Cross-cultural Consumer Perceptions for Natural Skincare

Designing strategic branding for a Finish born-global natural skincare company to enter Denmark and South Korea

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Abstract

This study yields an interest from the rising global trend in consumer preferences for natural skincare products. As trends are essentially commercialized by western marketers, this study exhibits an empirical inquiry into cross-cultural consumer perceptions for the category in two distinctive countries, Denmark and South Korea. An in-depth understanding of consumer perceptions is used to reflect upon the dialectics of global and local influences to consumer cultures and further used to discuss global branding. A Finnish born-global natural skincare brand, Supermood, is used as a case to provide managerial insights into branding for born-globals seeking to leverage the trend. Inspired by the Supermood value proposition, the study seeks to demonstrate how the Finnish country-of-origin (COO) appeal may be used in global branding in the category.

The design of the study, as focused on unraveling consumer perceptions for natural skincare and the Finnish COO, is inspired by the triangulation of quantitative data gathering through online surveys and a qualitative method of focus group interviews. All participants for both methods are 18-35-year-old female from Denmark and Korea. Combined with literature regarding consumer and cultural studies, natural product marketing and global branding, this study explores consumer perceptions, values, and along with COO appeal.

The results address that the rising trend of natural skincare category is essentially a by-product of Postmaterialism. Consumer individualism in decision-making, personal health, and concern for the environment are reflected in consumer perception and practice in both countries. Hence, the study finds prevailing differences in the level of socio-cultural contexts as related to the meaning of natural skincare, relevant information sources, and product usage values. Given the results, the study acknowledges the existence of a globally transcending consumer segment for young female natural skincare consumers in Denmark and Korea. The cultural pluralism appears to be in line with the existing research paradigm for global consumer cultures to some degree. Moreover, the study finds the Finish COO appeal to be relatively more appealing in Korea than in Denmark. Hence, differences in perceptions concern that the use of Finnish COO appeal is not supported to be used standardized in the two markets.

This study proposes that Supermood should focus on creating a strong global brand with a glocalized strategy, essentially by imposing standardized products, pricing, and visual image, yet with localized distribution choices and communications. The communications approach, as is argued to impose challenges for resource-scarce born-global, is proposed to be done by a local sensitivity, combining push- and pull- channels as the strategy to enter Denmark and Korea successfully.
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1. Introduction

Globalization, a phenomenon fueled by technological, social and political changes, has increased the magnitude of possibilities to conduct international business (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; Ghemawat, 2016; Oviatt & McDougall, 2005). The increased global connectedness has resulted that many businesses seek to strategically leverage the potential by increasing the scope and scale of their international operations. While traditionally firms are proven to increase their international commitment incrementally, we now see large quantities of companies aiming for global markets from their very inception. The contemporary literature has recognized such a phenomenon as born-globals (BGs) companies. Since these are essentially established on the globally anticipated similarities for the demand of their product concepts (Gabrielsson & Kirpalani, 2012; Lynn & Jin, 2014), BG companies stand at the forefront of the globalization phenomenon and its business applications.

Due to the aspects of global business practices, media landscapes and fashion systems, consumers around the world are exposed to a greater number of global goods and services than ever before (Arnould & Thompson, 2005b; Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). Along these, the meanings and usage values attached to these concepts transcend regional and national borders, encouraging consumers to participate in global consumer culture (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). GCC (global consumer culture) is a “cultural entity not associated with a single country, but rather a larger group generally recognized as international and transcending individual national cultures” (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999, P.80). Consumer acculturation to such GCCs has thus proposed to blur cultural patterns, creating consumer and market interconnectedness across geographic areas (Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010).

Paradoxically, while GCCs induce attraction for marketers to standardize across geographical regions, these efforts are hampered along differences in preferences and value dispositions in relation to the socio-cultural backgrounds of the consumer (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Therefore, a growing number of researchers have argued that marketers should consider both differences within countries and similarities across countries when designing their approaches (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). Thus, while the consumption of global brands has been proven to symbol cosmopolitanism, modernity (Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010), and social status (Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010), there simultaneously remain concern with regards to the brand’s country of origin in the minds of the consumers’ (Josiassen et al., 2013; Yasin et al., 2007). The COO appeal remains important particularly for the degree the country preference overrides the global standardization for brand differentiation (ibit). In this regard, brands in various product categories benefit from the country-of-origin appeal when constructing their global brand strategies.
Only recently, global consumer studies have drawn attention to the dramatic increase in consumer preferences towards green and natural products, and the business and marketing implications (Liobikienë & Bernatonienë, 2017). The particular interest of this paper is the natural cosmetics industry, which has grown significantly during the recent years (Statista, 2018). The market value was estimated at 15 billion USD in the year 2017 with a projected view to be the fastest growing subsegment in the wider industry of personal care (Bae, 2017; Chidley, 2017; Statista, 2018). The market, while having great potential globally, pertains a challenge due to the lack of conceptual definitions to be used in marketing (ibid). Simultaneously, the use of cosmetics products is generally regarded important in the lives of the consumers’ and embedded to the socio-cultural contexts, corresponding to the usage values beyond mere utility (Matic & Puh, 2016; Rosch, 1975).

