The Social Attitude-Behavior Gap among Swiss Millennials: The Fairtrade Max Havelaar Case

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KEYWORDS: attitude, behavior, sustainable consumption, social consumerism, Gen Y

ABSTRACT. Public interest in sustainability has been steadily increasing and consumers mainly hold favorable attitudes toward this idea; however, these are not univocally reflected in purchase behaviors. There exists an attitude-behavior gap. While existing research mainly investigated this gap within the field of environmental sustainability, this research explores the concept from a different angle: the social dimension of sustainability. Fairtrade Max Havelaar, an established Swiss non-profit organization, is taken as a reference example to visualize the concept of social sustainability respectively social consumerism. Further, the sustainability-conscious cohort Generation Y is the target segment of this research. In essence, the present thesis studies the social attitude-behavior gap among Swiss Millennials based on the example of Fairtrade Max Havelaar. The leading objective of this empirical research is to investigate the relationship between social attitude and social purchase behavior and how it is impacted by various influencing factors. The results prove the existence of a statistically significant gap between the two variables with the four factors perceived personal importance, habits, trust and awareness being significant mediators. Based on these insights, organizations operating in the field of social sustainability should be aware of a potential attitude-behavior gap. The findings imply that this gap may be decreased through raising the perceived personal importance, trust, awareness and the willingness to switch products (habits). That is assuming communication has already been adapted to today's sustainability-shaped world and to the target segment. Suggestions on how to effectively communicate sustainability-related topics and reach Gen Y are provided.

ABSTRATO. O interesse na sustentabilidade tem aumentado de forma constante e os consumidores têm demonstrado uma maior preocupação em relação a este tema. No entanto, essas preocupações nem sempre são refletidas na compra, uma vez que existe uma lacuna entre a atitude e o comportamento dos consumidores. As pesquisas elaboradas anteriormente focaram-se principalmente nessa lacuna dentro da sustentabilidade ambiental. Contudo, esta dissertação pretende explorar o conceito de sustentabilidade sob a perspetiva da vertente social. O Fairtrade, uma organização suíça sem fins lucrativos, é uma referência dentro do conceito de consumismo social. A Geração Y, consciente da sustentabilidade, é o segmento alvo desta pesquisa. O objetivo principal desta pesquisa é investigar a relação entre a atitude e o comportamento social, e como esta é impactada por vários fatores. Os resultados comprovam a existência de uma diferença estatisticamente significativa entre as duas variáveis. Os quatro fatores para estas diferenças são a importância pessoal, os hábitos, a confiança e a consciência. Baseado nestes pressupostos, as organizações que operam no campo da sustentabilidade social devem estar cientes de uma possível falha na relação atitude-comportamento. Essa lacuna pode ser diminuída através do aumento da importância pessoal percebida, da confiança, da consciência e da vontade de mudar de produto (hábitos). Isto pressupõe que a comunicação já tenha sido adaptada ao mundo atual, tendo em conta os critérios de sustentabilidade e o seu segmento alvo. Nesta tese são ainda fornecidas sugestões sobre como comunicar de forma eficiente tópicos relacionados com a sustentabilidade, que possam atingir a geração Y.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's era, which is shaped by climate change, recurrent natural disasters, natural resource limits, a growing population and social inequality, companies as well consumers alike increasingly focus on sustainability (Allen & Spialek, 2017; Wang, Krishna & McFerran, 2017).

Companies allocate substantial resources to sustainable business practices in order to be perceived as socially responsible. This trend toward a sustainable way of doing business has multiple roots including regulatory compliance requirements and natural resource limits (Fliedner & Majeske, 2010). However, one of the most hotly debated motives is the brand image (ibid.). Copious research (e.g. Ellen, Webb & Mohr, 2006; Nan & Heo, 2007; Pracejus & Olsen, 2004; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001) illustrated that corporate social responsibility[1] [CSR] initiatives not only help to alleviate the ills of the world but also positively affect the brand reputation. Hence, showing environmental efforts resulting in a green brand image may improve the firm's stock return (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014; Peloza, White & Simpson, 2013; Sum, 2012). As a result, companies across industries including multinationals such as Unilever, Nike and Starbucks have recognized the need for doing business sustainably and have embedded this philosophy into their DNA (Hardcastle, 2013).

An underlying driver of this trend toward sustainability is the growing environmental concern of the public (Trudel, Argo & Meng, 2016). Consumers have realized that they directly impact the natural environment as well as climate change (Stern, 2000) and that socially responsible behavior can induce positive environmental change on a large scale (EPA, 2019). In consequence, their demand for sustainable options is burgeoning (Gershoff & Frels, 2014). At least in theory because this is not a universal truth. While consumers claim to care about the environment, they not always translate this mindset into actual behavior – there exists a so-called attitude-behavior gap, the main concept of this study (e.g. Auger & Devinney 2007; Carrington, Neville & Whitwell, 2010).

To connect the dots, the topic of sustainability has gained significant global relevance during the past decades. Consumers are increasingly aware of the consequences of their consumption

[1] Broadly defined as a business's role in the ecosystem it operates in and its impact on social, environmental, and economic aspects within this universe (Crane, Matten & Moon, 2004).

decisions and their effects on the environment as well the society (Schor, 1998). This has triggered a rethinking; companies and consumers alike aim to act more sustainably albeit their underlying rationale might differ. However, it seems that a world of sustainable consumption is rather wishful thinking than reality. Positive attitudes toward sustainability seem not to be always reflected in the consumer's behavior. This thesis investigates this phenomenon, also referred to as the attitude-behavior gap. The relevance of this research is twofold. On the one hand, there is a theoretical relevance; this research aims to explore the gap between attitude and behavior from a social (rather than from an environmental) perspective of sustainability which has not yet been widely covered in previous research. More specifically, this study intends to discover if and why such a gap may exist among Swiss Millennial consumers based on the case study of Fairtrade Max Havelaar. The present quantitative findings will complement the current state of research and enrich the understanding of the topic. On the other hand, the identification of a potential attitude-behavior gap among Swiss Millennials and the main factors contributing to it also entails practical relevance. It might be beneficial for organizations, operating in the field of social sustainability, to become aware that attitudes not automatically translate into behaviors and what the main reasons for this could be. With that knowledge, marketing strategies focusing on minimizing the gap can be implemented. This in turn may positively affect the organizations' returns.

The first chapter of this dissertation provides an overview of relevant literature which builds the basis for the subsequent chapters. Secondly, the problem discussion illustrates the relevance and the objective of this study. Thirdly, the methodology examines the applied research methods focusing on the quantitative survey. Fourthly, the results of the research are provided and discussed. The following conclusion connects the insights of this study with existing theoretical knowledge and provides managerial implications. The last chapter serves for reflection; it states limitations and highlights areas for further research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to lay the theoretical foundation of this research focusing on sustainability and the attitude-behavior gap. The structure follows a funnel approach; the examination starts on a broad level and becomes more specific and nuanced as it proceeds. The literature presented in the first part of the chapter describes the concept of sustainability, defines its terminology, touches upon ethical consumerism and investigates how brands are communicating sustainability-related issues. In a second step, the concept of the attitude-behavior gap is examined. To complete the theoretical framework, the last subchapter links sustainability and the attitude-behavior gap through the demographic cohort Generation Y.

2.1 Sustainability: An Idea with Momentum

As depicted in the introduction, sustainability is a contemporary paradigm which has been gaining importance on a global level throughout the past decades. Nowadays, it is a driving force of decisions on the company- as well as the consumer side. Firms, including well-established multinationals such as Nike and Unilever, are adapting their business models in order to satisfy the growing need for sustainable products of their consumers and the public (Hardcastle, 2013). Sustainability is a powerful concept that has been institutionalized into agendas of legislators and strategies of corporations; however, how can it be defined?

2.1.1 The Complex and Disputed Definition of Sustainability

Sustainability is a multifaceted term. There have been many lengthy discussions about its definition (Johnston, Everard, Santillo & Robért, 2007). The intention of this subchapter is not to review these debates in-depth but rather provide a concise overview and determine a working definition.

The notion of sustainability has its origin in the French verb *soutenir* which can be translated into *support* or *hold up* (Brown, Hanson, Liverman & Merideth, 1987). The original meaning is rooted in sustainable resource management in forestry, dating back to the early 18th century, and was related to the husbandry of wood supply in times of shortages (von Carlowitz, 1713; Mantel, 1990). Over years, the concept developed into an ecological principle of respecting the capability of Mother Nature to regenerate itself (Duden, 2015). Influential in that development was the first *United Nations Conference on the Human Environment* in Stockholm in 1972, during which the potential misalignment of economic growth and environmental protection was at the center of discussion (United Nations [UN], 1972). A few years later, the World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED] (1987, p. 43) articulated in *Our Common Future,* also known as the *Brundtland Report,* what has now become the most frequently cited and a widely accepted definition of sustainability respectively sustainable development (e.g. Fliedner & Majeske, 2010; Kuchinka, Balazs, Gavriletea & Djokic, 2018):

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations to meet their own needs."

This definition relates to critical global issues, such as climate change and resource depletion, implying that the impact of supply chain activities on ecological systems should be limited (Fliedner & Majeske, 2010). It has been a revolutionary definition in the sense that it was the first to combine environmental and socio-economic issues (ibid.). Our Common Future stated that economies as well as the comfort of people depend on the environment (WCED, 1987). It further underlined the global interdependence with regards to environmental issues (ibid.). Hence, the publication induced a change in attitude; the environment was no longer seen as an eternal source of resources and the dependability of humankind on it was acknowledged. In the following years and decades, a multitude of definitions followed. For instance, the World Conservation Union [ICUN], United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP] and World Wide Fund for Nature [WWF] (1991) verbalized the term sustainable development as raising the human standard of living within the capability of surrounding ecosystems, which primarily comprised social and environmental facets. As a result of the *World Summit on Sustainable Development* in 2005, a rather metaphorical illustration of sustainability was born: the "three-pillar" model (United Nation [UN], 2005). It focused on the sustainable development of three interdependent dimensions, namely the *ecological, economic* and *social* pillar (ibid.). This UN resolution-based model has become widely acknowledged and many academics have based their understanding of sustainability on this theory (e.g. Littig & Griessler, 2005; Gibson, 2006; Murphy, 2012). There are numerous other models, thoughts and attempts to conceptualize sustainability. For instance, the debate about "weak" vs. "strong" sustainability (Haughton and Hunter, 1994) or a research program around global sustainability (Schellnhuber, Crutzen, Clark & Hunt, 2005). In fact, these days an estimated number of around 300 definitions exist (Johnston et al., 2007).

As highlighted, there has been much discussion about the notion of sustainability, sustainable development and related concepts; however, no single universally accepted definition exists. Instead, there is a lot of criticism of prevailing conceptualizations. Wackernagel and Rees (1996) alleged that the Brundtland report, probably still the most-widely accepted description, is intentionally ambiguous and leaves too much room for interpretation. This broadness carries the risk that the concept becomes meaningless (Costanza & Patten, 1995) or worse, companies and politicians may legitimize a wide range of policies and practices by the concept of sustainable development (US National Science Foundation, 2000). Brundtland's ambiguity enabled companies to label almost any course of action as sustainable growth (ibid.). Further, they are able to justify their business practices by Brundtland's support for but vague definition of rapid growth (Hopwood, Mellor and O'Brien, 2005). Other academics counter and claim that it might have been exactly this absence of a precise definition which has led to the consensus that the world should not be treated as a business in liquidation (Daly, 1991). With regards to the "three-pillar" model which also has become a popular understanding of sustainability, critics argue that, similarly to Brundtland's definition, the simplicity of the model results in conceptual vagueness (Parris & Kates, 2003). The terminology is ambiguous and there are no clear methods of measurement (ibid.). Other conceptual models that include different and more domains, such as the "prism" or the "egg" of sustainability (Keiner, 2005), face similar criticisms (Parris & Kates, 2003). Also, such models are criticized for diluting the intention of sustainability as they have been extended through multiple dimensions with a variety of meanings (Grunwald, 2004).

Whilst acknowledging the vigorous debates and existing ambiguities about the understanding of sustainability, the still widely acknowledged definition of the Brundtland Report serves the purpose of this research. It is complemented with the understanding of the "three-pillar" model, respectively its categorization of sustainability into three spheres. The focus of this research lies on the social pillar which is subsequently described.

2.1.2 Social Sustainability: The Wellbeing of a Community

As the term sustainability originates from an environmental thought, many studies have emphasized this aspect over other dimensions, such as the social one. Lozano and Huisingh (2011) suggested that another reason for this might be that social issues are less developed than their counterpart. In order to complement the comparably poor literature about social sustainability, with regards to the attitude-behavior gap, the present study focuses on this domain. Hereinafter, this social perspective is specified.

On a broad level, the Brundtland Report stated that it is essential to have an equal distribution of power and influence within a society (WCED, 1987). More specifically, McKenzie (2004) defined social sustainability as relationships, structures, systems and processes that support current and future generations to build livable and healthy communities which are democratic, equitable (e.g. in relation to human rights), diverse, connected and provide a good quality of life. Lozano and Huisingh (2011) focused more on work aspects and mention factors such as employee wages, working hours, benefits, development, training, education and human rights. Still, they also mention the health and safety of the entire community (ibid.). Other academics described the term as the quality of and within a society, including its relationship to nature (Littig & Griessler, 2005). Accordingly, social sustainability is achieved if institutions and employment fulfil normative claims of human dignity, participation as well as social justice and satisfy a set of human needs (ibid.). Additionally, the natures' reproductive capabilities need to be preserved in the long-term perspective (ibid.). This latter point emphasizes the blurry line between the different sustainability dimensions (i.e. the environmental and the social one). Further aspects which are frequently mentioned in literature are distribution of resources and power, education, capacity-building (e.g. through education and training), freedom and the provision of basic services and infrastructure (e.g. Chiu, 2002; Nahapiet & Ghosal, 1998; Redclift, 2005; Vallance, Perkins & Dixon, 2011) – which all in a way are related to the quality of life.

While not every definition of social sustainability includes environmental aspects, most focus on the quality of human life, social justice and equality. In a nutshell, the core of the social sphere of sustainability, and the working definition for this research, is to provide a good quality of life within an equitable, healthy and safe community for current and future generations.

2.1.3 Sustainability in Consumption: Ethical Consumerism

As portrayed above, sustainability itself is a multifaceted term and there are copious concepts related to it. As this research does not focus on sustainability in general but rather on its role in consumption, this subchapter aims to provide some background on sustainable consumption and its terminologies.

The concept of sustainable consumption behavior has its emergence in the 1990s and attracted the attention of numerous academics. Various studies have used different expressions to describe these responsible consumer segments, from ethical to green to environmental to socially responsible consumers (e.g. Bondy & Talwar, 2011; Crane, 2001; De Pelsmacker, Driesen & Rayp, 2005; Roberts, 1996). Independent of the terminology, the major part of the existing research analyzed the relationship between consumers and the environmental domain, such as recycling or saving energy (e.g. Rokka & Uusitalo, 2008; Tang & Lam, 2017; Tanner & Kast, 2003; Young et al., 2010). This can also be summarized by the term *environmental* consumerism, which refers to an individual's purchase behavior influenced by environmental concerns (Shrum, McCarty & Lowrey, 1995); namely, to search for goods and services with minimal environmental impact (Mainieri et al., 1997).

However, as the previous chapter illustrated, sustainable behavior consists of more than just the environmental facet. Consumers that through their purchase decisions try to contribute not only to the environment but also address other issues, such as social ones, can be considered as *ethically minded consumers* (Bray et al., 2011; Carrington et al., 2010; Roberts, 1996). Ethical consumers feel responsible toward the society, and the environment is just one aspect of it (De Pelsmacker et al., 2005). Ethical can be considered, similar to sustainability, as an umbrella term. It encapsulates various meanings and issues, which may differ among consumers (Carrington et al., 2010). Examples include concerns about the environment, fair trade, employee rights and animal welfare, to name a few (ibid.; Crane, 2001). As these ethical values differ, so does the resulting behavior: for example, some consumers primarily care about environmental issues and are looking for environmentally friendly products, while others aim to support social causes and therefore purchase fair trade products (De Pelsmacker et al., 2005; Roberts, 1996). As already specified, this research mainly moves within the *social dimension,* addressing the quality of life, wellbeing and health of communities. However, as much of the existing research is based on the environmental[2] domain, it is also taken into account (as graphically depicted in Figure 1).

