analyzing the gap between the two parts

In this section, an analysis based on the empirical findings between the focus groups and the case company is performed within this study’s theoretical framework. Different kinds of gaps between green companies and green consumers are identified.

Lush’s tagline is “fresh handmade cosmetics” which aims to describe the nature of the products. The attributes highlighted in the company’s marketing messages are “fresh & natural ingredients”; however Lush does use a minimal amount of synthetic ingredients, for instance parabens which are necessary for the production of liquid soaps. Because of this, some consumers find it difficult to comprehend whether the products are completely natural and whether the synthetic substances used are harmful. The focus group interview revealed that some consumers are reluctant to trust green companies if they find questionable ingredients and that they would rather not purchase the product than believing the company’s explanation to why the ingredients are used. A gap is therefore created among green companies using green terms such as natural and consumers questioning on whether these companies are 100% green due to the use of synthetic ingredients used in the stated green products.

The terms ecological, organic and natural were as mentioned discussed with the case company as well as the focus groups; the majority of participants admitted not understanding the difference between these terms. Lush confirms the above and that Swedes firstly look for good results within the purchase of a product. The unawareness and complexity of the expressions could lead to further skepticism, or in contrary naivety about the adjectives used to describe green products. Since these terms do not have a common definition it can become challenging for companies to explain the environmental and personal benefits provided by these. As seen in literature, Kinoti (2011) states that the relation between a green product and the biophysical environment should be addressed. Laroche et al (2001) suggest that green marketers should try to change the consumers’ attitudes by clearly stating the moral and environmental benefits of green products. Similarly, Kalafatis & Pollrad (1999), explain that there is a need for companies to inform the consumers about the offerings in as much detail as possible and be able to explain the meaning of the terms used in the company’ marketing messages to diminish misunderstandings between the company and the consumers. In accumulation the question arises if Lush should continue using the adjective “natural” to describe the products. To avoid confusion between Lush and green consumers, the attributes used in marketing need to be fleshed out in order to close the current gap of trust.

Despite misunderstandings regarding the marketing terms, the specific advantages seen in green products were, according to the members, personal health benefits. These benefits were described as more important than causing less environmental harm. Kinoti (2011) explains that the reason behind this is the fact that environmental benefits are intangible, indirect or insignificant to consumers which makes it challenging for companies using green marketing strategies. In addition, the environmental benefits of using a certain product cannot be measured in a quantitative way. The health benefits of green cosmetics, as seen by the focus groups, contribute to minimizing the risk of allergic skin reactions to strong chemical ingredients because of the skin’s ability to absorb substances which were later on perceived as a danger for the human body. Green groceries were described as equally important to green cosmetics since both product categories are consumed into the body.
The case company had a similar view about green cosmetic health benefits in a sense that the products do not interfere with the human body ecosystem because of the amount of natural ingredients used. A gap regarding the importance of health benefits was not identified between the company and green consumers. Ottman (1997) points out the importance of providing substantial information about what health benefits could be achieved with the use of green products, apart from the environmental protection advantages. Peattie (1992) additionally shows that consumers will insist on purchasing more green products when the environmental issues affect their usual consumption patterns.

“Just because a product is green doesn’t mean it’s not as effective as a conventional alternative” according to Looysen. The first green products released in the 1970’s were rather inefficient and did not satisfy consumer needs due to lack of technology in innovation and production. Costumers looking for green goods chose to settle for an environmentally friendly but less effective product, something the vast majority of consumers chose not to do. The conception of green products being of lower quality still exists as observed in the focus group interview. Kinoti (2011) stated the significance of companies assuring the consumers of the green product quality by providing them with information about the benefits in order to create self-interest.

A number of answers given from both focus groups showed that green product categories and in particular makeup were not preferred; reasons were that green makeup products could not compare to conventional alternatives in terms of texture, finish and color pigmentation. In contrast, Lush explains how the efficiency of its green makeup line is equal or higher to regular offerings from other makeup brands as well as believing that the main reasons consumers choose not to purchase green is due to the higher price. Consequently the consumers and the case company did not have the same conception about the product category green makeup which creates another knowledge gap regarding the reason of consumers’ non-purchase. Ottman (1997) argues that companies need to reassure the consumers about the performance of green products and how these are not inferior to conventional products as sometimes perceived by consumers.