This study yields its interests in the above-mentioned areas by establishing a cross-cultural consumer study and using a born-global brand in the natural skincare industry as an explorative case in the inquiry. Ultimately, the paper sheds a light on the area of global branding within the field.

1.1. Objectives and Research Question

This paper will seek to unravel and understand consumer perceptions, values, and dispositions toward the natural skincare product category. Moreover, the paper seeks to address the dynamics that prevail in the perceptions cross-culturally: Namely, we aim at discovering the degrees to which the skincare consumers converge in their perceptions, meanings, and values towards the subcategory of natural products, simultaneously acknowledging the potential for points of divergence.

Based on the consumer insights, the purpose of this paper is to ultimately discuss and evaluate the implications of the found similarities and differences in consumer perceptions from a global branding perspective. In more detail, the goal is to facilitate a discussion and provide evaluations as to how a global brand may be established in two distinctive market contexts. We have chosen two interesting and presumably different market contexts, namely Denmark, where consumers are argued to be among the most pro-organic in the world (Kaad-Hansen, 2017), and Korea, where the cosmetics industry has a strong and well-established position in the consumers’ lives with skincare as its most prominent segment (Cosmetics Europe, 2017; Matic & Puh, 2016).

In order to position our study further into the contemporary dynamics of global and local consumer cultures, we address the age cohort of young female adults between ages 18-35. These consumers are not only
targeted by marketers within the given category but are also arguably centrally situated within the global movements of meanings, values, and goods (Rašković et al., 2016). Therefore, the interest ultimately prevails regarding whether there exists a rising global consumer culture for the natural skincare category. We thus perceive such an inquiry to be of both managerial and academic relevance.

As to situate our investigation into a real-life context, this study explores the latter areas by using a Finnish born-global natural and organic skincare company Supermood as the case. With an in-depth understanding of the consumer culture and its varying dynamics, this study will seek to discuss and evaluate the ways in which the brand may be introduced to the Danish and Korean markets, and the branding strategies most feasible for the company to adopt internationally.

Inspired by the case company’s value proposition, “holistic beauty from Finland”, this study will thus propose an interest towards the Finnish country-of-origin appeal. Little has been investigated regarding the appeal (Ryan, 2008), therefore providing this study a unique opportunity for contributing to existing to literature.

The study is designed to include both quantitative and qualitative inquiries to be used in triangulation. With the combination of an exploratory survey and focus group interviews, we seek for in-depth understanding of the given phenomenon in its contexts. Conclusively, this study paper will be devoted to answering the following research question(s).

How can a Finnish born global natural skincare company achieve a global brand image?

- How are natural skincare products perceived cross-culturally by 18-35 years old female consumers in Korea and Denmark?
- How is the Finnish country-of-origin appeal perceived cross-culturally within the product category?
- Based on consumer insights, how may the case company Supermood establish a brand presence in the Korean and Danish markets?

1.2. Structure

This thesis is divided into 7 chapters. This chapter, Chapter 1, includes an introduction to the chosen research field, a presentation of the research objectives followed by the research questions, and the limitations and the contribution to the field of research.
Chapter 2 includes a situational analysis with the presentation of the case company Supermood and its marketing mix, the industry descriptions for both European and Asian outlooks, as well as the empirical data on cultural dimensions (Hofstede) and societal types (Inglehart) for Denmark and Korea.

In chapter 3, the theoretical framework is presented. Given the stated research questions, the study encompasses three main areas; born-global literature, cross-cultural consumer research, and natural product marketing. To start, a short introduction to the born-global and global branding theories are provided which induces the propositions of Finnish country-of-origin appeal for our case company. The contemporary consumer research regarding natural products is presented to yield an insight prior to building our research design for empirical data. Lastly, the section closes with cultural frameworks and theory of global consumer culture.

In chapter 4, the philosophical standpoint, namely social constructivist approach, is introduced. The research methodologies are explained, followed by research design regarding Finnish and Korean consumers perception on natural skincare and Finnish country-of-origin.

Chapter 5 will be devoted to the analysis of the primary data. The section is divided into two main parts, first of which presents the results from online surveys. Secondly, the results from focus group interviews will be presented.

In chapter 6, the findings will be discussed in accordance with the stated literature and situational analysis. Additionally, managerial aspect with an implication for the Supermood case will be addressed to conclude the three research questions.

Chapter 7 will summarize our study, conclude its findings and contributions, and provide directions for further inquiry.