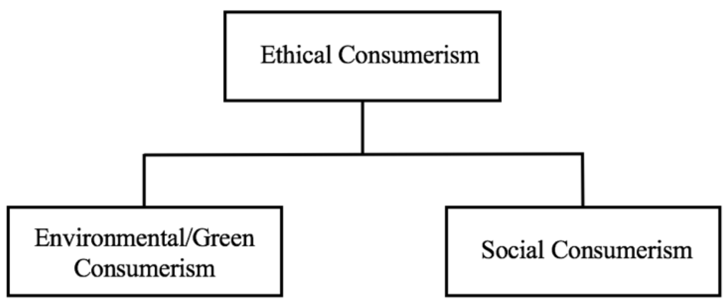

Figure 1 – Simplified Representation of Ethical Consumerism

[2] For the purpose of this research the terms *green* and *environmental* are used interchangeably

It should be noted that these are just two components of *ethical consumerism* which includes a much broader set of issues and considerations (Carrington et al., 2010).

Having discussed sustainability and consumer-related concepts, the focus is now turned to the company's side of the equation. Sustainability trends have changed the business environment for many organizations and this new reality is discussed in the upcoming subchapter. The focus lies on the element of communication as it is closely linked to the attitude-behavior gap.

2.1.4 How to Communicate in a Sustainable World?

"Fish or humans may die because swimming in the seas and rivers has become unhealthy. The oil-pumps may run dry and the average climatic temperature may rise or fall. As long as this is not the subject of communication it has no social effect."

– Niklas Luhmann (1989, p. 28f.)

With this quote the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann accentuated the significance of communication in the process of engaging the society in sustainability- and environmental issues. According to Ziemann (2011), communication is the underlying cornerstone of societal organization. Humans become social beings through communication because it allows to inform each other and to disclose internal thoughts (ibid.). In that sense, the term communication implies a social process that allows the interchange of common orientations (Godeman & Michelsen, 2011). Consequently, the communication of sustainability aims to build a conscious awareness and common understanding of issues related to the relationship between humans and their environment, linking them to social norms and values (ibid.; Kates et al. 2001). However, organizations that take an approach to sustainability not only need to make consumers aware of sustainability-related issues but also appropriately communicate their engagement. This is the topic of this chapter. Before diving into how to communicate, sustainability communication is contextualized.

2.1.4.1 Background: From the Presustainability World to the Sustainability World

More and more consumers evaluate brands based on their sustainability initiatives and direct their purchase decisions according to it (Holt, Quelch & Taylor, 2004; Kotler, 2011). Thus, brands across the planet have begun to integrate the idea of sustainability into their strategies and operations to achieve a competitive advantage and generate favorable stakeholder attitudes (Du, Bhattacharya & Sen, 2010; Göçer & Tuğrul, 2015). There has been a change in the

Presustainability World	**Sustainability World**
Wants are natural and infinite, and encouraging unlimited consumption is good	Wants are culturally influenced and strongly shaped by marketing and other forces
The planet's resources are infinite	The earth's resources are finite and fragile
The earth's carrying capacity for waste and pollution is infinite	The earth's carrying capacity for waste and pollution is very limited sources are finite and fragile
Quality of life and personal happiness increase with increased consumption and want satisfaction	Quality of life and personal happiness do not always increase with more consumption and want satisfaction

Table 1 – Presustainability vs. Sustainability World

(Kotler, 2011, p. 132f)

mindsets of consumers as well as enterprises, and marketers need to adapt to this new reality (Kotler, 2011). In order to put this into a framework and illustrate how this new environment is different, key assumptions from the presustainability versus the sustainability world are summarized (Table 1). In the sustainable world, companies need to consider resource limitations, externality costs which are connected to consumption (such as pollution and waste) as well as redefine the concepts of wants and consumption. Next to adjusting their communication activities, they also have to revise the other elements of their marketing strategy, including product, price and place[3], as well as their supply chain activities (ibid.). While Kotler's definition of a sustainability world primarily focuses on impacts on the environment, such adaptions can also be of a different nature, addressing other dimensions of sustainability. The Japanese consumer electronics company Sharp is an illustrative example; they engaged in multiple environmental and social initiatives (Sharp, 2014). For instance, they reduced greenhouse gas emissions to become an eco-positive organization while at the same time educating 180'000 Japanese children in 3'000 elementary schools about sustainability (Reilly & Hynan, 2014; Sharp, 2014). Hence, they not only addressed the environmental but also the social domain. Some other companies that have successfully incorporated the sustainability credo are (ibid.):

[3] Elements of a marketing strategy and tools to put marketing planning into practice, aiming to satisfy the target market (McCarthy, 1960).

- General Electric: Launched the "Ecoimagination" program which aspired to solve social problems that result in an economic profit (social dimension);
- DuPont: Discovered methods to cut pollution and manufacture sustainable materials (environmental dimension);
- Wal-Mart: Increased the fuel efficiency of its truck fleets, resulting in decreased pollution, and is further pushing its suppliers to follow their example (environmental dimension).

As the above examples show, there are various ways how companies can commit to sustainability. Accordingly, also communication topics can range from green manufacturing to issues of social justice that have an impact on the community at large (Friedman, 2009; Nidumolu, Prahalad & Rangaswami, 2009; van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003). Digging into communication, there are two theories on how stakeholders may be approached. The traditional, also called *functionalistic*, view of communicating sustainability, companies promote CSR activities to build brand identity and reputation through transparency (Golob et al., 2013). It is a strategic top-down approach (Mumby & Stohl, 1996) focusing on reporting CSR activities to stakeholders (Porter & Kramer, 2006). It is a one-sided communication and therefore does not allow interaction or negotiations of public expectations (Christensen & Cheney, 2011). On the other hand, there is the *constructivist* approach which is primarily concerned with stakeholder interaction and has been addressed in more recent publications on CSR (e.g. Golob et al., 2013). The objective of this view is to discuss and negotiate CSR initiatives to reach a mutual understanding of sustainability-related issues (ibid.). In other words, not only intra- but also inter-organizational discussions anchor CSR holistically in and around the organization and lead to co-creation (Basu & Palazzo, 2008). In line with the *constructivist* idea, also Kotler (2011) stressed the importance of the dialogue with all stakeholders – from employees to investors. They need to be convinced to accept associated sustainability challenges (ibid.). This approach is a reaction to the increased significance of the sustainability topic (Chapter 2.1).

As the introductory quote of this subchapter emphasized, sustainability commitments are only as valuable as their communication. A number of academics elaborated on the topic on how companies can effectively communicate their CSR activities and hence maximize business benefits from them.

2.1.4.2 The Message Design: Emphasize Involvement

Several scholars proposed different concepts and theories to underlie successful CSR communication. Du et al. (2010) established a popular conceptual framework for enterprises to communicate sustainability more effectively to stakeholders. According to them, companies usually aim to emphasize their involvement in various social causes within their CSR communication. In that circumstance, the researchers propose four domains a company can base their message design on. Subsequently, these four are explained and complemented with examples:

1. *CSR commitment:* There are three elements to commitment; the amount of input, the consistency of it and the durability of the association (Dwyer, Schurr & Oh, 1987). A firm can concentrate on one or multiple of these aspects. As an example, in their corporate responsibility report, Target (2008) stated that they had donated more than $246 million to schools (amount of input) since they launched their "Take Charge of Education" (ECOE) program in 1997 (durability) which purpose is the donation of a percentage of Target credit card purchases (consistency). Hence, they included all three aspects. More generally speaking, commitments to a sustainable cause mostly are related to fund donations. But also the provision of other corporate resources (e.g. human capital in the form of employee volunteering) may belong to this category.

2. *CSR impact:* While commitment addresses the input, impact focuses on the output of a CSR endeavour. In other words, it comprises the concrete benefits to the target segment. For instance, Pampers partnered with the United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] to introduce the social initiative "1 Pack=1 Vaccine". The objective of the program was to save neonates from the disease newborn tetanus (Procter & Gamble, 2008). Hence, they provided vaccines to expectant women in developing countries (ibid.). This social program offered a tangible societal benefit, which is captured in the program's title. According to prior research, both CSR commitment and impact are effective communication strategies as long as they are based on facts and do not evoke the perception of bragging (Sen, Du & Bhattacharya, 2009).

3. *CSR motives:* CSR motives which are communicated to stakeholders can be categorized into intrinsic motives (e.g. giving back to society) and business cases for engagement (e.g. a reaction to consumer demands) (Maignan & Ralston, 2002). To inhibit

stakeholder skepticism and establish credibility, CSR messages should focus on the intersection of societal and company interests and be frank about benefits to both society and to themselves (Forehand & Grier, 2003; Porter & Kramer 2006).

4. *CSR fit:* Generally, stakeholders expect a logical association between the sustainability issue the company supports and their business (Haley, 1996). Congruence may be achieved through shared associations of the brand and the cause (ibid.). Examples are affinity with particular target groups (e.g. personal care brand Avon's engagement against breast cancer), product dimensions (e.g. a herbal product brand supports the restoration of rain forests), or a firm's past conducts in a field that is now associated with the corporate image (e.g. Ben & Jerry's commitment to environmental protection) (Menon & Kahn, 2003). The lack of a logical connection between a social issue and the company's core activities, which implies a low CSR fit, is likely to reduce stakeholders' positive reactions to a company's CSR undertakings. This can be explained by the two-stage model of attributions (Gilbert, 1989). According to it, consumers correct their initial attribution of sincere intrinsic motives to CSR activities if they have to engage in effortful elaboration of considering alternative, contextual elements. As a result, superficial extrinsic motivations (e.g. financial motives, competitive pressure) become more salient. Hence, the CSR fit of social initiatives should be highlighted. If there is no obvious natural fit, the company should focus on the rationale for its social activities and thereby increase the perceived fit. On the other hand, alternative research suggested that, under certain conditions, a low fit might lead to more positive stakeholder reactions (Bloom, Hoeffler, Keller & Meza, 2006; Menon & Kahn, 2003). The reasoning behind is that a low CSR fit might be associated with sincerer motives (ibid.). Still, the majority of the academics advise to strive for a high fit.

2.1.4.3 The Message Delivery: Elevate Independent Channels

After setting the context of the sustainability world and defining *what* to communicate, the focus is now turned onto *how* to deliver the message, respectively communication channels. The following discussion is primarily focused on the distinction between *company-controlled* vs. *independent external* channels.

A company may disseminate its CSR activities through a variety of *company-controlled* channels such as official documents (e.g. annual corporate responsibility reports), a CSR subsection on its official corporate website, billboard or magazine advertisements, TV commercials, and product packaging (Du et al., 2010). Often, companies combine multiple channels. For instance, Diet Coke created a section on its website and also ran TV commercials for its initiative to educate women about heart diseases (ibid.). In contrast, there is a sizable and rising number of *independent external* communicators, such as customers, media or consumer forums/blogs (ibid.). A company usually has little control over these channels. This, however, might turn to the company's advantage. Messages from biased or self-interested sources (i.e. company-controlled channels) are often considered more skeptically by stakeholders (Wiener, LaForge & Goolsby, 1990). Put differently, the more controllable the channel, the less credible the message and vice versa. This is underlined by Yoon, Gürhan-Canli and Schwarz (2006) which indicated that consumer reactions are more favorable to a firms' CSR activities when they learned about it from an independent, rather than from a corporate source. Hence, positive media coverage from neutral sources (e.g. neutral press or publications) can greatly enhance CSR associations (ibid.).

Likewise, more informal communication channels, as for example word-of-mouth by stakeholders, may serve as credible sources and should be encouraged by companies (Du et al., 2010). Dawkins (2004) accentuated the power and reach of employees. Through their social ties, employees naturally have a broad reach and are normally considered credible (ibid.). About every third employee already has recommended their company due to their CSR; therefore, employee advocacy can be powerful (ibid.). Another, very influential stakeholder group that is highly credible as a communication channel are consumers. Especially, in modern times of internet communication through social media, blogs and forums, the power and reach of consumer word-of-mouth cannot be neglected. Companies should proactively use social media to turn consumers into CSR advocates. An example is Timberland who established an online network (on Facebook, YouTube and a blog) of one million people for its "Earthkeeper" program to encourage genuine environmental behavior change. Through such means, firms are able to efficiently spread the word about their CSR initiatives and involvement (Du et al., 2010).

The above section about the message design concludes the discussion about sustainability communication. The characteristics of the sustainability world were discussed as well as ideas on what and how to communicate in this new reality provided. Yet, even companies that have managed to successfully implement as well as communicate CSR initiatives, face barriers. A major one is the attitude-behavior gap. This concept will be examined in the upcoming section.

2.2 The Concept of the Attitude-Behavior Gap

The discussions thus far mostly underlined the importance of and the increasing public interest in sustainability. Even though sustainability-related consumer attitudes are largely positive, they do not unequivocally translate into behavioral patterns. There exists a gap between consumers' favorable attitude toward sustainable behavior and their actual buying behavior, which is commonly defined as the *attitude-behavior gap* or *value-action gap* (Blake, 1999; Gupta & Ogden, 2009; Young, Hwang, McDonald & Oates, 2010).

The term attitude can be defined as an individual's set of positive and/or negative evaluations of a particular entity (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). In more detail, it is "an enduring set of beliefs about an object that predisposes people to behave in particular way toward the object" (Weigel, 1983, p. 257). Research in the area of consumer attitude suggested that the behavior of individuals is consistent with their attitudes (Gupta & Ogden, 2009). Hence, attitudes can be a useful concept to explain and predict consumer behavior (Udell, 1965). The most cited theory that analyzes the relation between attitudes and behavior is the Theory of Planned Behavior [TPB] (Ajzen, 1991). Intentions are at the center of this model and directly influence behavior; the more a person is willing to try and the more effort they exert to perform a behavior, in other words the higher the intention, the more likely it will occur (ibid.). The intention is influenced by three determinants. For the sake of completeness, all are briefly described. The first one, the attitude toward the behavior, is the individual's positive and/or negative assessment of performing a specific behavior (ibid.). The second factor, subjective norm, is described as the perceived social pressure whether or not to perform the behavior of interest (ibid.). Perceived behavioral control, the third element, reflects the ease or difficulty a particular behavior is associated with, respectively people's confidence in their ability to perform the behavior (ibid.).

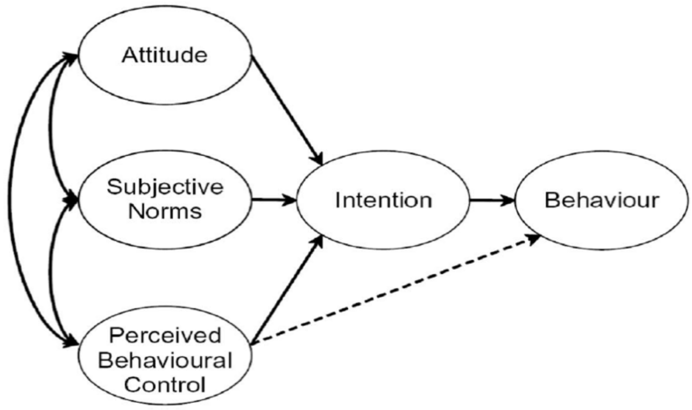

Figure 2 – The Theory of Planned Behavior [TPB]
(Ajzen, 2005, p. 118)

For the present study, there are two rationales of this model which are relevant. The first one is the premise that intentions predict behavior. This link is affirmed by well-rooted research (e.g. Ajzen, 2005; Sheppard, Hartwick & Warshaw, 1988). This report regards this relationship in a simplified manner and proceeds on the assumption that intentions directly translate into behaviors. The second premise is the positive relationship between attitudes and intention/behavior. This connection is the central point of this research, mainly because, contradicting the TPB, attitudes not always seem to be reliable indicators for behavior. The elements of subjective norms and perceived behavioral control are not included into the study design.