Green cosmetics were also seen by the focus groups as overall more expensive than conventional cosmetics which shows that pricing was a significant buying motivation factor. If the pricing were to drop, a larger amount of purchases among the interviewed participants could be carried through. It was also questioned by the focus groups whether a mainstream consumer could truly afford a complete green lifestyle due to the pricing. Even so the respondents would continue purchasing green cosmetics due to the advantages offered but not to full scale. Lush conversely considers Swedish consumers willing to spend money on green cosmetics in which they see and understand value. Hence, store staff is employed to communicate with the consumers about the product benefits and provide useful information to ease their price sensitivity. According to the previously mentioned survey by a Lush reseller, the main reason Swedish consumers choose not to purchase green cosmetics is due to price. Consumers that are not aware of product quality and advantages of green cosmetics will most likely not choose to visit a store where products are thought to be more expensive than conventionally. This could in turn lead to alienation of possibly new customers. A gap can be identified between the case company and the mainstream consumers in terms of knowledge about the quality of green cosmetics and the reason of pricing.

Another cause of why some consumers may be excluded from green cosmetic companies’ customers could be the fact that they do not identify the place of retail. During the focus group interviews a respondent currently working in pharmacy said that some Swedish
consumers firstly tend to look for green cosmetic products in pharmacies. This conception is most likely implemented due to the health benefits of green cosmetics as well as pharmacies retailing health oriented and safe products. Even so, several green companies such as Lush, does not retail product through pharmacies. Looyesen added that Swedish consumers misunderstand that retailing location does not determine whether a product is green or not.

Ultimately, a gap arises between the consumers who believe that green cosmetics can mainly be found in pharmacies, and companies that do not retail green cosmetics through pharmacies. Looyesen also expressed that Swedes are more sensitive to scents compared to internationally which could be the cause of placing trust in unscented pharmacies. Lush products are known to have a powerful scent which further creates skepticism on whether the cosmetics are naturally scented. Certain consumers prefer unscented cosmetics which can be found in pharmacies; however the company explains that it provides its consumers with a large range of different scents in order to satisfy different preferences.

Whether labels were seen as a reason of purchasing green cosmetics, some participants declared that they continuously look for well-known labels when shopping for green products as a confirmation of the benefits. These respondents also found the labels helpful in understanding the green benefits associated with the product. In reverse, others had negative conceptions about labels, suspected as marketing ploys and greenwashing but also complicated to understand. According to Kinoti a challenge with adopting green marketing strategies is marketers claiming to be environmentally friendly when promoting products which make other green companies less reliable in the eyes of the consumers. Lush expressed that only vegan and vegetarian labels are used on the product packaging since conventional labels are highly costly and therefore avoided. Instead Lush opts for educated employees who communicate the green cosmetic benefits to consumers. This results in a gap of interest between the company and the consumers preferring green conventional labels.

Regarding the case company’s current green marketing activities, customers returning five containers of Lush products are rewarded with a free fresh mask. This activity does not only contribute to customer retention but also post-consumer recycling. Kinoti (2011) refers to this method as a green logistics strategy which is referred to as reverse channel systems. With this said, the case company extracts and reuses useful substances found in waste which improves the company image by underlying ethics. Another form of green logistics is to use minimal packaging; this is also done by Lush and shows company commitment and contribution to the environment. Yet, the focus groups did not mention recycling as a benefit of purchasing green products which could be explained due to mainly placing emphasis on satisfying their own needs. There is therefore a gap between the company and the consumers’ interest and intentions regarding recycling.

Lush explains the importance of using sampling in its marketing activities since this helps the consumers try the products before purchasing. Members of the focus groups were at one point asked about their impressions after using a green cosmetic product for the first time. Most of the participants answered that a first impression cannot be obtained after only one use since the positive effects of such products can mainly be discovered through a longer period of time. Ottman (1997) explains that it is important for companies to increase the actual and potential customers’ self-interest. The use of sampling has been shown to be appreciated among consumers wanting to test the efficiency of green cosmetics according to Lush, but it is left unsaid on whether the amount used in these samples can be compared by the consumers to long term usage as in providing the same positive effects. It can therefore be explained that the case company is not aware of the fact that consumers experience advantages after a period.
of use and may not value samples the same way which creates a further knowledge gap between the parts.