2. Situational Analysis

As the current study will investigate a real-life phenomenon, it is essential to begin by addressing the context and the specific situation which this study will be embedded into. This includes the introduction of the relevant secondary data sources that will further guide the design of the study and its managerial implications. The sections are structured as follows: First, the case company Supermood will be presented with relevant company details of the marketing mix and value proposition. Second, the secondary sources from the
cosmetics skincare industry in Europe and Asia is presented, with specific focuses on the Danish and South Korean markets. Thirdly, this section closes with the cultural dimensions scores (G Hofstede, 1980), and the two respective countries as positioned to the World Values Survey (Inglehart, 1997; WVS, 2010).

2.1. The Case Company
Supermood Ltd. was founded in 2014 by a Finnish former supermodel Anne Kukkohovi. It is privately held and currently employs up to four people in the Headquarters in Helsinki, Finland. Its specific fields of business are natural and eco cosmetics skincare products. Research and development as well as the ingredients are of Finnish origin, and no animal testing is used in the process (Supermood, 2018a).

The company is, as stated to be to the focus area of this study, a born-global with a presence in multiple countries despite its startup status and small size (Appendix 9.1). The company has stated that the brand is designed for global appeal and that they anticipate success in their chosen niche across national borders (Supermood, 2018b). In the sense that Finnish cosmetics brands typically internationalize incrementally (Gloria, 2017), the company and its unconventional strategy to challenge the industry status quo provides an especial interest in this paper. Furthermore, since it is ultimately anticipated that the trend towards the holistic perception of beauty is global and that the Finnish country-of-origin represents a positive point of difference, Supermood is of special interest for the chosen area of studying consumer cultures from a cross-cultural branding perspective.

2.1.1. Supermood branding & Marketing
The company was established on the notion that beauty stems from a holistic set of factors; natural cosmetics, sleep and nutrition as a 360-degree experience (Supermood, 2018a). The company stands for a value proposition of “holistic beauty from Finland”, and leverages the purity of the Finnish nature and the specialties of Nordic nature for the use of beauty and self-care (Supermood, 2018a). The brand seeks to have its products incorporated into the consumers’ daily life as a functional element, if you will, in the process of creating a certain “mood”. That is, each product line ensures that the consumer perceives her mood as enhanced as a result of her chosen lifestyle to which she incorporated the products.

2.1.1.1. The Marketing Mix
The product range is currently standardized across markets. The company has three product lines in the current portfolio (Appendix 9.1). Each includes a full range of products for both internal and external use:
Facial washes, creams, serums, beauty powders, dietary supplements, and antioxidant filled chocolate (Supermood, 2018a).

Pricing reflects an everyday luxury and is skewed more towards a high-end position. On a price-quality axis, the price strategy reflects quality positioning and is currently standardized across markets.

Placement has two aspects, namely distribution channels and geographical presence. As a niche brand, Supermood has created an international presence from inception and is available in several countries in physical retail outlets: California and New York (United States), Finland, Sweden, Estonia, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, and recently also in the Netherlands (Supermood, 2018a). The products are available online with worldwide shipping, and through several online retail outlets (ibit). The company seeks to establish itself as a global brand, therefore actively negotiates new retail contracts such as to Denmark and Korea that are chosen for focus in the current paper.

Promotion: Supermood’s marketing communications occur primarily through online channels and in the specific retail outlets (Supermood, 2018b). The brand communications practice on social media with company-owned channels (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn), and through public relations initiatives such as bloggers and editorial reviews (Supermood, 2018b). The founder, Anne Kukkohovi, represents the brand face across the brand’s current markets.

Typical for the industry, the packaging design is an important contributor to the communications: The visual brand identity is heavily built around the products, and the visuals are standardized across markets.

2.2. Skincare Industry and Trends

The global cosmetics skincare industry is estimated to grow in total 3.6% in the year 2018, with the primary markets in well-developed countries in Europe, North America and Asia. The value of the market in total has been estimated at 134.5 billion US dollars in the current year (Statista, 2018). Further, the markets for natural skincare represents the fastest growing subsegments within the industry, with its value estimated at 15 billion US dollars in 2017 (Statista, 2018).

The following subsections include the detailed descriptions of the industry trends and consumer behavior for Europe and Asia, providing this study with the relevant background details of the cross-continental differences that prevail in the given industry.
2.2.1. Europe & Denmark

Cosmetics Europe is a European personal care association that conducts yearly consumer research across the region. Their report highlighted that while certain functional product benefits are well-documented and expected by the consumers, there is growing evidence that cosmetics and personal care products have a positive role for satisfying certain tangible usage benefits (Cosmetics Europe, 2017). Thus, sustainability beyond the ingredients, such as in the production and regarding negative impressions towards testing on animals (Chidley, 2017).