Research within the field of environmental consumerism showed that attitudes not always are accurate indicators for behaviors (Gupta & Ogden, 2009). While there is evidence for a positive correlation between attitude toward the environment and environmentally friendly behavior (Arbuthnot, 1977; Kallgren & Wood, 1986) – for example Laroche, Bergeron and Barbaro-Forleo (2001) discovered a positive relationship between favorable environmental attitudes and willingness to spend more for green products when it was convenient to behave in an environmental favorable manner – a lot of research suggests a weak relationship (Mainieri, Barnett, Valdero, Unipan & Oskamp, 1997; Tanner and Kast, 2003; Webster, 1975; Wicker, 1969). A market research by Mintel (2006) revealed that despite positive environmental attitudes, concern about air pollution, intention to recycle and higher willingness to pay for eco-friendly goods, only few individuals turn these attitudes into routine green purchasing behaviors. Similarly, the CSR expert Ditlev-Simonsen (2012) identified a discrepancy between stated concerns and actual behavior of consumers on five sustainability-related dimensions; purchase of ecological food, use of public transportation, energy saving, recycling and use of water-efficient showerheads. This underlines the existence of a gap of what people say and do (Blake, 1999). A study by Young et al. (2010) revealed that 30-50% of the respondents expressed willingness to buy environmentally friendly, green products; however, in reality, the market share of such products is less than 5%. It is also interesting that environment-friendly behaviors seem not to be significantly correlated (Tracy & Oskamp, 1984). Put differently, one type of a sustainable behavior, such as carpooling, does not imply other types of similar behaviors, for example recycling (ibid.). This, however, is not within the scope of this research.

2.2.1 Attitudes and Behaviors Differ due to Many Reasons

According to researchers, the inclusion of a sense of sustainability (ethical consumerism) increases the complexity of the consumer's decision making process, compared to the case of "conventional" consumption (Vermeier & Verbeke, 2006). The resulting attitude-behavior gap, which has been primarily studied in the field of environmental consumerism, presents a daunting challenge to marketers of green goods (Gupta & Ogden, 2009). Several studies suggested various explanations for the gap. Following, an overview of relevant studies is provided.

To begin with, Moisander (2007) argued that behavior is determined by motivation and ability. While motivation can be divided into intensity and direction (explaining the choice of a specific behavior from a set of alternatives), ability is connected to the personal resources needed to perform the behavior (ibid.). There are two main finding of Moisander's research (2007): firstly, personal resource constraints (low ability) hinders ecological consumption (this point is included into the discussion below about *price acceptance*) and secondly, the complex nature of environmental information might overwhelm consumers which in turn negatively affects their motivation respectively consumption (behavior). Nilsson, Tunçer and Thidell (2004) specified that the reason for this second point lies in the flood of information from the numerous competing labelling organizations. On the other hand, a lack of information, low quality information or wrong information about the single labels undermine their credibility (ibid.; Roberts, 1996). Consequently, unprofessional, not widely available or incredible information make consumer more skeptical and less interested about the respective label (De Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007). This, reflected in lower motivation, not only leads to negative attitudes but also lowers the purchase behavior (ibid.). In essence, too much, too little or low quality *information* contribute to the attitude-behavior gap.

The research of Young et al. (2010) supported these findings while adding that next to the information environment also limited available time for research, the required cognitive effort for each purchase and the prioritization of non-green criteria (e.g. size, specific brand, design) represent key barriers for green consumption. They concluded that a green lifestyle demands space and time, which is not available in people's busy lives (ibid.). This can negatively impact the customer journey[4]. Busy lifestyles can hinder consumers to become aware of environmental organizations/products and as a result they do not consider "green" purchasing criteria (Schmeltz, 2012). As for any buyer journey, *awareness* is the basis also for green purchases and therefore holds a key role in the decision-making process (Bray, Johns & Kilburn, 2011; Rahim, Waheeda & Tajuddin, 2011; Schmeltz, 2012). For people that passed the stage of awareness, high prices, respectively the economic availability, can be a hurdle (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2015; Moisander, 2007). Bray et al. (2011) claimed that low availability of money is the major hurdle to buy green services or products. Especially for young consumers, with relatively low income the availability of money can be a major obstacle (Schmeltz, 2012). Other academics relativize the importance of the income and stated that the willingness to pay a price premium, the *price acceptance*, for green goods is rather shaped by personal (Tanner & Kast, 2003; Rahim et al., 2011). Still, according to a study, the price is a barrier which also is present in social consumerism; sport socks that were labelled as being produced under fair working conditions were bought by 42% of consumers when the socks were offered at the same price as conventional socks (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2015). As the price was increased merely by a marginal percentage, only 20% of consumers still purchased the labelled ones (ibid.).

Another hurdle that inhibits consumers to purchase green products are their *habits* (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002). A person's behavior is to a large part determined by frequent past behaviors (Sutton, 2006). For habitual behaviors, individuals are more likely to use simplified decision rules instead of cognition (Aarts, Verplanken & Knippenberg, 1998). Said differently, for habitual choices, consumers search for less information and consider fewer alternative options (ibid.). With regards to green purchasing behavior, this implies that it is effortful for consumers, which do not habitually buy green products, to start buying more environmentally conscious (ibid.). Most consumers rely on choices they have always made (Ramayah, Lee & Mohamad, 2010). This behavior also is inherited; according to Rainer and Rainer (2011), young consumers adopt choices of their parents and hence do not buy green if their parents do not. Habitudinal purchases are also closely connected to the concept of *trust,* a frequently cited reason for the attitude-behavior gap (Drumwright, 1996; Fein, Hilton & Miller, 1990; Schmeltz, 2012; Shrum, McCarty & Lowrey, 1995). Especially young consumers are skeptical toward

[4] In this context, the customer journey is defined as the stages a consumer undergoes in their purchasing decision. It is based on the AIDA-Model that was developed in 1898 by Elmo Lewis, an American advertising advocate. The four stages in this basic model are: awareness, interest, desire and action which refers to the eventual purchase (Bruhn, 2005; Mayer, 2000).

commercial messages and do not easily trust companies' green efforts (Schmeltz, 2012). Little trust leads to low purchase intentions even though the underlying attitudes might be positive.

In line with the TPB, Vermeier and Verbeke (2006) discovered in their green consumerism study that there is a positive correlation between consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. However, regardless of the attitude, the intention to buy was low if the *availability* of ecological food was perceived as low. This finding suggested that the external factor of perceived availability has a strong influence on purchase intentions. Nguyen, Nguyen and Hoang (2019) underlined the importance of availability and added that more readily available green products lead more likely to actual purchases. Grimmer and Woolley (2012) even argued that the availability of green products is more meaningful in predicting purchasing behavior than consumer attitudes. It is effortful to visit specialized shops; hence, consumers want to be able to find green products in regular grocery stores (ibid.).

Gupta and Ogden (2009) described the attitude-behavior gap as a social dilemma; most consumers' purchase decisions are guided by *self-interest* (excluding true believers). If the costs of cooperation (decision to buy green products for the collective social gain) is higher than the possible personal utility gained from it, consumers refrain from buying (ibid.). To state it in a less absolute way, consumers engage in green purchasing only when there is also a perceived personal benefit, next to the environmental one (Stern, 2000). This is supported by Chatzidakis, Hibbert and Smith (2007) which argued that consumers' egocentric objectives outweigh collective interests in social purchasing decisions. Some researchers regard *self-interest* as a dimension of a broader concept: the *perceived personal importance [PPI]* (Laroche et al., 2001; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). It distinguishes consumers which view sustainability topics as personal issues versus societal problems. Consumers may have a positive attitude toward sustainability but feel that it is an issue of the society, respectively the responsibility of the government and the industry (ibid.). Low PPI, reflected in low levels of self-interest, translates into small numbers of green purchases (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). This is partially connected to the inability of consumers to estimate the actual impact of green purchases (Rokka & Uusitalo, 2008). That idea is captured in the concept of *perceived consumer effectiveness [PCE]*. It can be described as "the extent to which the consumer believes that his personal efforts can contribute to the solution of a problem" (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006, p. 175). High levels of PCE are required to transform positive green attitudes into actual green purchases (ibid.; Laroche et al., 2001). To put the matter another way, consumers need to believe that their purchases have a positive impact on the environment (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

From another point of view, drawing on reference group theory, it is proposed that the pressure to be in line with the behaviors and expectations of significant reference groups may influence the decision-making process – in a positive way (Gupta & Ogden, 2009). As an example, members of an environmentally friendly group buy green products to cooperate (ibid.). Vermeier and Verbeke (2006) complemented that social pressure from peers can even transform somewhat negative personal attitudes into intentions to buy and therefore reduce the attitude-behavior gap. This insight coincides with the subjective norm factor of the TPB (see Chapter 2.2). The factor of subjective norm has already been analyzed by several academics (e.g. Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Chiou, 1998; Kang, Liu & Kim, 2013; Taylor & Todd, 1995) and as this study aspires to find reasons for the existing gap, not factors that diminish it, it will not be included into the study design.

The attitude-behavior gap has been the focal point of a lot of research and a vast set of possible explanations exist. The subsequent table summarizes the discussed factors that contribute to the gap between attitude and behavior in *environmental purchasing*.

Factor	**Summary**	**Source(s)**
Information	If consumers suffer from information overload or contrarily no information is available at all, or of low quality, their interest is diminished	De Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007; Moisander, 2007; Nilsson et al., 2004
Awareness	Low awareness hinders green purchasing criteria to be included in the decision-making process	Bray et al., 2011; Rahim et al., 2011; Schmeltz, 2012
Price Acceptance	High prices can be a hurdle for the purchase of green products and services	Tanner & Kast, 2003; Moisander, 2007; Rahim et al., 2011; Schmeltz, 2012
Habits	Consumer decisions are predetermined by past behaviors. If green goods are not included in habitual choices, it is difficult to add them	Aarts et al., 1998; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Rainer & Rainer, 2011; Ramayah et al., 2010; Sutton, 2006

Trust	Commercial messages and claims of green activities are considered skeptically and are not always trusted which affects purchasing decisions	Drumwright, 1996; Fein et al., 1990; Schmeltz, 2012; Shrum, McCarty & Lowrey, 1995
Availability	Low availability of green products undermines positive attitudes toward such goods	Grimmer & Woolley, 2012; Nguyen et al., 2019; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006
Self-Interest	Consumers try to maximize self-interest and only purchase green if there is a perceived personal benefit	Chatzidakis et al., 2007; Gupta & Ogden, 2009; Stern, 2000
Perceived Personal Importance	Low level of self-involvement leads to a shift of responsibilities to a societal level and results in low quantities of green purchases	Laroche et al., 2001; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006
Perceived Consumer Effectiveness	The less consumers believe that their actions positively impact the environment, the less likely their positive green attitudes are transformed into green purchases	Laroche et al., 2001; Rokka & Uusitalo, 2008; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006

Table 2 – Summary of Reasons for the Attitude-Behavior Gap in Green Consumerism

Some researchers argue that green consumers recently have started to act more in line with their attitudes (Akehurst, Afonso & Gonçalves, 2012). This is reflected in the fact that the consumption of green products has been increasing in absolute numbers throughout recent years (ibid.). Still, there is a wide consensus that the attitude-behavior gap remains large and of profound significance – possibly it is more important than ever before (Akehurst et al., 2012; Nguyen et al., 2019; Sheeran & Webb, 2016). This is supported by the relative numbers; the growth in ethical consumption is trivial considering the total market size and growth across many industries (Eckhardt, Belk & Devinney, 2010; Govind, Singh, Garg & D'Silva, 2019).

2.2.2 Millennials: A Social Generational Cohort

As illustrated in the previous section, *green consumers* do not always act according to their attitudes. Still, the public holds a favorable attitude toward environmental issues and strongly supports the engagement in CSR. People these days believe that, besides generating profits, companies have responsibilities toward their stakeholders and the environment (Gershoff &

Frels, 2014). According to Kaifi, Khanfar, Noor and Poluka (2014), Millennials in today's societies have a higher commitment to sustainability than other generational cohorts. Among the main reasons they name social media and recent popular scandals that promoted the necessity of sustainability which have influenced the mindset of Millennials (ibid.).

Generation Y [Gen Y], also commonly known as Millennials, is the demographic group ensuing Generation X and preceding Generation Z (Brosdahl & Carpenter, 2011). Although the exact time span varies among researchers, it is widely accepted that members of Gen Y were born between the early 80s and the late 90s (e.g. Bolton et al., 2013; Swinarski, Parente & Noce, 2010; Valentine & Powers, 2013). For this research, the range from 1981 to 1999 is adopted, following a popular definition of Bolton et al. (2013). Millennials are the first demographic cohort that was born into a digital environment and hence are also called Digital Natives, they are no longer Digital Immigrants (Prensky, 2001). The strong influence of technology and the internet (Bolton et al., 2013; Valentine & Powers, 2013) has led to a different evolvement of this consumer cohort, making it a challenging group to target (Lester, Forman & Loyd, 2005). This is not only due to their technological affinity but also due to a shift in values and qualities compared to previous cohorts (Hyllegard, Yan, Ogle & Attmann, 2011).

Gen Y is characterized as well-educated, tech-savvy, better travelled and more tolerant than other generations (Syrett & Lammiman, 2013; Valentine & Powers, 2013). Syrett and Lammiman (2003) further emphasized traits such as sophisticated, structured, mature and individualistic. Other scholars particularly accentuated the characteristics of being more educated, individualistic as well as tolerant and add descriptions such as being more affluent and self-sufficient (Farris, Chong & Danning, 2002; Noble, Haytko & Phillips, 2009; Morton, 2002). Controversially, despite of being portrayed as individualistic, Millennials seem to desire greater (digital) connectedness with peers and influencers, indicating a sense of group-orientation (Hyllegard et al., 2011). To express their identity, they desire distinctive brands that share traits of their own (Gupta, Brantley & Jackson, 2010). Hence, this cohort group has greater expectations of goods and services, has been repeatedly described as being materialistic and is more skeptical of media as well as advertising (Hyllegard et al., 2011; Loroz, 2006; Noble et al., 2009). Their high demands are backed by considerable purchasing power making them an interesting – yet difficult – target for marketers (Farris et al., 2002). Some academics characterized Gen Y as more brand loyal (e.g. Hyllegard et al., 2011); however, this point is disputed (Valentine & Powers, 2013; Morton, 2002).

There are various additional studies that debate about a multitude of characteristics of Millennials and it is not in scope of this research to enter these discussions about cohort segmentation in depth. However, there are two fundamental values which have been suggested to be shared among members of the Gen Y cohort: a desire and the ability to become knowledgeable consumers and a concern for social affairs (e.g. Furlow, 2011; Hume, 2010; Hyllegard et al., 2011). This second trait makes Gen Y a particular interesting target group for this study and needs some further elaboration.

Furlow (2011) claimed that this generation cares about ethical issues and supports socially responsible companies. Major concerns for members of Gen Y include the environment, health and diseases, poverty and education (ibid.). Apparently, Gen Y consumers have more trust in socially responsible companies, pay more attention to their message and have higher purchase intentions for their products (ibid.). In numbers: 66% would recommend products/services of a socially responsible company, 69% of Gen Y consumers take a company's environmental and social commitment into consideration in their shopping decisions and 89% indicated to likely or very likely switch brands (quality and price being equal) in favor of the alternative which is linked with a good cause (Cone Inc., 2006). It is widely agreed, and supported by these numbers, that this social cohort is willing to engage in ethical consumption. However, actual behavior shows a different picture. A qualitative study by Hume (2010), including focus groups and interviews, revealed that even though Millennials seem to understand what is needed to create a sustainable world, they do not take action. The researcher stressed their failure to convert knowledge into action and depicts Gen Y as ego-driven (ibid.). They shift the responsibility of becoming sustainable from them toward companies (indicating low *PPI*). These results are in line with earlier findings of Tanner and Kast (2003) who suggested, on a more general level, that moral thinking and socio-economic characteristics of consumers are not significantly linked to green purchases. Also, more recent evidence underscored Gen Y's weak transformation of environmental concerns into product choices (e.g. Young & McCoy, 2016).

However, existing literature in this particular field is very limited; only few academics have studied Gen Y's attitudes and behaviors in the context of green consumerism, let alone social consumerism. Consequently, there is a need to conduct more research about this particular segment connected to the attitude-behavior gap (Bernardes, Ferreira, Marques & Nogueira, 2018; Tang & Lam, 2017; Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017).