Despite the gaps between green consumers and green companies found above, similarities are also identified which lead to positive interactions between the parts. Even if green consumers can be described as dazed and confused, or unaware of claims made, Bearnie et al (2009) showed that green consumers tend to be brand loyal. Both focus groups said that their consumption of green products had increased and that it most likely would continue to do so based on the improvement of product variety. Lush also expressed that many costumers become brand loyal after repurchasing products. Thus, both focus groups and the case company share similar opinions regarding brand loyalty among green consumers.

The focus groups also stated a positive opinion of how the manufacturing of green products is performed; without animal cruelty or human exploitation. This was also the conception Looysen had of Lush customers; the campaigns are well received and valued. Ethical campaigns designed by Lush use different ways of creating awareness about animal cruelty, human exploitation and environmental issues. Conversation is usually brought up by asking for consumers’ opinions about specific topics such as reducing amounts of plastics used. Using sound and image to explain and demonstrate the environmental protection as well as health values of green products has been stated as a positive green promotion strategy by Kinoti (2011). It is also a way to catch consumers’ attention and to generate involvement. Furthermore the use of campaigns work as a helpful green marketing tool since consumers overcome the “greatest environmental hazard” by being informed about the environment, as discussed by Polonsky (1997). The case company is aware of the fact that Swedish consumers value ethical campaigns. With this said, both the case company and consumers value animal cruelty and human exploitation and a gap is therefore not of existence. Instead the case company aims to create bonds with consumers by means of trust which will result in brand growth.
7. Conclusions

Conclusions are drawn based on the analysis of the performed interview with Lush Cosmetics and the focus group meetings. The questions presented in the problem formulation section will be answered, and the results of the study will be shown below.

The study revealed both similarities and gaps between the case company and the focus groups’ knowledge. Gaps can also be identified in the company’s offerings compared to the focus groups’ needs. Although ingredients is the most highlighted attribute in the company marketing messages both focus groups showed lack of knowledge regarding components of green cosmetics. More so, green marketing terms such as natural, organic and ecological create confusion among the consumers and it can therefore be questioned why the case company uses these terms in a market where consumers are found to be fragmented in terms of knowledge. Firstly, a gap was identified due to differences in knowledge regarding ingredients and marketing terms. Changing the consumers’ behavior becomes intricately difficult if they are not aware about the meaning of the ingredients, green terms and what advantages these have both on a personal and an environmental level.

Even due to the unawareness about ingredients, the advantage consumers looked for and valued the most from green products and cosmetics were personal health benefits. With the company having similar traits in the marketing messages there was no gap between what consumers value as the most important advantage in green products and what the company emphasizes in advertising. Another factor that determines how aware Swedish green consumers are about green products is their potential knowledge on green labels. The study secondly finds a gap between the consumers who look for green labels and Lush that doesn’t satisfy these needs by not using mainstream labels apart from vegan and vegetarian. This could be a result of the company not understanding the information that these consumers value within green labels.

Thirdly, opinions regarding pricing as a purchase motivator differed between the case company and the focus groups which establishes another gap. Although the case company understands the fact that Swedish consumers are price-sensitive there is no clear understanding that some consumers who purchase green cosmetics own a larger amount of mainstream cosmetics due to price difference. In addition to this, there is minor marketing effort where the price of the products in correlation with the quality is justified or explained to the consumers. Having the Swedish consumers understand where green cosmetics are retailed was described by the company as a challenging effort even though the focus groups stated to be aware of the actual places of retail. Hence there is no knowledge gap between the focus group and Lush. However a lack of information can be identified as stated by the case company. Fourthly, a gap arises due to the fact that conception of green makeup products being of lower quality and efficiency compared to conventional alternatives among consumers is not acknowledged by the case company. As a conclusion, consumers finding a particular product category unsatisfactory could lead to further doubt regarding other product assortments.