Firstly, cosmetics and skincare were proven to increase the quality of life, as was agreed upon 72% of respondents (Cosmetics Europe, 2017). They perceived personal care as contributing to the value of good health. Secondly, up to 80% of the respondents identified cosmetics and personal care products as either important or very important in building up self-esteem (ibid). Thus, consumers perceived that the use of the products contributed to building their social confidence. Finally, the perceptions towards product innovation and marketing information were that 86% of consumers emphasized efficacy, and 87% quality (ibid). Thus, consumers take financial considerations and the brand’s social responsibility into account when making their decisions.

European consumers have increased knowledge with regards to different effects of ingredients to their health. Furthermore, the natural skincare segment reaches across different consumer segments, from those who use products heavily as part of their daily routines, and those with less interest towards such routines. The common factor in the trend towards healthy lifestyles. Ultimately, a product category combining aromatherapy, superfoods, and beauty products, referred as nutricosmetics, is estimated to grow its presence in the market (Chidley, 2017).

For the Danish market for natural and organic skincare, it has been estimated that the potential remains unsaturated and biggest in the Nordic region: The Danish consumers are the most pro-organic consumers in the world, with the most well-developed organic market already existing in other categories such as food products (Kaad-Hansen, 2017). The demand is expected to grow even further in the future especially in the cosmetics division, consumers emphasizing environmental friendly and purity of ingredients as central to their choices (Cosmetic Business Review, 2016).
2.2.2. Asia & South Korea

As the second largest cosmetics market after Europe, the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region is estimated to grow into the biggest to cover 57.5% of total sales in the industry by the year 2020 (GlobalData, 2018). The region also has the largest market size in skincare category, the most popular segment in the cosmetics market, and is forecast to reach US$90.9 billion by 2020 (ibid). The APAC skincare market characterized as most fragmented and multi-dimensional with the high variation within Asia regarding the ethnicity, beauty standards, and income increase, while pertaining the collectivist cultural traits to some degree (Martin Roll, 2017). Regional standardization towards Asia is less likely, thus acknowledging the country-specific market details is essential.

Geographically, Korea is among the top 10 players in the world with an estimated worth of over $13.1 billion in cosmetics sales in 2018 (Liu, 2018). Facial skincare products alone make up half of the total market share (ibid). Korean consumers are known as highly sophisticated in beauty sector, which reflected in Korea being “the testbed of many world-famous cosmetic companies” (Bae, 2017; Liu, 2018). Korean consumers growing more knowledgeable about different cosmetic types and ingredients and hold a high pride and rigor in their choices. Given the market competitions among a large number of both global and local brands, consumers often switch brands and settling for more personalized products (GlobalData, 2018).

One of the most distinctive skincare trends in Korea is the multi-step skincare regime. The steps range from double-cleansing to moisturizing in 8 to 10 stages a day (Bae, 2017). The steps and products in use are highly individualized among Korean consumers depending on their skin status, preferences, climates and the environmental condition. While the yearly purchase revenue per capita in skincare products increase in the past year, the whole step routines are likely to decrease (ibid). Market experts interpret this phenomenon as consumers use multiple different products for each step (ibid). The major reason for altering the steps for Korean consumers is the perceived skin problems, for example, irritation and over-sensitivity, thus they pay great attention to the ingredients (ibid). Along with the nations’ long belief in herbal usage in beauty sector and increasing awareness for health and wellness, the judicious consumers provide opportunities for brands to facilitate natural, organic or non-synthetic formulations (Bae, 2017; Liu, 2018).

Natural and organic beauty is conceived in the context of ‘functional cosmetics’ and ‘cosmeceutical’, both terms specialized in Korean cosmetics market. ‘Functional cosmetics’ is a label allowed by the Korea Food and Drug Administration for anti-wrinkle, elasticity-boosting, pigment-fading and sunscreen properties (Liu, 2018). Coupled with ‘cosmeceuticals’ adding the health notion of beauty, natural ingredients as traditional Korean herbs and plant extracts are often framed with the nuance of therapeutic function. In this regard,
marketers estimate that multifunctional cosmeceutical products with natural ingredients all in one will be in high demand in Korean market (ibid). Korean consumers are also acknowledging the allegedly harmful chemical ingredient in conventional cosmetics, and willing to obtain more information prior to their purchase decision (Martin Roll, 2017). However, the authorized label for natural or organic cosmetics does not exist in the market, thus the definition of the product category is vague (ibid).

Consequently, it gives rise to emerging consciousness among consumers about “source and purity of ingredients and the manufacturing process” (Martin Roll, 2017). Korean consumers are also acknowledged alleged harmful chemical ingredient in conventional cosmetics, and willing to obtain more information prior to their purchase decision.