2.3 The Conceptual Research Model

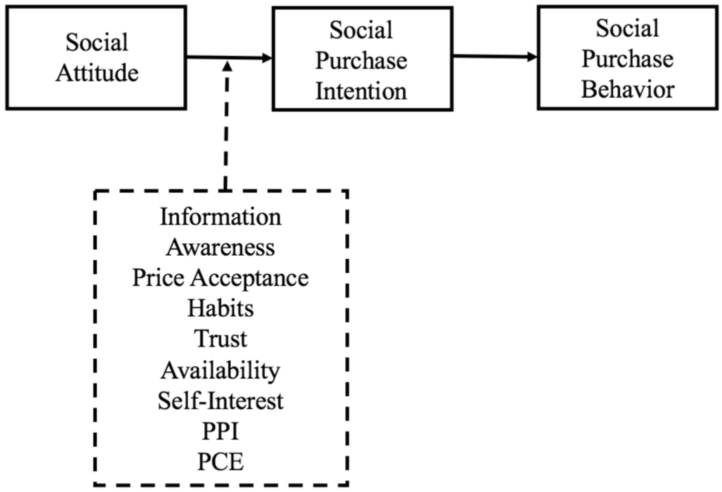

Figure 3 – The Conceptual Research Model

The theoretical background illustrated that contemporary consumers, especially Millennials, hold positive attitudes toward sustainability and ethical products. However, contradicting established theories (e.g. TPB), these attitudes seem not to be accurate predictors of purchasing behaviors, especially in *green consumerism*. There exists an attitude-behavior gap which, according to current literature, can be explained through numerous factors. This study hypothesizes that such a gap not only exists in environmental but also in *social consumerism*, even among the sustainability-conscious Gen Y. It therefore borrows nine factors from existing environmental literature to explain such a gap within social consumption. This is summarized in the research model above in which the factors are represented as variables that have the ability to influence the process from social attitude to social purchase behavior. To recapitulate, it is assumed that social purchase intentions directly translate into social purchase behavior – this path is not influenced by any variables.

3. PROBLEM DISCUSSION/RELEVANCE

As outlined in the literature review, the interest in sustainability at all levels of the value chain, from the production to the consumption, has been increasing over the past decades (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Issues around the topic of sustainability are of great public concern. Nevertheless, these concerns are not always mirrored in consumers' purchasing decisions; patterns of behavior are not congruent with the mainly favorable consumer attitudes regarding sustainability (e.g. Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Many studies have revealed that the reported demand for ethical products is often not being appropriately reflected in actual sales (Young et al., 2010).

Literature has identified this discrepancy as the attitude-behavior gap and there is vast research revolving around its existence, especially in the context of environmental consumerism (Govind et al., 2019). Why is research in this field relevant? Worldwide, consumers increasingly demand ethical products and claim to include ethical considerations in their purchase decisions. However, the sales figures talk a different language – ethical goods are still a very niche market (ibid.). An example from the nutrition industry: In most Asian countries, including China, India and Japan, ethical food accounts for less than 1% of total nutrition sales (ibid.). In Africa and South America these numbers are even lower (ibid.). There is a similar picture in economically more developed regions. In New Zealand, even though 25% of consumers stated to care about ethical consumption, only 2% of purchases reflected this ideal (ibid.). A study showed that in Europe approximately 30% of consumers reported to address ethical challenges through their purchase decision (Cowe & Williams, 2000). However, actual sales accounted for only 3% (ibid.). This phenomenon is also evident in organic food consumption; while 46-67%[5] of the Swedish population indicated to have a favorable attitude toward organic food, only 4-10%[6] translated this attitude into purchase intentions (Magnusson, Arvola, Hursti, Åberg & Sjödén, 2001). Organic food consumption is not within the scope of this research but the fact that the attitude-behavior gap is present in different domains too underlines the importance of this topic. There are also some more optimistic numbers. Based on a meta-analysis, converging research on the attitude-behavior gap, Sheeran and Webb (2016) suggested that intentions get translated into actions about one-half of the time. Still, the gap remains large indicating that the market for ethical products has a lot of unfulfilled potential.

[5] Percentages vary depending on the food category
[6] Percentages vary depending on the food category

This is not limited to certain countries as the gap between attitude and behavior, with regard to sustainable products, is not a local phenomenon but present across borders. This is confirmed by the Greendex, a quantitative study comparing 17 countries around the world, conducted by National Geographic and GlobeScan (2012). Figure 4 graphically illustrates an outcome of the study that analyzed attitudes toward the environment and the usage of green products. All countries show a gap, of varying magnitude, between the percentage of people claiming to be green and people that actually purchase green. This has fundamental implications for marketers of sustainable consumer products (Gupta & Ogden, 2009).

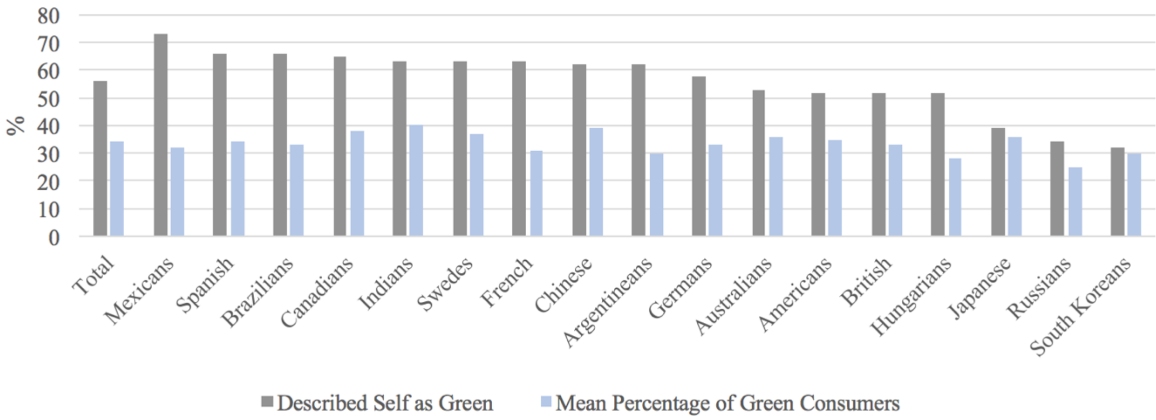

Figure 4 – Gap between Self-Declaration as Green and Actual Green Purchasers

(Based on GlobeScan, 2012)

While literature has made evident that this gap exists, there is still much potential in further exploring it (Govind et al., 2019). Much of the research conducted until now is within the field of environmental consumerism. However, due to the lacking unanimity of defining sustainability and related concepts, oftentimes the boundaries between environmental and social respectively ethical consumption are blurry. Explanations for the attitude-behavior gap vary with the study and one reason might be these different definitions of environmental/green consumerism. The conceptual research model of this study is derived from research within this multifaceted environmental dimension but it tries to cover a less studied, well-defined area: the attitude-behavior gap within *social consumerism.*

Another imbalance of existing research is that much of it is based on qualitative research methods. Quantitative studies also exist; however, further evidence is needed to verify and complement current knowledge (Perry & Chung, 2016). One specific domain which may profit from further research is the analysis of the gap connected to a particular segment (ibid; Papaoikonomou, Ryan & Valverde, 2011). There is little research that deliberately connects the attitude-behavior gap to a particular target segment respectively a generational cohort. As illustrated in the literature review, Gen Y is an interesting target segment to base this investigation upon. It is a social cohort which is very well-educated about sustainability issues and from the outside, they seem to care. However, current evidence indicates that even this segment seems to deviate from their sustainable attitudes in purchasing situations. The fact that existing studies about the attitude-behavior gap of Gen Y are very limited suggests the need for further research about this specific segment to complement the present literature (Bernardes et al., 2018; Tang and Lam, 2017; Valaei and Nikhashemi, 2017). If evidence for an attitude-behavior gap emerges, the question *why* is standing to reason.

In summary, this research strives to contribute to existing studies by exploring the attitude-behavior gap from a clearly defined social perspective. Gen Y consumers are studied to evaluate the extent to which their presumably positive attitudes correlate to their actions. Further, factors that might negatively impact this relationship are intended to be detected.

3.1 Fairtrade Max Havelaar: Social Sustainability becomes Tangible

To further isolate the research objective and make it more tangible, this analysis was conducted based on the case study of Fairtade Max Havelaar [FT], a Swiss non-profit organization with an established label for fair trade products. FT is committed to empower producers in the global south, ensure that they get paid a fair price and to improve their quality of life.

FT was founded in 1992 following the example set by the Dutch Max Havelaar foundation. The founding purpose was to elevate the social issue of fair trade out of its niche and connect disadvantaged producers in the global south with Swiss consumers. The foundation started with a label for fair trade coffee and expanded the product range during the 1990s rapidly: from honey to chocolate to sugar to bananas to fruit juice. Nowadays, the assortment encompasses 2’800 products, many having a considerable market share (cane sugar is at the top with 95%). FT is only a labelling organization and does not trade with products themselves. According to a recent market research in 2019, the organization has 89% brand awareness, 82% trust and 88% consumer loyalty. Further, it belongs to the top three sustainability labels in Switzerland.

It is part of the international Fairtrade system which consists of the umbrella organization Fairtrade International, 25 national Fairtrade organizations (of which FT is one), three producer networks and nine Fairtrade marketing organizations. The mission of the FT system is to strengthen producers and facilitate fair trading practices (e.g. ensure living wages, implement safer working conditions). In other words, social sustainability is the organization's core business (Fairtrade Max Havelaar, personal communication, 2020).

Figure 5 – FT Campaign 2020 Example (Fairtrade Max Havelaar, personal communication, 2020)

To spread their marketing messages to a large audience, FT uses traditional channels (such as advertisements in trains) as well as digital platforms (predominantly Facebook and Instagram). Typically, physical advertisements (e.g. billboards, post cards, brochures) depict a consumer and a producer of a particular FT product and includes a short message. This year's claim is: "Weil es uns wichtig ist", which means "Because it is important to us" (Figure 5). Online, there is a mix between featuring producers and turning the spotlight on specific products. While FT's primary target are middle-aged families that are financially stable, in more recent years the foundation has also started to target younger segments, especially through social media. Millennials are one of these segments.

The choice of this particular NGO has several reasons. First of all, it exemplifies the dimension of social consumerism very well as its core values are built around it. As Swiss consumers are well aware about the label it makes the concept of social sustainability less abstract and more tangible. Additionally, Gen Y has become an increasingly important target for FT; therefore, this study might also be valuable to the organization and build the basis for more effective communication. There is also an interesting aspect about the Swiss marketplace. Switzerland is one of the leading countries when it comes to sustainability measures (Sachs et al., 2019). It is currently on SDG Global rank[7] 17 (out of 162) and among the top five countries to be expected

[7] An index that ranks countries based on their implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals [SDG], which were introduced by the United Nations and aim to protect the environment, end poverty and ensure prosperity for everyone by 2030 (Sachs, Schmidt-Traub, Kroll, Lafortune & Fuller, 2019)

to reach the SDG the fastest (ibid.). Values such as social justice, environmental awareness and preservation as well as thinking about future generations are at the core of Swiss consumers (Stallone, n.d.). This is also reflected in the sales of Fairtrade products: In 2018, Swiss consumers spent more than 794 million on Fairtrade products, which are 93 Swiss francs per capita – an increase of 13.4% from 2017 (Max Havelaar-Stiftung (Schweiz), 2018). As a result, Switzerland remains the world's leading country in terms of Fairtrade sales (ibid.).

Looking at these facts and numbers, Switzerland seems like a very sustainable country. Swiss people seem to care about sustainability issues and translate this attitude into actual purchases which is reflected in being the world leader in terms of Fairtrade revenues per capita. However, what about the attitude-behavior gap? It seems as if Swiss consumers are generally better educated about sustainability issues than consumers in other nations and hence buy more Fairtrade products – but is their positive attitude really reflected in sales? Only the fact that Swiss consumers already purchase a lot of Fairtrade products does not reveal anything about their attitudes and the potential. Said differently, there is little academic research on social consumerism in Switzerland and no data about how the social attitude of Swiss consumers, particularly Gen Y, is translated into Fairtrade purchases. It is reasonable to assume that with a yearly spending of 93 Swiss francs per capita, which has been steadily increasing over the past years, the potential has not yet been fully exploited.

3.2 Objective and Structure

As outlined in the previous section, very little research connects Millennials to the attitude-behavior gap. Adding the geographic dimension of Switzerland as well as introducing FT as a framework for social consumerism leaves no present studies/literature. Hence, this research complements current knowledge by analyzing the attitude of the target segment toward Fairtrade products and their corresponding consumption pattern. According to existing literature, the attitude-behavior gap is not limited to a geographic region and present across segments. Thus, it is assumed that it will also appear in this research. The research question is derived as following:

To what extent do Swiss Millennials translate their social attitude into purchasing behavior of Fairtrade Max Havelaar products?

To simplify the research question and add more details, a pool of supporting key questions lead through this study:

I. Which factors influence the attitude-behavior relation the most?
II. To what extent is the concept of sustainability of Swiss Millennials shaped by environmental concerns (vs. social concerns)?
III. Is the pricing of Fairtrade products a main factor hindering consumption among Swiss Millennials?
IV. How well do Swiss Millennials understand what Fairtrade represents and what it does?
V. How much do Swiss Millennials trust the Fairtrade label?
VI. How may Fairtrade communicate to more effectively reach Gen Y?

This study not only examines the existence the presumed attitude-behavior gap among the target segment but also strives to identify possible obstacles that hinder the consumption of Fairtrade products. In pursuance of answering this question, this research is divided into multiple sections. Firstly, the literature review established the background for the present study. Secondly, the relevance of it was discussed. Thirdly, the methodology, following in the next chapter, describes the structure of the quantitative research. In a fourth step, the quantitative research findings are illustrated and discussed. The results draw a line from the theoretical knowledge to the reality and allow to analyze the attitude-behavior gap in the given context. Fifthly, an overarching conclusion is drawn to connect the findings and managerial implications are derived. These practical implications include ideas on how to more effectively target Swiss Millennials and foster the consumption of Fairtrade products as well as some more general recommendations on how to communicate to Gen Y. The last chapter serves as a reflection; it states the limitations of the study in order to prevent decision-making processes that are not backed by actualities and highlights areas for further research.

4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology section provides an overview of the procedures that were applied to answer the research question. For this study, both secondary and primary research were conducted.

4.1 Secondary Research: Literature Review

The review of existing literature served to establish a theoretical framework of all research-relevant concepts. In order to avoid misunderstandings about the key concepts of this study, a preliminary terminology delimitation as well as working definitions were provided. Theories, models, definitions and assessments of numerous academics have been scrutinized and contrasted with each other to assure validity and reliability. Furthermore, recent publications indicated the current state of research which was especially valuable for the derivation of underlying research purpose.

4.2 Primary Research: Quantitative Survey

Based on the secondary research, a survey was constructed. The questionnaire was divided into different parts which will be summarized hereafter. The complete questionnaire is attached in Appendix 9.1. The aim of the survey was not to assess Gen Y's awareness of FT nor evaluate existing beliefs about the label but rather examine the relationship between social attitudes and the purchase behavior of Fairtrade products. In order to analyze this relationship including the influencing factors, a mediation analysis (described in Chapter 5.3) is applicable. This type of analysis led to the subsequently described structure of the survey and the use of Likert scales ranging from 1-7 (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree, if nothing else indicated). To enhance validity, all scales were borrowed from established researches, mostly from the field of environmental consumerism, and tailored to this study.

Independent Factor: Social Attitude

The *attitude* toward social sustainability was considered the independent factor of this research. A total of seven items were used to examine it. Questions one and two were taken from the ECOSCALE (Stone, Barnes & Montgomery, 1995) and items three to seven from Lee's attitude-behavior study (2011). The scales from both studies are well-established and were developed to measure attitudes toward environmentally responsible consumption. The questions were slightly adapted to this research respectively to the social consumerism facet.