In accumulation gaps that occur between the case company and green consumers can be identified. As this study explores, these gaps are based on both green companies’ as well as consumers’ unawareness of the following; marketing terms, price, ingredients and efficiency. These gaps could possibly be the reason behind low sales of green cosmetics in the Swedish market but this study’s explorative nature does not aim to find closure to the gaps.
7.1 Suggestions for further research

During the development of this study, fields of interest for further research have been identified. Due to the explorative nature of this study, strategies to seal the gaps identified have not been established. Emphasis is placed upon describing the findings of gaps in detail. Because of this there are further possibilities of performing quantitative research in the field of subject with a fuller population where reliable statistical conclusions can be obtained. A foundation can be seen in this report to further aid in detecting questions for future research.

7.2 Recommendations

Green consumers have been shown to be puzzled and suspicious about green marketing albeit interested overall in the subject. It is therefore a recommendation to green companies and cosmetic companies in particular to create strategies in order to eliminate the gaps. Terms organic, natural and ecological result in misunderstandings between the parts as of now and aiming to generate common definitions would be beneficial for the industry as whole. Misunderstanding of terms could lead to consumers automatically branding marketing efforts as greenwashing and instead choosing not to believe any claimed advantages of the product.

Green cosmetics are often questionable among consumers in terms of ingredients and labeling. These two fields need to be further explored by companies in order to diminish consumer unawareness. Using the term natural to describe the cosmetics might have to be taken into consideration by Lush, even if the amount of synthetic substances used in the products is minimal.

The environmental hazard is not the main reason consumers choose to purchase green products; instead personal needs such as health benefits are prioritized. Trying to sell products by creating stress and guilt has proven to be unappreciated by consumers and unsuccessful for companies. Consumers express concerns regarding green companies marketing efforts which they sometimes find to be uninspiring and tiring. Green products have also been described as overpriced, ineffective and unavailable. Green companies need to find ways to diminish these conceptions and establish innovative and interesting products as well as market them in an appealing way.
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9. Attachments

9.1 Focus group questionnaire

Green Products

1. What green products do you usually buy?
2. What do you like about these (green) products?
3. When did you start buying green products? Have your green product purchases increased or decreased during time? Why?
4. What kind of green products haven’t you purchased yet? Why? Would you like to try them? (explain why if the answer to the last question is No)
5. What specific advantages do you see in green products? How important are these for you?
6. What disadvantages do you find in green products? Do you have any personal experiences?
7. What would you define as a green product?
8. What do you prefer? Green or mainstream products?

Green Cosmetics

9. Do you own or have owned any green cosmetics? -What made you purchase these?
10. Did you do any research on green cosmetics (before buying)?
11. What was your first impression after using a green cosmetic product?
12. Do you overall own more mainstream or green cosmetics?
13. What do you think about the price difference between green vs. mainstream cosmetics?
14. What are the health benefits of using green cosmetics?
15. What do you think about the quality of green cosmetics?
16. What could make you purchase green products more often?
17. Will you continue purchasing green cosmetics?
18. What do you think of companies that sell green cosmetics? Do you believe that they stand for what they say or do they just claim to be green in order to improve their image outwards?
9.2 Lush Cosmetics questionnaire

1. What does the term *green cosmetics* mean to the company? Is there a specific definition used within the company?
2. What are the company’s current green marketing activities in the Swedish market?
3. Are green consumers the company’s main target group?
4. What attributes do you focus on when marketing your green products? Why?
5. What is the most highlighted attribute?
6. What is your opinion regarding green labels such as Fairtrade? Do consumers understand these labels?
7. What are the health benefits of using green cosmetics?
8. What makes green cosmetics as important as other green products?
9. Do you believe that green makeup products have the same quality attributes as mainstream makeup products?
10. Why do Swedish consumers choose to purchase green cosmetics?
11. Why do some consumers choose not to purchase green cosmetics?
12. What do you believe are Swedish consumers’ perceptions about green cosmetics?
13. What advantages do Swedish consumers look for in green cosmetics? What do customers value the most regarding product attributes?
14. Do you believe that Swedish consumers understand the difference between the terms ecological, organic and natural cosmetics?
15. What difficulties have you earlier experienced when trying to communicate green marketing messages to Swedish consumers?
16. It is said that price is a factor that prevents consumers from buying green products. Do you believe that the Swedish consumers are willing to pay a higher price when purchasing green cosmetics?
17. Green products are sometimes described as “boring” and “less efficient” among consumers. Do you think that the image of green cosmetics plays an important role as opposing to these descriptions?
18. What are your perceptions on other green cosmetic companies and how does Lush differ from these?