It leads to the rising popularity of the digital platform to gather the information from the ingredient check to product reviews. The mobile application that provides ingredient analysis of cosmetics, called Haw Hae recorded 6 million downloads (Bae, 2017). The application allows customers to examine ingredients on a certain product. The influence is expanded to commerce platform and actual sales record, accompanied by an abundance of E-commerce in Korea. In addition to the mobile applications, Korean consumers gather their information regarding ingredient and products reviews through online beauty forums, beauty YouTubers and TV shows specialized in blind beauty product test (ibid).

Overall, there exists a rising need for customization in their beauty practices which induce multidimensional product experience in their skincare routines in use of natural beauty product and digital instrument among Korean consumers. Accompanied with the balance between the collectivist and the individualized needs of the consumer, natural beauty brands entering Korean market need to recognize that products should be developed and marketed aligned with market trends and the consumer needs.

2.3. Cultural Analysis

2.3.1. Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede’s (1980; 2001) cultural dimensions propose a high cultural difference between the Danish and South Korean contexts. Proposed to account for the general socio-cultural context within the given countries, the differences may be regarded to be as follows:

Danish culture proposes a low score on power distance, whereas Korean culture prevails a relatively high score. The Danish culture is highly individualistic, whereas Korean culture collectivist. Both countries are
more feminine than masculine, although the Danish culture presents a more feminine tendency. Korean culture is of high uncertainty avoidance, whereas the Danish culture is low. The Danish culture is of low uncertainty avoidance, as contradictory to the high score of Korea. While both national cultures reflect a long-term orientation, Korean culture is of extremely high score compared to the Danish equivalent.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dimension/ Score</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Korea</th>
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<tr>
<td>Power Distance</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term Orientation</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
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Table 1. Denmark and Korea in Hofstede’s 5 dimensions

2.3.2. Inglehart: World Values Survey

Although Korea and Denmark score very opposite in each cultural dimensions of Hofstede (1980), there are similarities between the two countries as both possessing postmodern values analyzed through Inglehart’s World Values Survey. Firstly, both countries belong to “high-income” societies when clustered according to the economic wealth of the society (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Given that the economic growth is the main driver in inducing transformation of values, this indicates that the populations of both countries may to some extent induce similar individual values. Moreover, both countries show high score in secular-rational values, as opposed to traditional values. Thus, self-expressive values are preferred against the survival values, although the degree of each variable differs from one another (ibid). The major difference regarding the distinction of material and post-material values would be that Korea remains resilient in its high score and emphasis on materialistic values, hereby imposing a mix of materialistic and post-material values (WVS, 2010). Therefore, we may assume that Korea is in the trajectory to a post-material transition when compared to Denmark which is considered and referred as the poster child of postmodernism (Inglehart, 1997).

3. Literature Review

The following subsections include the theoretical foundations of this study. The sections aim for introducing the relevant theoretical propositions, to account for their relevance to this study paper, and to ultimately reveal the gaps and areas to which we will aim at contributing to.
The first section 3.1. introduces the literature and point of departure to the born-global phenomenon. Followed by section 3.2., the concept of a global brand is introduced. Hence, the section will provide an overview of the country-of-origin appeal in global branding. Section 3.3. will have a focus on the contemporary studies within the organic and natural cosmetics and skincare. Lastly, section 3.4. introduces the global consumer culture theory and two complementary perspectives.

3.1. Introduction to Born-globals

The definition of a born global (BG) company used in this paper is one originally presented by Welch & Luostarinen (1988), who referred to such companies as “those that intended to export immediately upon inception”. This definition is complemented by identifying BGs as startup companies with a vision and strategy to internationalize within the first three years of their existence (Knight, 2001), and with the aim to geographically expand to several foreign markets to cover a minimum of 25% of total sales from these markets (Knight & Cavusgil, 1996). The prerequisites for BG companies is that they possess competitive advantages to be leveraged on a global scale (Oviatt & McDougall, 2005). They typically have products that are either innovative or highly specialized, and their customer segments propose anticipated similarities across different markets, countries, and regions (Gabrielsson, 2005). Furthermore, these companies typically occupy a niche market position, which reduces the barriers to entry (Lynn Childs & Jin, 2014).

Oviatt & McDougall (2005) and Ghemawat (2016) proposed that the convergence of business processes, information and communication technologies, and the availability of business and consumer data, knowledge, skills and corporate governance have reduced the liabilities of physical and psychical distances, and enabled companies for rapid internationalization to increasingly distant markets early on. An additional reasoning used to account for the motivational direction of SMEs to born global thus includes the insufficient size of the home market to sustain growth (Luostarinen & Gabrielsson, 2004). Under the contemporary propositions of convergence of business practices, early exporting has also been proven to be related to the international success of SMEs compared to the incremental approach proposed by the Uppsala model (Gabrielsson & Kirpalani, 2012; Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). Thus, the established BG literature widely ignores the incremental approach to internalization and argues for the non-sequential path. Accordingly, BGs invest in global markets with higher structural scale and scope, thus lowered psychological barriers for entrepreneurial actors’ as opposed to more traditional SMEs (Gabrielsson & Kirpalani, 2012).
The born-global literature is especially incomplete in the domain of product marketing for consumers goods (ibit), hereby posing this study with potential contribution to the existing BG literature by investigating cross-cultural consumer perceptions and the implications to the brand and marketing approaches.