Dependent Factor: Social Purchase Behavior

In order to measure the *purchasing behavior* with regard to socially responsible products, respectively FT products, seven elements from different researches were consolidated (Berens, Riel & Rekom, 2007; d'Astous & Legendre, 2009; Maignan, 2001; Shaw & Shiu, 2003). Kolkailah, Abou Aish and El-Bassiouny (2012) combined these elements in a similar way to measure consumers' responsible buying behavior. The elements were adapted to specifically ask about FT products. At this point it is important to recapitulate that an underlying assumption of this research is for behavioral intentions to directly translate into actual behavior (based on the TPB; Ajzen, 1991). Said differently, it is not differentiated between intentions and actual behavior respectively these two terms are used interchangeably. The idea that intentions predict behavior is supported by several reputable studies (e.g. Ajzen, 2005; Sheppard, Hartwick & Warshaw, 1988).

Concern About Sustainability Issues

In order to assess the extent to which Gen Y's concept of sustainability is shaped by environmental versus social concerns, the importance of sustainability issues was measured on a scale developed and tested by Grunert, Hieke and Wills (2014). Six items were borrowed, corresponding to different social and ecological issues. The seventh item, *food safety and quality*, was added by the researcher in consultation with FT.

Consumer Awareness

The subjective *awareness* of Fairtrade was measured by the means of three questions. This measurement was developed by Chiou (1998) to evaluate subjective product/brand knowledge. Except for adding FT, the items were identically adopted.

Perceived Consumer Effectiveness

The construct of *PCE* was assessed through four items, adopted from Roberts' (1996a) as well as Straughan and Roberts' (1999) profound green consumerism studies, scrutinizing ecologically conscious consumer behavior. The elements of this scale are assessing the respondents' estimated ability to contribute to environmental sustainability and were used in numerous further studies (e.g. Nguyen et al., 2019; Kang et al., 2013; Taufique, Siwar, Talib & Chamhuri, 2014). The four questions were tailored to the dimension of social consumerism.

Perceived Personal Importance

The Personal Relevance Scale combines the two factors of *PPI* and *self-interest* which are hence considered together (Celsi, Chow, Olson & Walker, 1992). The five items, which were adapted to this study, measure the extent to which an individual believes that socially responsible consumption behavior is consistent with their values, personal lifestyle and self-image. Also this scale was reused in several other studies (e.g. Kang et al., 2013). Going forward, this factor solely is named *PPI* and *self-interest* is considered a sub-dimension of it.

Trust

The first two elements to measure the factor of *trust* with regards to FT were copied from a research that analyzed the role of Fairtrade and organic labels in purchasing decisions (Rousseau, 2015). The third item stems from Roberts' (1996a) established green consumerism research and was marginally adapted to fit the present study.

Availability

The perceived *availability* was measured on a scale, constructed in Vermeir and Verbeke's (2006; 2008) popular sustainable food consumption researches. Respondents of the present study were asked how easily they can acquire Fairtrade products; find such products in their neighborhood; and how easily available these products generally are. These items were used in a similar way by multiple other academics (e.g. Nguyen et al., 2019; Kang et al., 2013).

Price Acceptance

The *price acceptance* of Fairtrade products was measured on a scale developed by De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007). This research studied the Fairtrade buying behavior of Belgians; hence, the scale could be directly transferred. The scale was developed based on focus group studies and a far-reaching literature review of previous quantitative studies (ibid.).

Information

This dimension, measuring quantity and quality of the available *information* about FT, was assessed through four items. The first three originate from the above-mentioned research about Fairtrade Belgium (De Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007). The fourth item was developed by the researcher in consultation with FT; items number five and six were added by FT themselves.

Habits

This variable measured the respondents' willingness to switch from habitudinal to FT products. The first item stems from De Pelsmacker and Janssens' (2007) research. It is complemented with two additional items from the Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behavior (ECCB) Scale that was used by Roberts (1996a) as well as Straughan and Roberts (1999) in their green consumerism researches. In these two questions, FT was added.

Demographics

The last part dealt with the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. Numerous studies found a link between environmentally conscious consumer behavior and demographic variables. A reputable work in that field is the one of Straughan and Roberts (1999); on that basis, the age, sex and income were asked. Additionally, the respondents were asked if they were in any way socially active – this could range from donating over being active in a NGO to volunteering.

After the first version of the questionnaire was assembled, it was discussed with FT. This conversation led to the addition of some further questions (as mentioned in the concerning paragraphs). In a next step, the researcher translated the questionnaire into German with the help of a linguistics Master student from the University of Bern – this step was necessary to remove the language barrier. The questions were translated to be as close as possible to the English version. At the same time, the aim was to articulate them in an unambiguous way for them to be easy understandable. As a pre-test, the questionnaire was personally discussed with five people from the researcher's personal network. Some wordings and sentence structures were changed without altering the initial meaning. To further improve the questionnaire, it was tested with a market research specialist and expert in quantitative research from Zurich University of Applied Sciences and slight adaptions, especially in terms of question order, were conducted.

The final version of the questionnaire started with a short introduction describing the study and guaranteeing anonymity to the respondents. It then continued with a qualifying question, namely if the respondents have heard about FT (the logo of FT was added to facilitate the process of recalling). If this question was answered in the negative, the respondent directly was redirected to the end of the survey. Otherwise, an introductory question about the consumer *awareness* of FT was asked, followed by the items to measure the *social purchase behavior*.

These were asked in the beginning in order to obtain unprejudiced results for the behavior. This structure is in line with several other researches (e.g. De Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007; Shaw & Shiu, 2003; Straughan & Roberts, 1999). The order of all the subsequent question blocks is depicted in Appendix 9.1. Demographic information was addressed at the end of the survey.

4.3 The Data Collection Process

The questionnaire was created with the online tool Qualtrics and was accessible for a period of ten days (18.-27.03.2020). It was distributed primarily through Facebook groups (mainly of Swiss universities and alumni networks) and the author's circle of acquaintances. These distribution channels were chosen because they seemed like fast and adequate ways to reach the target segment. However, this sampling method does not ensure a random sample which therefore does not adequately represent the population. Rather, it can be defined as a convenience sample which is characterized by quick and inexpensive information collection (Bortz & Döring, 2006). The survey reached 243 people. 44 did not fully complete the survey (resulting in a completion ratio of 81.89%) and 19 indicated that they have never heard of FT. Excluding these two groups of respondents, a sample size of 180 respondents was left.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an insight into the analysis of this research and to discuss the most important findings. In a first step, a descriptive overview of the results is presented. The conceptual research model is tested through several mediation analyses in a second step. After each section, the results are discussed.

5.1 Descriptive Results: An Overview

The subsequent table depicts the demographic characteristics of the 180 respondents.

Gender (N=180)	Age (N=180)	Income (N=180)
Female: **101** (56.11%) Male: **77** (42.78%) Other: **2** (1.11%)	below 21: **6** (3.34%) 21-30: **152** (84.44%) 31-39: **10** (5.55%) above 39: **12** (6.67%)	Less than CHF 10’000: **48** (26.66%) CHF 10’000 – CHF 19’999: **23** (12.78%) CHF 20’000 – CHF 29’999: **16** (8.89%) CHF 30’000 – CHF 39’999: **9** (5.00%) CHF 40’000 – CHF 49’999: **11** (6.11%) CHF 50’000 – CHF 59’999: **19** (10.56%) CHF 60’000 – CHF 69’999: **14** (7.78%) CHF 70’000 – CHF 79’999: **12** (6.67%) CHF 80’000 – CHF 89’999: **12** (6.67%) CHF 90’000 – CHF 99’000: **7** (3.88%) Above CHF 100’000: **9** (5.00%)

Table 3 – Summary of the Demographic Characteristics

Furthermore, 77 out of the 180 respondents indicated engagement in a social activity, such as donating, working for an NGO or volunteering. Since the primary target audience of this research are Millennials (21-39) and there is no relevant sample size for the other age groups, the six respondents aged below 21 and the twelve above 39 were excluded from the succeeding analyses. The Gen Y sample consists of 162 respondents; 90 (55.56%) females, 70 (43.21%) males and 2 (1.24%) others. The percentage distribution is similar to the one of the complete sample (as depicted in the table above). 68 of the Gen Y sample are engaged in a social activity. The focus is now turned to the main elements of the questionnaire. For the following analyses, negatively worded items were reverse scored and a mean score for each variable calculated.

Sustainability Issue	Mean
Deforestation of the rain forest	6.33
Environmental damage caused by humans' use of land and water	6.17
Poor treatment of animals in food production	5.96
Child labor	5.93
Poor working conditions and wages for food producers in the global south	5.77
Packaging that is not recyclable	5.51
Food safety and quality	4.94

Table 4 – Mean Scores for Concern about Sustainability Issues

When looking at which sustainability issues Gen Y is most concerned about, *deforestation of the rain forest* (mean: 6.33) and *environmental damage caused by humans* (mean: 6.17) stand out – not only in terms of having the highest means but also the lowest standard deviations. *Child labor* is the most concerning social issue (mean: 5.93), followed by *poor working conditions and wages* (mean: 5.77). Least concerning of the seven areas is *food safety and quality* (mean: 4.94). The results are summarized in Table 4.

The examination continues with the heart of this research: the independent and the dependent variable. The independent factor, *social attitude,* has a mean of 5.76 (standard deviation: 0.83). With a mean of 4.85 (standard deviation: 0.96) the *social purchase behavior*[8] is noticeably lower.

Variable	Mean
Social Attitude	5.76
Social Purchase Behavior	4.85
PCE	5.54
Availability	5.26
Habits	4.80
Trust	4.61
PPI	4.51
Information	4.43
Awareness	4.10
Price Acceptance	3.50

Table 5 – Mean Scores for Research Variables

The analysis of the influencing factors revealed that the *PCE* has the highest mean with 5.54. The variable of *availability* has a mean of 5.26 and ranks second-highest. *Habits* has a mean score of 4.80 and the variable of *trust* 4.61, while the construct of *PPI* achieved 4.51. The variable of *information* scored 4.43. The central tendency for *awareness* is 4.10 and the one for *price acceptance* is with 3.50 the lowest among the eight factors (Table 5).

5.1.1 Discussion

The respondents are generally very concerned about sustainability-related issues. *Deforestation of the rain forest* and *environmental damage caused by humans* are the two primary concerns of the target population. As both are related to the environment, it can be stated that

[8] The survey assessed the purchase intention of FT products, representative for *social purchase behavior*. In the analysis, the latter term is utilized, as depicted in the conceptual research model (Chapter 2.3)

environmental issues have a predominant role (versus social concerns) when it comes to the concept of sustainability. A possible explanation for this might be the wider media coverage of such topics which can be exemplified by Greta Thunberg and her polarizing media appearances. This finding is in line with the high popularity of environmental topics in academic research (as described in the theoretical framework). Still, social topics such as *child labor* and *poor working conditions and wages* also score high and are considered important. Consistent with this outcome is the high mean for *social attitude*. Its score is, as theorized, higher than the one of *social behavior*. This is an indication for the attitude-behavior gap. A Paired Samples T-Test showed that this difference is statistically significant at the 5% significance level (p-value: 0.000). Further, the paired sample correlation between the two variables is 0.524, indicating a weak to moderate correlation (27% of the variance in *behavior* is explained by *attitude*)[9].

PCE is the influencing factor with the highest mean. In other words, the respondents quite strongly believe that with their personal efforts they are able to contribute to social sustainability. Personal efforts here are defined on a broad basis and are not only related to FT but to the consumers' overall demeanor. In contrast, the result for *availability* is directly related to FT and signposts that FT products are perceived to be easily and widely available. The result for *habits* indicate that the sample does not per se prefer habitudinal purchases over FT purchases and is rather willing to switch to more socially-responsible products. The mean for *trust* reveals that people rather trust FT and somewhat believe in its positive effect on the society and the environment. Further, the outcome of *PPI* signifies that the respondents consider fair trade, respectively social sustainability, a bit more as a personal issue but also see it as a societal problem (a mean of 4 would indicate a division of responsibilities). The mean score for the variable of *information* infers that the respondents have information about FT; however, since it is not far from neutral (which would be 4), there could be more data available. This is confirmed by the two additional elements that were included into the questionnaire by FT: 113 respondents would like to know more about FT products (mean of 5.16); 127 would like to learn more about the working conditions and the situation of the producers (mean of 5.62). As these two elements were added by FT and are not fully congruent with the other statements in the category of *information*, they were not included into the above mean score of the factor *information*. This finding is in line with the *awareness* construct. With a mean of 4.10, the sample's *awareness* about FT is very close to the one of the average consumer (only 6

[9] $0.524^2 \text{x} 100 = 27\%$; The assessment of the strength of this correlation is discussed in Chapter 5.4.1

respondents indicated to know much more and 16 to know more than the average consumer). This is a valuable information because if the respondents classified themselves as Fairtrade experts or indicated to know very little about the foundation, their responses would have been biased or unreliable. Being very close to the average consumer's awareness, the sample's answers are more likely to be representative. Lastly, people are between neutral and rather accepting with regards to a higher price for FT products (a 1 on this measurement scale would indicate total acceptance of a higher price; a 7 total disapproval).

5.2 Demographic Variables as Differentiators

To assess the statistical differences among demographic groups in relationship with the dependent variable, the independent variable and the influencing factors, multiple analyses of variance [ANOVA] were conducted. The ANOVA test was applicable due to the *nature* of the dependent (continuous) and independent variable (categorical). Also, the data met the requirements: the histograms proofed the *normal distribution* of the responses which was verified by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test; *independent samples/groups* were given by the design of the study and the *homogeneity of variances* was assessed using Levene's test (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014).

Firstly, the variable social activity was tested. There is a significant difference between the two groups[10] (the one that is socially active and the one that is not) and the following five variables: *social attitude, behavior, PPI, habits* and *awareness*. Secondly, the different gender groups were evaluated. As there were only two respondents selecting "others", this group is not representative and was excluded from the analysis. For the two remaining gender groups[11], there is a significant difference for *social attitude*, *behavior*, *PCE*, *information* and *habits*. Further, there is a significant difference when it comes to income levels and the factors *social attitude*, *behavior*, *PCE*, *PPI* and *trust*. The last demographic variable is *age*. Gen Y was divided into two categories: 21-30 and 31-39. However, there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups[12].

[10] As the sub-group of socially active people consists of 68 and the one of not socially active people of 94 respondents, the statistical validity of this analysis is limited
[11] As the sub-group of males consists of 70 and the one of females of 90 respondents, the statistical validity of this analysis is limited
[12] As the sub-group of 31-39 year olds consists of 10 respondents, the statistical validity of this analysis is limited

Tables that visually illustrate the data of the three demographic variables social activity, gender and income are depicted in Appendix 9.2. Next to the mean scores they include measures of the effect size (partial η^2 and adjusted R^2) and the significance level (p-value).

5.2.1 Discussion

The ANOVA tests revealed that three out of the four demographic variables exhibit significant statistical differences among their groups. The independent and dependent variables are sources that differentiate the groups in all three cases, the other sources vary.

The comparison of the two groups that are divided by social activity discloses that socially active people have a more favorable *social attitude* as well as FT purchasing *behavior*. Further, they are slightly more *aware* of the FT label/products and perceive the purchase of Fairtrade products as of higher *personal importance*. Additionally, their purchases are less driven by *habits* which means that they are more willing to switch products for social reasons. On average, the mean for these five variables was almost 0.5 higher for socially active people than for people which are not. However, the relatively small partial eta-squared and adjusted R-squared indicate small effect sizes. In other words, little variance in the dependent variables of this model can be explained through social activity.

Considering the gender division, it becomes evident that women have a more favorable *social attitude* and also purchase more FT products *(behavior)*. They believe more than men that their efforts to preserve and improve the society have a positive effect *(PCE)* and their purchases are less driven by *habits*. Further, they feel that they are better *informed* about FT than their gender counterpart. The average difference between these two groups amounts to 0.37. As for social activity, the partial eta-squared as well as the adjusted R-squared are relatively small and so is the effect size of gender on the single variables.

Dividing the respondents by income generates eleven groups. As the number of respondents within each group is quite small (between 9 and 48), this analysis cannot be considered as representative. Still, it is interesting to see that there is a general tendency that respondents at the lower end of the scale rate higher than the respondents at the upper end of the scale. Said differently, respondents earning less have a more favorable *social attitude*, *purchase* more FT-labelled products, feel that their social efforts have a stronger impact *(PCE)*, perceive social issues as more *personal* and also slightly *trust* FT more. The partial eta-squared and the adjusted

R-squared are substantially higher than the ones of the previous two variables, however, due to the limited sample sizes this insight is not further elaborated. Also, the Bonferroni-adjusted significance test for pairwise comparison illustrated that the majority of these differences between the elven groups are statistically not significant.