The definition of a brand in this paper is one by Keller (1993), who stated brand as the augmented product to which imaginary is added to create a certain set of perceptions, a mindshare among the consumers. Kotler (1994) in turn used a definition of a brand image as ‘the set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person holds regarding an object’ (p. 599). A brand’s image is said to include both product-related and non-product related attributes (Keller, 1993), and that these may categorize to be either functional or symbolic (Rosch, 1975). Moreover, the process of branding refers to the design of the marketing mix to construct and communicate a favorable and a unique image of the given brand to the consumers in the marketplace (ibit).

A strong brand represents a valuable asset for a company seeking to compete in international markets (Alden et al., 1999; Nelson & Paek, 2007a; Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010). However, brand concepts are argued the prevail challenges as to how they may be exported to international markets. Namely, this is due to that a brand that is created to signal certain attributes in a specific manner in the original context, is moved to another context where potential differences in the customers’ perceptual frameworks may yield different interpretations (Nasir & Altinbasak, 2009). A way of understanding these differences is proposed to be the means-end chain (Gutman, 1982) which has been elaborated as “a hierarchy of goals” (Gutman, 1997, p.558).

The approach is based on a theory that product attributes a brand resonates with are associated with consequences, consumer product benefits and risks, and further to the personal values, the product concept can help consumers fulfill (Gutman, 1997). The result is a value chain linking a product attribute to its functional consequence, to the psychosocial consequence, and to the underlying personal value. This resonates with the Belk’s (1988) proposition that consumer use products as to extend their sense of selves. Hence, since the self-concept is essentially formulated as a socio-cultural and psychological constitution (Markus & Kitayama, 2010), the cross-cultural differences in consumer perceptions may be discovered by an understanding of this means-end chain for a particular product concept.

The recognition of potential differences in consumer perceptions has resulted into the definition of a global brand as the augmented product concept that is available in multiple markets with the same name, yet with possible differences in the marketing mix and positioning strategies (Alden et al., 1999; de Mooij, 2014). The strategic and managerial implications of the differences have been subject to academic research for decades,
yet with no comprehensive answers have been proposed (Nasir & Altinbasak, 2009). On the contrary, the contemporary literature proposes remarkable tensions among the findings known as the standardization versus adaptation debate of global branding (de Mooij, 2014; Moon & Park, 2011; Nasir & Altinbasak, 2009; Nelson & Paek, 2007a) which will be introduced in the following section.

3.2.1. The Standardization versus Adaptation Debate

Standardization refers to the execution of a common marketing mix across international markets (Nasir & Altinbasak, 2009). The approach has its roots in the early globalization literature such as “Globalization of Markets” by Levitt (1993) (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). The given perspective posits an optimistic view of the globalization phenomenon arguing that the convergence of competitive landscape, technological and socio-economic developments have created homogeneous conditions under which companies can sustain a standardized position, referred also as a foreign consumer culture positioning (Alden et al., 1999; de Mooij, 2014).

While some research has outdated in the assumptions of the degree to which globalization has truly created homogeneity among consumer markets (Ghemawat, 2017), academic work has also been devoted to the understanding that for some consumer goods with a foreign origin, brand standardization is in fact accepted and valued by consumers in the export country (Nelson & Paek, 2007b; Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010). Standardization has been found successful when the brand has strong functional attributes in its product category, that is, it satisfies utilitarian needs and implies to the rationale of the consumer (Merz, He, & Alden, 2008; Rosch, 1975). Thus, such an approach may benefit brands with a strong, positive country-of-origin appeal to be leveraged (Josiassen et al., 2013). In particular, consumer perceptions towards the trustworthiness, quality, and modernity related to the foreign origins of the brand add to the equity of the brand (Josiassen et al., 2013; Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010). Furthermore, it has been proposed according to the principles of conspicuous consumption that globally recognized brands may lead to brand usage for both public and private references of one’s social status (Han et al., 2010).

The use of standardized advertising appeal and execution for visuals and a copy has also been supported and argued to enable the formation of prestige around the brand (Alden et al., 1999; Nelson & Paek, 2007). Particularly the use of English as lingua franca may convey symbolic meanings to those consumers who prefer to associate positive meanings, and thus are open towards products and advertising from multinational companies (Alden et al., 1999; Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). Thus, the standardized approach is argued for to reduce resource constraints for the brand organization (Nasir & Altinbasak, 2009).
Adaptation, on the contrary, refers to the modification of a product, price, promotion, and distribution strategy in global markets to fit local market conditions (Nasir & Altinbasak, 2009). This is argued for by theorists emphasizing countries-as-segments approach to marketing (Alden et al., 1999; de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). The rationale is typically based on the assumption that consumer perceptions diverge at the level of symbolic product attributes, which relate to the invisible dimensions of culture. The different symbolic perceptions and normative influences thus ultimately lead to different positions in different cultural contexts (Fournier, 1991; Merz et al., 2008). It has furthermore been proposed that consumer ethnocentrism impacts the perceived value and authenticity of domestic products and brands as compared to those of global origin (Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010). Thus, some consumption values persist as learned behaviors and consequently, are difficult to control by standardized strategies (Nelson & Paek, 2007). Translating into a local consumer culture positioning (Alden et al., 1999), the brand is made to create associations with local cultural meanings, culture’s norms and identities, and advertised by portraying local people in the national culture or by linking the origins of the product to be domestic. Thus, an adapted branding approach may result from cross-national differences in media availability, distribution structures, communicative styles and advertising regulations (Nelson & Paek, 2007). De Mooij (2014) went as far as to argue that “in global brand strategy, the choice is not between global and local but between ineffective global standardization and effective cultural segmentation strategy” (p. 329). Accordingly, the strategic adaptation of the brand to local conditions would drive brand performance and an economic payoff for the company (Nasir & Altinbasak, 2009).

There is a rising consensus among the scholars that both localized and standardized approaches to global branding are vague (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; Ghemawat, 2016; Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010). In the attempt to strike a balance between the two ends of the continuum, so to speak, scholars have established a perspective referred to as the convergence, or glocalized, approach (Merz et al., 2008; Nasir & Altinbasak, 2009). Theodosiou & Leonidou (2003) defined that the degree of adaptation and standardization in the marketing strategy is situation specific. Further, there should be a careful analysis of the prevailing internal and external factors of the given brand organization, and to that, the final decision should reflect a positive impact to the brand performance in international markets. Similarly, Cleveland & Laroche (2007) refer to findings of Yoon et al. (1996) and Ger & Belk (1996) in the conclusion that global marketing strategies should be situated within the consumer-product relations and remain domain-specific.

The so-called convergence approach pertains much in common with the global consumer culture positioning strategy, defined by Alden et al. (1999) as a collection of common signs and symbols agreed and understood among consumers in several markets around the world. Alden et al. (2006) further emphasized that for most
product categories, globalization and cultural homogenization are not equivalent. Rather, consumers integrate consumption symbols of both local and global origins. In this regard, it may be beneficial to blend the shared global symbols and local symbols together depending on the target market attitudes and global consumption orientation in the product category. The scholars emphasize that local conditions may indeed propose an adaptation to context-specific advertising copies and languages or different product portfolio compositions. However, also the existence of globally diffused consumption signs and symbols shared may be leveraged to establish global brands (Alden et al., 1999; Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010).

Conclusively, this paper will be investigating the given tension in the literature by focusing especially on the globally recognized trend for natural skincare, as situated in the context of the case company within the industry.

3.2.2. Branding of Born-globals

Luostarinen & Gabrielsson (2004) established that the studies examining branding strategies of born-globals are in this regard limited and even somewhat contradictory. Adding to the debate over standardized versus adapted brand approaches, the given gap provides this study with a great academic interest.

In general, a special characteristic for business-to-consumer BGs is the early formation of a branding strategy by the use of the corporate brand (Gabrielsson, 2005). Additionally, it was found that these companies typically relayed on the corporate brand irrespectively to their global expansion stage (ibid). The study also covered that these companies do not follow the typical countries-as-segments approach widely used by incrementally internationalizing multinationals (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; Gabrielsson, 2005), but instead follow a “pattern matching standardization by developing a global brand essence while keeping a global customer segment in mind” (Gabrielsson, 2005, p. 214).

The global pattern standardization brand approach for BGs was a subject to empirical inquiry by Gabrielsson (2005) and Spence & Hamzaoui Essoussi (2010). These scholars found that BG companies tend to have an emphasis on their product as standardized across markets and that they seek to utilize a variety of innovative tactics for maximizing impact at lower costs in distribution, communications, and advertising. Especially, the push and pull strategies we used in the local context, typically with the help of horizontal partnerships for localized impact (Gabrielsson, 2005; Spence & Hamzaoui Essoussi, 2010). While traditional push-methods such as advertising appeals were seen as crucial for initial presence and awareness, pull-methods as
specialized magazines, editorial publicity, the Internet and industry fairs may be utilized for reinforcing a standardized image (Gabrielsson, 2005).