The last demographic variable is age. The hypothesis that the mean is the same for both age groups cannot be rejected; however, also in this case the sample size of the second group (31-39) is with ten respondents very limited and so is the validity of this statement.

As the effect sizes of all the models were rather small, several additional multi-way ANOVAs[13] were conducted with the objective to obtain more representative models. Even though these models better estimated the means of the outcome variables, the increase of the effect sizes was not substantial. Also, most interactions among the demographic variables were statistically not significant. Hence, they are not elaborated in detail.

5.3 The Mediation Analysis: A Triangle Relationship

In order to examine if the relationship between the independent variable, *social attitude* (X), and the dependent variable, *social purchase behavior* (Y), can be explained to some extent by the eight influencing factors, labelled as mediators (M), multiple mediation analyses were conducted.

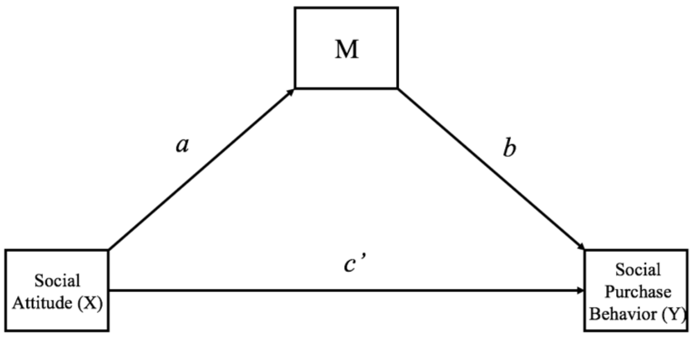

Figure 6 – Simple Mediation Model
(Based on Hayes, 2013)

To simplify the explanation of the model, just one mediator is considered in this step (Figure 6). The *social attitude* is proposed to influence the mediator *(a)* which in turn affects the *social purchase behavior (b).* The product of the two paths *(ab)* is called the *indirect effect*. The direct effect *(c')* is the effect of *social attitude* on *social purchase behavior*, taking into account the effect of the mediator. The indirect and direct effect together are called the *total effect (c)* which

[13] Each dependent variable was plugged into a model with all the four demographic variables together to estimate the dependency of the outcome variable on the categorical variables

corresponds to regressing *social attitude* on *social purchase behavior*. In other words, *c* is the relationship between the independent and dependent variable without a mediator. A successful mediation requires a significant indirect effect *(ab)* which lowers (partial mediation) or completely eliminates (complete mediation) the direct effect (Hayes, 2013).

First, eight simple mediations, one for each of the mediators, were conducted. In that way, the individual impact of each influencing variable could be evaluated. Second, a parallel mediation, a more complex model which can include more than one mediator, was conducted. In this step, all eight influencing factors were plotted into the same model. This approach allows the mediators to correlate with one another, however, there is no influence on causality (Hayes, 2013).

5.4 Simple Mediation: Considering each Factor Individually

Before starting with the examination, the variables had to be inspected to determine if a mediation analysis was applicable. A mediation analysis is a modified form of a linear regression; therefore, it works well with Likert scales and has the same statistical assumptions (Hayes, 2013). The first one is *linearity:* in order to minimize errors, the relationship between X and Y should be linear (ibid.). In mediation analysis, also the indirect effects *(ab)* need to be linear. To test this criterion, numerous linear regressions were run. The basic one was X predicting Y *(c)*, resulting in an adjusted R^2 of 0.270. Further, for each influencing factor, further regressions were run to test: X predicting M *(a)*, M predicting Y *(b)* as well as X and M predicting Y *(b* and *c')*. The results were analyzed based on the scatterplot of the residuals. All relationships respected the linearity assumption. Next, residuals should be equally distributed across all predicted Y values, which is called *homoscedasticity* (ibid.). To verify this assumption, the same scatter plots were examined. The data showed quite a constant vertical range and hence also met this assumption. Third, the assumption of *normality,* meaning that estimation errors should be distributed in a normal way, was tested (ibid.). This assumption was examined through predicted probability plots and histograms. The data indicated normality in both diagrams. Fourth, *multicollinearity* was checked through the VIF values in the collinearity statistics (values below 10 indicate that the assumption is met; ibid.). The analysis revealed that the predictor variables are not highly correlated with each other (*attitude* and *PCE* have the highest correlation with a VIF of 2.070). The last assumption, *independence of observation*, was met through the sampling procedure which is described in Chapter 4.3 (ibid.).

The subsequent analyses take into consideration the coefficients for each path (*a, b, c, c')* and their significance. Significance of the indirect effect is determined based on 5'000 bootstrap samples with a 95% confidence interval (default of PROCESS; ibid.). The lower and upper bounds (BootLLCI and BootULCI) of the confidence interval are identified – if zero does not fall into the range, the result is significant. If the range lies above zero, it can be stated with 95% confidence that there is an indirect *positive effect* (the mediator and the dependent variable move in tandem, in the same direction); if the range is below zero, it is an indication for a *negative effect* (they move in opposite directions) (ibid.). The results from the eight simple mediation analyses indicated that six out of the eight factors have a significant mediating effect on the relationship between *social attitude* and *social purchase behavior.* The influences of *availability* and *price* are not significant.

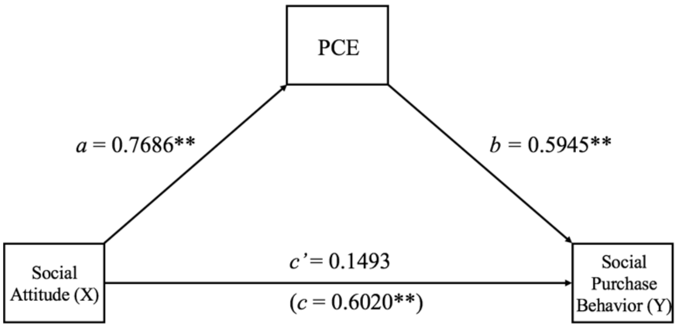

Figure 7 – Simple Mediation Model with PCE as Mediator
(Based on Hayes, 2013)

Among the six factors, which have a significant effect, all of them are *positive*. The factor with the strongest mediating effect is *PCE* (*a*=0.7686**; *b*=0.5945**)[14]; its indirect effect amounts to 0.4569*. To put this result into relation: the coefficient of the total effect of *social attitude* predicting *social purchase behavior* amounts to 0.6062** (which is *c* and the same for all the eight models). Including *PCE*, the direct effect is reduced to 0.1493 *(c')*, which is no longer significant. Second and third are *PPI* (*a*=0.6319**; *b*=0.5633**) and *habits* (*a*=0.6044**; *b*=0.5286**). Their indirect effects quantify as 0.3559* and 0.3195* respectively. Also the indirect effect of these two mediators is higher than the direct effect of *social attitude* (*c'*=0.2503** for *PPI*; *c'*=0.2867** for *habits*). The mediation effects of *awareness* (*a*=0.3502**; *b*=0.3462**) and *trust* (*a*=0.4073**; *b*=0.2665**) are 0.1212* respectively 0.1085*, while the one of the *information environment* (*a*=0.2728**; *b*=0.2800**) accounts for 0.0764*. A table summarizing the most relevant results is illustrated in Appendix 9.3.

[14] The asterisks are indications of the p-value, respectively of the significant coefficients: *p<.05, **p<.01; indirect effects are only tested on the 95% confidence level

5.4.1 Discussion

First, the model indicates a significant positive relationship between the independent and the dependent variable: 27% (adjusted R^2=0.270) of the variance for *social purchase behavior* is explained by *social attitude*. While according to Cohen (1988) this already would be a substantial effect size, in more marketing-related researches[15], such as this one, it is defined as weak toward moderate. Further, the results from the eight simple mediation analyses show that *social attitude* is indirectly related to *social behavior* through its relationship with six out of the eight influencing factors. All the relationships are positive which means that the mediators are positively correlated to the independent as well as the dependent factors. For instance, Figure 7 shows positive numbers for both, *a* and *b*. Path *a* indicates that social attitude is positively related to *PCE*. Path *b* expresses that *PCE* positively predicts social *behavior* when controlling for social *attitude*. This is the same for *PPI, habits, awareness, trust* and *information environment*. Each of them is subsequently described in more detail.

The total effect *(c)* of *social attitude* on *social purchase behavior* amounts to 0.6062**. When including *PCE* as a mediator into the model, this direct effect is no longer significant and is reduced to 0.1493. In other words, the proportion that operates indirectly through *PCE* is 75.37%, only 24.63% of the relationship accounts for the direct relationship between *social attitude* and *social purchase behavior*. As the direct relationship has become quite small and even statistically insignificant, the mediation effect is very strong. This model explains 42.06% (R^2=0.4206)[16] of the variation of *social purchase behavior*. Also, *PPI* and *habits* are strong mediators, their indirect effects account for 58.71% and 52.71% respectively. In contrast to the simple mediation including *PCE* as a mediator, in these two cases, the direct effect *(c')* remains significant. The model including *PPI* as a mediator explains 62.48% of the variance in *social behavior* (R^2=0.6248), the one including habits 59.60% (R^2=0.5960). In other words, the two models including *PPI* and *habits* explain the highest shares of the variance of *social purchase behavior*. *Awareness* and *trust* have a lower mediation effect, accounting for 19.99% and 17.89% of the total relationship. Including the mediator *awareness*, the model explains 39% (R^2=0.3900) of the dependent variable variation, with *trust* 34.48% (R^2=0.3448). The factor

[15] While Cohen (1988) provided very widely known guidelines to interpret effect sizes (R^2: very weak=0-0.02; weak=0.02-0.16; moderate=0.16-0.26; substantial=above 0.26) multiple scholars focusing on marketing research suggested that R-squared values of 0.75, 0.50 or 0.25 can be described as substantial, moderate or weak (e.g. Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2011; Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014).
[16] Adjusted R^2 are not illustrated in mediation models

with the smallest mediation effect that is still significant is *information*, it describes 12.60% of the total effect. Comprising this variable, the R-squared quantifies as 0.3766.

Mediator (M)	*ab*	*c′*	R^2
PCE	0.4569* (75.37%)	0.1493 (24.63%)	0.4206
PPI	0.3559* (58.71%)	0.2503** (41.29%)	0.6248
Habits	0.3195* (52.71%)	0.2867** (47.29%)	0.5960
Awareness	0.1212* (19.99%)	0.4850** (80.01%)	0.3900
Trust	0.1085* (17.89%)	0.4977** (82.11%)	0.3448
Information	0.0764* (12.60%)	0.5298** (87.40%)	0.3766

Table 6 – Effect Sizes of Various Simple Mediations

To sum up, all six influencing factors are positively related with the independent and the dependent variables. Put differently, the higher the *social attitude*, the higher for example the *perceived effectiveness* or the higher the willingness to switch from *habitudinal* products to FT products, which in turn also increases the *social purchase behavior*. Special attention has to be paid to the factors *PCE, PPI* and *habits*. The relationship through them is stronger than the direct relation between *social attitude* and *social purchase behavior.* This suggests that they are better predictors for *social purchase behavior* than *social attitude*. The R-squared increases when including each of the six variables. Thus, the models explain more of the variability of the response data – these models fit the data better than the regression only including *social attitude* and *social purchase behavior*. Even though *PCE* has the highest mediation effect, the two models including *PPI* and *habits* have the highest R-squared. Otherwise speaking, from the six factors, they explain most of the dependent variable *social purchase behavior*. This is verified by three additional linear regressions: *PCE* explains 40.80% (adjusted R^2=0.408) of the variation of *social purchase behavior*, *PPI* 58.5% (adjusted R^2=0.585) and *habits* 54.3% (adjusted R^2=0.543). To recapitulate, *social attitude* explains 27%.

5.5 Parallel Mediation: All Factors in One Model

The results of the simple mediations suggest that *PCE* mediates the relationship between *social attitude* and *social purchase behavior* the strongest, while the two models including *PPI* and *habits* have the highest statistical accuracy[17]. In order to verify if that still is true when all eight influencing factors are plotted into the same model and all indirect effects are tested simultaneously, a parallel mediation was conducted. As mentioned earlier, in this analysis mediators are allowed to correlate but not to causally influence each other. One additional

[17] They explain the highest proportion of the variance in the dependent variable (R^2)

regression – X and all eight mediators predicting Y – was run to verify all assumptions[18]. No violations were noted.

The analysis of the results indicates that in this model only four factors still have a significant mediation effect. The first factor which no longer has a significant influence is *information* (*a*=0.2728**; *b*=0.1020*; *ab*=0.0278). The second one is *PCE*. The influence of *social attitude* on *PCE (a)* remains unaltered the strongest of all the factors (*a*=0.7686**, path *a* is not influenced by including more than one mediator). However, the effect of *PCE* on *social purchasing behavior* has become insignificant (*b*=0.0548) and so has its indirect effect of 0.0421. The four influencing factors which still have a significant positive effect are: *PPI* (*a*=0.6319**; *b*=0.3068**), *habits* (*a*=0.6044**; *b*=0.2997**), *awareness* (*a*=0.3502**; *b*=0.1558**) and *trust* (*a*=0.4073**; *b*=0.1263*). The indirect effect of *PPI* which amounts to 0.1939* is the strongest, closely followed by *habits* (0.1812*). *Awareness* and *trust* account for 0.0546* and 0.0515* respectively. Based on the 5'000 bootstrap samples, all these indirect effects were entirely above zero on a 95% confidence interval indicating significance on that level. The direct effect of *social attitude* on *social purchase behavior* decreased from 0.6062** *(c)* to 0.0680 *(c')* – which is not significant. A graphical illustration of the model is presented on the next page; the data is attached in Appendix 9.4.

[18] The assumptions are the same as for the simple mediation and have been verified in section 5.4

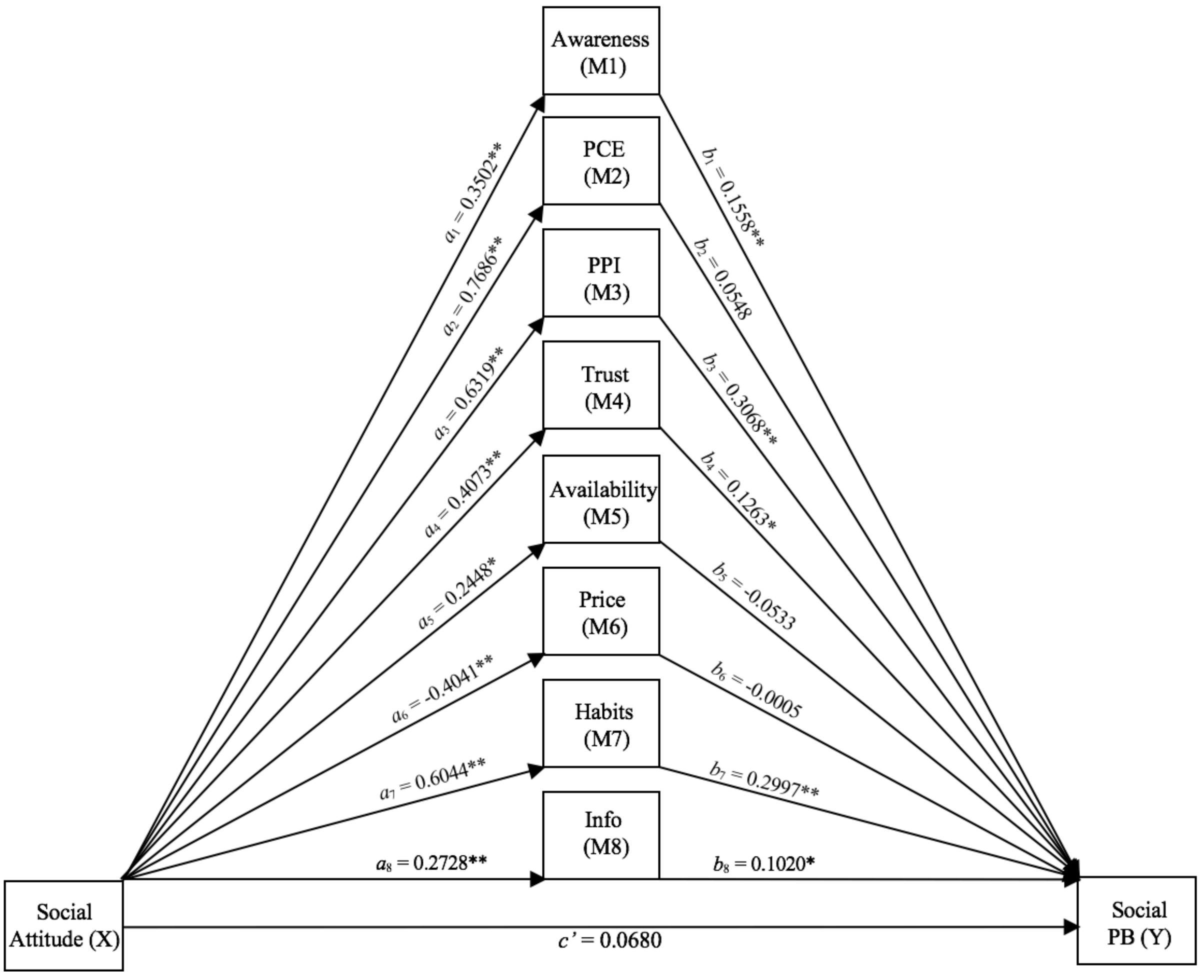

Figure 8 – Parallel Mediation Model including all Influencing Factors

5.5.1 Discussion

While in the simple mediation model, the indirect effect is independent of the effects of other mediators, in the parallel mediation model the mediators are allowed to correlate. These correlations decrease the direct effects of the single mediators, however, enhance the explanatory power of the whole model.

The parallel mediation analysis verified that *social attitude* is indirectly related to *social purchasing behavior* through its relationships with the influencing factors. A 95% bias-corrected confidence interval revealed that the indirect effects through *PPI*, *habits*, *awareness* and *trust* were above zero (in other words they are significant), while the effect of the other four factors remain statistically insignificant, meaning their indirect effects were not different than zero. One factor that has become insignificant due to the correlation of the mediators is *information*. It was the mediator with the smallest impact already in the simple mediation and it seems like the variance it explains is better explained by other mediators. More surprising is the second one: *PCE*. In order to understand, why the factor with the highest indirect effect in the first analysis no longer is significant, seven additional parallel mediation analyses were conducted. Each time, one of the other influencing factors was excluded. In that way, it became evident that *PPI* and *habits* are eliminating the effect of *PCE*. A linear regression between *PCE* and *PPI* confirmed that there is no multicollinearity between the two factors (VIF=1) and the same holds true for *PCE* and *habits* (VIF=1). However, a linear regression with *PPI* and *habits* as independent variables and *PCE* as a dependent variable results in an adjusted R-squared of 0.421, meaning they explain 42.1% of *PCE* (VIF=1.729).

Even though it was tested for multicollinearity earlier and according to Hayes (2013) no symptoms could be discovered, due to these results the issue was inspected again. Further research revealed that many scholars agreed that VIF values which exceed 10 suggest severe multicollinearity (e.g. Kutner, Nachtsheim, Neter & Li, 2005; Hayes, 2013; Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 1998); however, many academics also proposed that this threshold can significantly vary according to the study and its variables (e.g. Freund, Wilson & Sa, 2006; O'Brien, 2007). As a consequence, the results of the mediation analysis were independently discussed with two professors of statistics, one from Bocconi University, one from Católica Lisbon School of Business & Economics, and a psychology professor from Missouri State University. All three came to the consensus that there is multicollinearity between *PCE* and *attitude* (VIF=2.070) as well as in the above-described model with *PPI* and *habits* as independent variables and *PCE* as a dependent variable (VIF=1.729). This is mirrored by the adjusted R-squared of 0.513 respectively 0.421, which are unanimously considered high. Furthermore, the discussion in Chapter 5.4.1 revealed that *PCE* explains 40.80% of the variance in *social purchase behavior*, while *PCE* and *attitude* together explain 42.06%. This little difference confirms that both variables explain a similar proportion of the variance in the dependent variable. In other words, the variables *attitude*, *PPI* and *habits* can be used to predict a substantial part of *PCE* because they are somewhat intercorrelated. As a result, the information of *PCE* become redundant. As these relationships are two-sided, *PCE* also predicts *attitude*, *PPI* and *habits* to a certain degree. In order to obtain the model with the highest predictability, four additional parallel mediation analyses were run. They aimed to evaluate which model predicted the highest proportion of the variance in *social purchasing behavior*. One excluded *PCE*, one *PPI*, one *habits* and one *PPI* as well as *habits* (as *attitude* is the independent variable it cannot be eliminated). The model eliminating *PCE* (R^2=0.7684) seems to explain most of the variance, however, still slightly less than including all of the eight factors into the parallel mediation (Table 7). As a comparison, a parallel mediation only with the four significant factors (*PPI, habits, awareness* and *trust*) explains 75.75% (R^2=0.7575).

Parallel Mediation Model	R^2
Including all variables	0.7690
Exclusion of *PCE*	0.7684
Exclusion of *PPI*	0.7141
Exclusion of *habits*	0.7091
Exclusion of *PPI* and *habits*	0.5441

Table 7 – Various Parallel Mediation Models

In summary, the model with *social attitude* as an independent variable, and all eight influencing factors as mediators, explains 76.90% of *social purchase behavior*, which is a substantial part. The principal contributors are *PPI*, *habits, awareness* and *trust.* To refresh, the variable *PPI* describes how relevant FT is to the individual and how the consumption of FT products fits into their life; *habits* exposes the willingness to switch from habitudinal products to FT products; *awareness* reflects the knowledge about FT; and *trust* mirrors the believed reliability/effectiveness of FT. *PPI* and *habits* have the strongest impact in this model which is not surprising when considering the results of the simple mediation models. While the *social attitude* has an influence on these four factors, it has no longer a significant direct impact on the *social purchase behavior.*

6. CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

When thinking about the concept of sustainability, environmental issues are predominant in the minds of Millennials. This is in line with the fact that most research in the field of the attitude-behavior gap revolved around this aspect. However, the insights of this study demonstrate that Gen Y also worries about social topics – even though these concerns are not always reflected in purchase decisions. This study report contributes toward a better understanding of the attitude-behavior gap within the social dimension of sustainability respectively social consumerism.

The results of this report evince that there is a significant gap between *social attitude* and *social purchase behavior*. In other words, the existence of a social attitude-behavior gap among Millennials in Switzerland can be statistically proven, based on the example of FT. The *social attitude* and *social purchasing behavior* are, according to marketing researchers, weakly to moderately correlated which indicated that other factors also play an important role in that equation. The simple mediation models, paired with linear regressions, disclosed that each of the three factors *PCE, PPI* and *habits* better predict *social purchase behavior* than *social attitude*. The three factors *awareness, trust* and *information* had a smaller but still significant impact on this relationship. However, in the parallel mediation model the indirect effect of *PCE* was no longer significant because it was offset by the direct effect of *social attitude* and the indirect effects of *PPI* and *habits*. Also the *information* factor lost its significance – its impact was marginal already in the simple mediation model. In other words, *PPI* and *habits* are the two factors which influence the attitude-behavior relation the most. Both relationships are positive. Said differently, the higher the *perceived personal importance* of Fairtrade-related issues, the more FT products are purchased; respectively, the higher the willingness to switch from *habitudinal* purchases to FT products the higher the *purchase behavior*. *Awareness* and *trust* are the two other factors with a significant influence in the model, even though their effect is much weaker. Also these two are positively correlated, meaning the more *conscious* respondents are about FT respectively the more they *trust* FT the higher the number of FT product *purchases*.

From a theoretical point of view it can be summarized that the attitude-behavior gap also exists in the social sphere of sustainability among Swiss Millennials. Four factors that significantly contribute to its existence are *PPI, habits, awareness* and *trust*. These findings, from a Swiss

Gen Y perspective within the social realm of sustainability, complement existing literature about the attitude-behavior gap which mainly focused on the environmental dimension.

6.1 Managerial Implications for FT: How to Overcome the Gap

Next to the theoretical contribution, these insights also have practical relevance. This section provides some concrete recommendations for FT, based on the main findings of the research. Despite the fact that environmental concerns are the top-ranking sustainability-related issues, also social topics, especially *child labor* as well as *poor working conditions and wages for producers,* are very important to Swiss Millennials. This is reflected in their very positive *social attitude.* However, it is important to understand that these positive *social attitudes* are more favorable than their *social purchase behavior*. There exists a significant attitude-behavior gap in the decision-making process of FT products.

As explained above, this gap can mostly be explained through the four factors: *PPI, habits, awareness* and *trust.* Against expectations, the *price* does not seem to be a barrier for FT product purchases. The majority of the respondents expect fairly traded products to be more expensive than ordinary products and believe it should be this way. Therefore, a higher price is accepted and the factor has no significant impact on the *purchase behavior.* While price does not significantly impact the purchase behavior, *PPI* does. The underlying rationale is that the more the target segment feels connected to FT, the higher the *personal importance* and the more benefits are connected to consuming FT products (e.g. the benefit of self-expression, which Millennials desire, enhances self-interest). Therefore, FT needs to become a part of the target consumers' everyday life, a part of their self-identity. In practice, this means that communication activities should rather be on the emotional side, connecting FT to personal values, integrating the brand into the target consumers' personal lives. In that way, FT-related issues are more likely to be considered as personal issues rather than societal issues. In a nutshell, FT needs to understand which issues are relevant to a particular target segment (e.g. child labor) and communicate accordingly. At the moment, the *PPI* of FT is on a reasonable level but there is still room for improvement. It is more difficult to leverage on the insight about *habits* because further research about factors that influence the willingness to switch products would be needed. From this study, it only can be said that the willingness to switch to FT products should be targeted. As an idea, comparative advertising, highlighting relevant benefits of FT products, might serve this purpose. Many respondents indicated to be willing to switch to FT products but there is still a share that is more skeptical and prefers their customary goods.

As for *awareness,* the respondents generally are aware of the FT label but do not completely know what it stands for. As *awareness* is positively correlated with *purchase behavior*, FT should try to better educate Swiss Millennials about their business, what FT represents and what they exactly do. This is confirmed by the high number of respondents that would like to know more about FT products as well as about the working conditions and the situation of the producers. The same is true for the variable of *trust*; generally, the target trusts FT but there is still significant upward leeway. Hence, *awareness*- and *trust*-building communication activities, tailored to Millennials, are cornerstones to decrease the attitude-behavior gap.

While effective communication methods and possible ways to reach Gen Y are illustrated in the next section, there is one more suggestion for FT regarding the definition of the target audience. It might be interesting to understand that socially active people and women are two segments that positively think about social sustainability in many domains. Therefore, these two broad categories could serve as a starting point in terms of defining a target for (digital) campaigns.

6.2 General Managerial Implications: How to Target Gen Y?

As evident from previous research, the attitude-behavior gap is not limited to any nationalities nor segments. The present research complements existing literature with a further proof that it is neither limited to the environmental dimension of sustainability. Hence, businesses operating in the field of social sustainability should be aware of such a gap, might want to investigate it specifically for their business and find measures to decrease it. Special attention should be paid to the factors *PPI, habits, awareness* and *trust.*

However, paying attention to the attitude-behavior gap and its reasons is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to communicating in the field of social sustainability. Fundamental is to acknowledge that the concept of sustainability has been shaping the world and communication efforts need to be coherent with the new sustainability world (as explained in Chapter 2.1.4). Two-sided communication, which means interacting with stakeholders and enabling co-creation (constructivist idea), is material in this reality. The times of top-down communication, in which companies impose their reality upon stakeholders, are over. Interacting with stakeholders allows to reach a mutual understanding of sustainability-related issues. Said differently, it enables companies to identify the overlap between what their stakeholders care about, what they themselves care about and what for them is feasible to address. This method inherently has a positive impact on the *PPI.*

Once the organization has identified a relevant topic, it can highlight its involvement in that field. How? It might emphasize its *commitment* (i.e. fund donations), the *impact* (the resulting benefits), its *motives* (reasons for the commitment) and/or the *fit* (between the business and the sustainability issue). When focusing on *commitment* and *impact* it is important that the communication is fact-based and does not evoke the perception of bragging. When communicating about *motives,* the organization needs to be frank about both; the benefits to the society and to the company. This enhances credibility. When focusing on the *fit* in the message design, it is advisable to have a logical association between the social issue and the business. A natural fit often is connected with sincerer intrinsic motivations rather than perfunctory extrinsic ones (e.g. financial motives). Emphasizing one or more of these four aspects might positively influence consumer *trust.*

Besides a relevant topic and the message design, the message channels are another central aspect. Next to disseminating their messages through *company-controlled* channels, an organization should also try to be present in *independent external* channels. Such channels might be valuable, especially to target Gen Y which is characterized as being skeptical of media and advertising. Consequently, word-of-mouth plays an even more important role in establishing credibility for this generational cohort than for other generations. Word-of-mouth marketing can be encouraged through different sources; employee advocates and consumer advocates are two effective examples. Employees have a wide reach and are usually considered a credible source while the same is even more true for consumers. Especially, the group-oriented Millennials place a lot of trust in their peers. A cornerstone of generating word-of-mouth is engagement with the target. An appropriate way to engage with these tech-savvy Digital Natives appears to be the digital environment, for example on social media or through blogs. This leads back to the beginning of this section, highlighting the importance of two-way communication. Digital platforms are suitable tools that allow for such interaction. Organizations should aim to turn consumers into advocates that spread the word about organizational sustainability initiatives among their peers. This could be done by explicitly addressing issues consumers care about with high-quality, sharable content. Another element of a word-of-mouth strategy can be the commitment to influencer marketing. Even though influencers are paid, they are considered an independent external channel that enjoy a lot of trust among their followers. Nowadays, particularly the cooperation with micro-influencers might be an effective way to credibly convey sustainability-related messages to Gen Y consumers. Next to establishing *trust*, word-of-mouth as well as influencer marketing also can be very effective in creating *awareness*.

As illustrated in this section, businesses that communicate sustainability-related topics need to be aware of some principles. First, two-way communication and interaction with stakeholders (in this case mostly consumers) is crucial. Secondly, the message should be designed in a way to highlight company involvement in a sustainability-related field. Thirdly, independent external channels are more credible than the ones which are company-owned. Fourthly, word-of-mouth and influencer marketing strategies are effective ways to reach Gen Y. As indicated at the end of each paragraph, these rather general recommendations, which are derived from existing literature, also might positively impact the variables *PPI*, *awareness* and *trust* (and presumably also *habits*). Hence, these general measures might decrease the attitude-behavior gap.

7. REFLECTION

This research extends the knowledge about the attitude-behavior gap. It was conducted within the context of the Swiss culture, focusing on Gen Y and the social area of sustainability. There has only been limited research within all of these three sub-dimensions; hence, this study was built on available existing theories from related fields and aimed to extend them. A critical review is presented to demonstrate awareness about deficiencies.

The academic literature for the theoretical framework was selectively and carefully chosen, focusing on most-cited and relevant articles from leading journals, to provide a solid foundation for this study. Sources were cross-verified to ensure validity. Still, this research is only based on a fraction of the available literature about sustainability, the attitude-behavior gap and the other concepts. Consequently, it is not representative for all the available knowledge. Further, as the existing literature about the social attitude-behavior gap is very limited, most of the theory is based on the attitude-behavior gap in environmental consumerism. For instance, the eight influencing factors were borrowed from environmental studies and adapted to the present one. Borrowing insights from related but different fields might have influenced the results of this study.

Another bias may lie in the design of the survey. Even though all questions and constructs were adopted from previous studies and tested, there are various ways how to examine the individual concepts. Different sets of questions may lead to different answers and hence different results. Further, the questionnaire was translated from English into German in order for the target segment to be more comfortable in answering the questions. Also this step was cross-validated but might have been subject to a translation bias with regards to the formulation of the single items. Moreover, the respondents for the survey were chosen based on the procedure of convenience sampling. This sampling method does not ensure that every member of the target population has an equal opportunity of being chosen (as random sampling does) and therefore the sample cannot be considered representative for the whole population. Additionally, as the questionnaire was only available in German[19], Swiss Millennials speaking French, Italian and Romansh were also excluded.

[19] 63% of the entire population speak German (French is the second most spoken language with 23%) (SWI, 2019)

Finally, this research is based on a simplified model of the Theory of Planned Behavior. According to this theory not only attitudes influence the behavior but also the two factors subjective norms and the perceived behavioral control. Further, the present study assumed that behavioral intentions directly lead to purchase behavior. However, this relationship might be influenced by variables such as the perceived behavioral control.

7.1 Suggestion for Further Research

In the course of this empirical study, a number of interesting observations have emerged which translate into suggestions for future research.

Firstly, unlike most of the research about the attitude-behavior gap this study did not focus on the environmental but the social sphere of sustainability. The foundation Fairtrade Max Havelaar was used to exemplify this social dimension. This method entailed the advantage that the concept became more tangible and appeared less abstract. On the other hand, the insights are also somewhat tied to FT as well as its brand equity and cannot be generalized. Therefore, further research could try to cross-verify the results of this study by the means of other reference businesses or on a more general basis not connected to any specific organization. Another, more in-depth, approach would be to investigate if the attitude-behavior gap varies according to specific product categories.

Secondly, the target segment of the present study was Gen Y. Therefore, all the insights refer to this generational cohort. To further explore the social attitude-behavior gap it might be interesting to investigate the gap for various age groups and compare the results. Some generations might be subject to a larger gap than others. Instead of broadening the analysis, it could also become more specific and evaluate different sub-groups within one generation. Such an investigation might also be based on other demographic variables, such as gender. Questions that could be explored are if females have a smaller/larger attitude-behavior gap than males and if there are different underlying factors affecting the gap for these two groups. There are numerous combinations of demographic variables and questions as just mentioned which leave a lot of room for additional research.

Thirdly, this research borrowed many insights from existing theories about the environmental attitude-behavior gap. The results imply that this approach was quite effective – the parallel mediation model explains a substantial amount of the attitude-behavior relationship. Still, there are aspects that are not explained through the given mediators. Future studies could take a step back and examine the factors which are influencing the attitude-behavior relationship in social consumerism. These could then be compared with the influencing factors stemming from the environmental sphere.

Fourthly, the variable *habits* emerged as the second-most important reason for the existence of the social attitude-behavior gap. It might be valuable to further explore this subject area within the context of the (social) attitude-behavior gap as the willingness to switch products is directly correlated with actual *purchases*. Said differently, academics may investigate factors that increase the willingness of consumers to change their *purchasing behavior* to a more (socially) sustainable one and leverage on these to decrease the attitude-behavior gap.

Lastly, a somewhat surprising phenomenon could be observed in the relationship between income level and opinions about social aspects. Respondents at the lower end of the income scale, earning less, had a tendency to have a more positive *social attitude*, pay more attention to the FT label in their purchasing decision (have a higher *social purchase behavior*) and rate higher on the *PPI, PCE* and *trust* variables than people at the upper end of the scale. As the observations for most of the income categories were quite limited, this tendency cannot be statistically proven. However, this gap-income relation could be a field for further studies.

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9. APPENDIX

9.1 Survey Questionnaire

Hi there,

This five-minute long survey was built in the course of an independent Master thesis and aims to study attitudes toward **social sustainability** (i.e. provide a good quality of life within an equitable, healthy and safe community). For this purpose, Fairtrade Max Havelaar, an organization founded to strengthen producers in the **global south** and facilitate fair trade, will be taken as a reference example. Fairtrade Max Havelaar awards a label for sustainably, fairly traded products but does not produce own goods.

Feel free to answer honestly and in line with your attitudes. Your answers will be used for research purposes only and handled anonymously. Many thanks for your support!

Qualifying Question

Have you heard of Fairtrade Max Havelaar?

- Yes
- No

Consumer Awareness

Compared to the average consumer, rate your knowledge about:

1. Fairtrade products (e.g. assortment)
2. Different brands that carry the Fairtrade label
3. Where to buy Fairtrade products

Dependent Factor: Social Purchase Behavior

Please indicate if you agree with the following statements (1=totally disagree; 7= totally agree).

1. I try to obtain information on social issues in the global south so that I can make an informed purchasing decision
2. I feel that my Fairtrade purchases do not have a real impact on important social problems and working conditions in the global south*[20]
3. I do not change my buying habits to buy more Fairtrade products as it is the government's role to force companies to conform to social standards*

[20] The asterisks (*) indicate reverse scored items

4. I do consider the Fairtrade label when I shop
5. I would advise my friends and family members to purchase Fairtrade products
6. I feel that I have an ethical obligation to purchase Fairtrade products

Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE)

Please indicate if you agree with the following statements (1=totally disagree; 7= totally agree).

1. It is worth it for the individual consumer to make efforts in order to improve people's living conditions in the global south
2. When I buy products, I tend to try to consider how my use of them will affect societies in the global south
3. Since one person cannot have any effect upon societal problems in the global south, it doesn't make any difference what I do*
4. By purchasing products sold by socially responsible companies, each consumer can positively impact living conditions in the global south

Perceived Personal Importance (PPI)

Please indicate if you agree with the following statements (1=totally disagree; 7= totally agree).

1. The consumption of Fairtrade products let others see me as I ideally would like them to see me
2. The consumption of Fairtrade products helps me to attain the type of life I strive for
3. I can make connections or associations between the consumption of Fairtrade products and other experiences and/or behaviors in my life
4. The consumption of Fairtrade products is of personal importance to me
5. The consumption of Fairtrade products helps me to express who I am

Trust

Please indicate if you agree with the following statements (1=totally disagree; 7= totally agree).

1. The Fairtrade label guarantees a social sustainable and fair trade process
2. The Fairtrade label is a marketing tool, but does not always guarantee a social sustainable and fair trade process*
3. By purchasing Fairtrade products, each consumer's behavior can have a positive effect on societies in the global south and the environment

Availability

Please indicate if you agree with the following statements (1=totally disagree; 7= totally agree).

1. It is easy for me to acquire Fairtrade products
2. It is easy for me to find Fairtrade products in my neighbourhood
3. I think Fairtrade products are generally easily available

Price Acceptance

Please indicate if you agree with the following statements (1=totally disagree; 7= totally agree).

1. Fairtrade products should be less expensive than ordinary products
2. It is a pity that a "fair price" appears to be a higher price

3. It is strange that you have to pay extra for good behavior instead of being rewarded for it

Information

Please indicate if you agree with the following statements (1=totally disagree; 7= totally agree).

1. Fairtrade is a not well-defined concept that should be explained more concisely and clearly*
2. There is not a lot of information on Fairtrade*
3. The origin of Fairtrade products often cannot be traced*
4. I get confused by the large number of sustainability labels and hence refrain from buying FT products*
5. I would like to know more about Fairtrade products
6. I would like to know more about the working conditions and the situation of the producers of the products I buy[21]

Habits

Please indicate if you agree with the following statements (1=totally disagree; 7= totally agree).

1. I am not interested in Fairtrade products because I prefer my usual brands*
2. I have switched to Fairtrade products for social reasons (e.g. working conditions of producers)
3. I make a conscious effort to limit my use of products that are made in a socially irresponsible way (e.g. poor working conditions)

Concern About Sustainability Issues

How concerned are you personally about each of these issues?

1. Child labour
2. Deforestation of the rain forest
3. Poor treatment of animals in food production
4. Environmental damage caused by humans' use of land and water
5. Poor working conditions and wages for food producers in the global south
6. Packaging that is not recyclable
7. Food safety and quality[22]

Independent Factor: Social Attitude

Please indicate if you agree with the following statements (1=totally disagree; 7= totally agree).

1. There is nothing the average citizen can do to stop social inequality in the global south*
2. My actions to increase social wellbeing today will make the world a better place for future generations
3. It is essential to promote fair employment conditions in the global south
4. Social justice works in the global south are simply a waste of money and resources*

[21] Items 4.-6. were added by the researcher in consultation with FT
[22] Added by the researcher in consultation with FT

5. Capacity-building in the global south (e.g. education and training) is none of my business*
6. I think promoting a fair distribution of power and resources in the global south is meaningless*
7. It is very important to raise concerns regarding the quality of human life in the global south among the citizens here

Demographics
Please indicate your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

What is your age?

- Below 21
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 39
- above 39

Are you involved in any social activity (e.g. work for a NGO, donating, volunteering)?

- Yes
- No

Information about income is really important to better understand the results. Please indicate your household income (in the previous year) before taxes.

- Less than CHF 10'000
- CHF 10'000 – CHF 19'999
- CHF 20'000 – CHF 29'999
- CHF 30'000 – CHF 39'999
- CHF 40'000 – CHF 49'999
- CHF 50'000 – CHF 59'999
- CHF 60'000 – CHF 69'999
- CHF 70'000 – CHF 79'999
- CHF 80'000 – CHF 89'999
- CHF 90'000 – CHF 99'000
- Above 100'000

9.2 Demographic Groups: Mean- and ANOVA-Tables

Independent Variable: Social Activity

Mean Scores:

Dependent Variable	Yes (68)	No (94)
Social Attitude	6.03	5.56
Social Purchase Behavior	5.13	4.65
PPI	4.84	4.27
Habits	5.09	4.58
Awareness	4.29	3.96

ANOVA Results:

Dependent Variable	Partial η^2	Adjusted R^2	Significance
Social Attitude	0.079	0.073	0.001
Social Purchase Behavior	0.062	0.055	0.003
PPI	0.060	0.053	0.003
Habits	0.050	0.043	0.008
Awareness	0.027	0.020	0.050

Independent Variable: Gender

Mean Scores:

Dependent Variable	Male (70)	Female (90)
Social Attitude	5.52	5.94
Social Purchase Behavior	4.67	5.00
PCE	5.33	5.70
Information	4.60	4.88
Habits	4.55	4.99

ANOVA Results:

Dependent Variable	**Partial η^2**	**Adjusted R^2**	**Significance**
Social Attitude	0.065	0.058	0.002
Social Purchase Behavior	0.031	0.024	0.039
PCE	0.044	0.037	0.013
Information	0.042	0.035	0.015
Habits	0.037	0.030	0.022

Independent Variable: Income

Mean Scores:

DV	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**
Social Attitude	6	5.93	6.24	5.64	5.09	5.54	5.9	5.63	5.49	5	5.36
Behavior	5.12	4.93	5.03	4.98	4.23	4.95	4.67	5.56	4	3.93	4.33
PCE	5.83	5.63	5.9	5.56	4.73	5.37	5.44	5.75	5.39	4.82	4.81
PPI	4.76	4.75	5.09	4.8	3.88	4.45	4.33	4.93	3.49	3.54	3.45
Trust	4.74	4.61	4.54	5	3.83	4.77	4.81	5.07	4.76	3.19	4.58

Legend:

1: Less than CHF 10’000: 48 (26.66%)
2: CHF 10’000 – CHF 19’999: 23 (12.78%)
3: CHF 20’000 – CHF 29’999: 16 (8.89%)
4: CHF 30’000 – CHF 39’999: 9 (5.00%)
5: CHF 40’000 – CHF 49’999: 11 (6.11%)
6: CHF 50’000 – CHF 59’999: 19 (10.56%)
7: CHF 60’000 – CHF 69’999: 14 (7.78%)
8: CHF 70’000 – CHF 79’999: 12 (6.67%)
9: CHF 80’000 – CHF 89’999: 12 (6.67%)
10: CHF 90’000 – CHF 99’000: 7 (3.88%)
11: Above 100’000: 9 (5.00%)

ANOVA Results:

Dependent Variable	**Partial η^2**	**Adjusted R^2**	**Significance**
Social Attitude	0.174	0.111	0.004
Social Purchase Behavior	0.190	0.128	0.002
PCE	0.169	0.105	0.005
PPI	0.183	0.120	0.002
Trust	0.175	0.112	0.004

9.3 Simple Mediation Analyses

Factor	a	b	c	c'	Mediation	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Awareness	0.3502**	0.3462**	0.6062**	0.4850**	0.1212	0.0602	0.1906
PCE	0.7686**	0.5945**	0.6062**	0.1493	0.4569	0.2842	0.6420
PPI	0.6319**	0.5633**	0.6062**	0.2503**	0.3559	0.2377	0.4825
Trust	0.4073**	0.2665**	0.6062**	0.4977**	0.1085	0.0396	0.1853
Availability	0.2448*	0.0701	0.6062**	0.5890**	0.0171	-0.0197	0.0624
Price	-0.4041**	0.0002	0.6062**	0.6063**	-0.0001	-0.3820	0.0488
Habits	0.6044**	0.5286**	0.6062**	0.2867**	0.3195	0.1857	0.4697
Information	0.2728**	0.2800**	0.6062**	0.5298**	0.0764	0.0111	0.1546

9.4 Parallel Mediation Analysis

Factor	a	b	c	c'	Mediation	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Attitude			0.6062**	0.0680			
Awareness	0.3502**	0.1558**	0.6062**		0.0546	0.0034	0.1106
PCE	0.7686**	0.0548	0.6062**		0.0421	-0.0790	0.1885
PPI	0.6319**	0.3068**	0.6062**		0.1939	0.1144	0.2802
Trust	0.4073**	0.1263*	0.6062**		0.0515	0.0071	0.1035
Availability	0.2448*	-0.0533	0.6062**		-0.0130	-0.0397	0.0097
Price	-0.4041**	-0.0005	0.6062**		0.0002	-0.0227	0.0220
Habits	0.6044**	0.2997**	0.6062**		0.1812	0.1020	0.2744
Information	0.2728**	0.1020*	0.6062**		0.0278	-0.0020	0.0650
(C1)					0.0124	-0.1636	0.1554
(C2)					-0.1393	-0.2467	-0.0383
(C3)					0.0031	-0.0642	0.0694
(C4)					0.0676	0.0033	0.1342
(C5)					0.0543	-0.0037	0.1150
(C6)					-0.1266	-0.2385	-0.0305
(C7)					0.0267	-0.0328	0.0887
(C8)					-0.1518	-0.3077	0.0250
(C9)					-0.0093	-0.1550	0.1562
(C10)					0.0552	-0.0679	0.1975
(C11)					0.0419	-0.0830	0.1873
(C12)					-0.1391	-0.2809	0.0241
(C13)					0.0143	-0.1110	0.1652

(C14)					0.1424	0.0458	0.2460
(C15)					0.2069	0.1232	0.2948
(C16)					0.1937	0.1126	0.2806
(C17)					0.0127	-0.1035	0.1165
(C18)					0.1661	0.0832	0.2586
(C19)					0.0645	0.0087	0.1252
(C20)					0.0512	0.0010	0.1102
(C21)					-0.1297	-0.2311	-0.0372
(C22)					0.0236	-0.0367	0.0880
(C23)					-0.0133	-0.4540	0.0187
(C24)					-0.1942	-0.2914	-0.1081
(C25)					-0.0409	-0.0835	-0.0006
(C26)					-0.1809	-0.2771	-0.1003
(C27)					-0.0276	-0.0733	0.0122
(C28)					0.1533	0.0737	0.2489

Specific indirect effect contrast definitions:

(C1): Awareness minus PCE
(C2): Awareness minus PPI
(C3): Awareness minus Trust
(C4): Awareness minus Availability
(C5): Awareness minus Price
(C6): Awareness minus Habits
(C7): Awareness minus Information
(C8): PCE minus PPI
(C9): PCE minus Trust
(C10): PCE minus Availability
(C11): PCE minus Price
(C12): PCE minus Habits
(C13): PCE minus Information
(C14): PPI minus Trust
(C15): PPI minus Availability
(C16): PPI minus Price
(C17): PPI minus Habits
(C18): PPI minus Information
(C19): Trust minus Availability
(C20): Trust minus Price
(C21): Trust minus Habits
(C22): Trust minus Information
(C23): Availability minus Price
(C24): Availability minus Habits
(C25): Availability minus Information
(C26): Price minus Habits
(C27): Price minus Information
(C28): Habits minus Information

*The underlined items are the sources of a high mediation effect