3.2.3. The Country-of-origin Appeal

Only a few of brand appeals have been argued to translate across national borders and be used regardless of cultural contexts (de Mooij, 2014). One such an appeal is the country-of-origin (COO) appeal, which implies to the stereotypical assessments of the consumers’ with regards to the home country and the product category of the brand (ibid). The central assumptions of the carryover-effect are that the positive perception of the brand’s country-of-origin translates to the image of the brand (Yasin et al., 2007). It is typically hypothesized that a positive carryover-effect enables companies to implement standardized branding and marketing strategies (Yasin et al., 2007; de Mooij, 2014). This is due to that the image influences brand distinctiveness and perceived quality positively and significantly, thereby contributes to the consumers’ purchase decisions and brand loyalty (Yasin et al., 2007).

A more inclusive perspective to the COO appeal is its treatment as a multi-layered concept. The basic effect of a country may only to a degree induce positive inferences among the consumers, while the product-origin attributes paired with the country of origin are more directly related to consumer perceptions of the brand (Josiassen et al., 2013). Thus, the supernational, or wider regional effect may appear stronger than the country level. Accordingly, the image of the country may be investigated for inferences made to the product, category, and the wider region. Therefore, the most positively perceived COO may be used to create a Halo-effect for the brand (ibid). Furthermore, it has been proposed that in some contexts, consumers have stronger preferences for domestic products, whereas the opposite in others (Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010). Hereby, the attention must be drawn to how the image of a given country translates to consumer perceptions in global markets.

3.2.3.1. The Finnish country-of-origin Appeal

Little has been investigated of the effects of the Finnish country-of-origin appeal. However, Ryan (2008) summarized that the Finnish COO-effect consist of both intrinsic and extrinsic elements: Intrinsic in the design, innovation and technological qualities of the product, and extrinsic for the concepts of fairness and justice, as especially embodied in the social responsibility, safety and environmental standards (Ryan, 2008). He argued that the Finnish appeal may be used as a marketing tool to add on to the brand’s prestige image and positioning from price alone to include the conditions of manufacture and their impact on the social, economic and natural environment (ibid).
The study proposed that the Finnish country-of-origin appeal would translate especially to industries relying on advanced technologies (ibit). How the argued prestige translates to consumer perceptions in the cosmetics skincare industry is, however, an unexplored area to be covered by this study.

3.3. Consumer Research in Natural and Organic Cosmetics

The following section will consider prominent existing studies regarding cosmetics marketing and consumer behavior studies in the natural and organic product category. Additionally, the purpose is to introduce and account for existing literature within the given area to establish and highlight specific interest areas for the research design in this study.

The cosmetics industry has become one of the important players in the market for global consumer goods due to its existence of personal care and makeup as prominent in the everyday lives consumers (Matic & Puh, 2016). Scholars have argued that along with the rising consumer awareness of health and environmental impact in a variety of industries, the consumer preference for green products is expanding worldwide to also cosmetics (Cervellon & Carey, 2011; Liobikienė & Bernatonienė, 2017).

However, marketing and consumer purchase behavior regarding natural cosmetics is still relatively under-researched area compared to the research on green product marketing in general (Kim & Seock, 2009; Liobikienė et al., 2017). Although relatively few in number, there has been an increase in academic interest and number of studies related to consumer behavior toward green cosmetics during recent years (Cervellon & Carey, 2011; Dimitrova, Kaneva, & Gallucci, 2009; Johri & Sahasakmontri, 1998; S. Kim & Seock, 2009; Liobikienė et al., 2017; Matic & Puh, 2016). This is due to that the natural cosmetic markets have grown remarkably (Bae, 2017; Chidley, 2017), thereby showing potential for marketers’ to leverage this trend.

Drawing on a recent study by Liobikienė & Bernatonienė (2017) who were among the first ones to cover consumer purchase intentions within the field of organic and natural cosmetics. They argued that the use of an environmentally-friendly ingredient in the production is an important underlying consumer motivation for natural, eco-friendly, or green cosmetics (ibit). Consumer sophistication of the synthetic ingredients, and the use of pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, toxic materials, genetically modified organisms or ionizing radiation, has increased and shown in consumer tastes and values accordingly (ibit). In addition to the preferences for types of ingredients, Liobikienė & Bernatonienė (2017) have indicated that internal factors such consumers’ attitude towards environmental concerns, in general, have an impact on the preference for green cosmetics.
In the context of personal care products, Hsu et al. (2017) and Kim & Chung (2011) found that the attitudes towards buying organic products in other categories such as food have a significant impact on purchase intention of green skincare products as well. Kim & Seock (2009), on the other hand, concluded that health and environmental consciousness significantly influenced the attitudes towards buying organic personal care products. Moreover, health and environmental consciousness were both positively related to a respondent’s perceived level of knowledge of beauty products and ability to distinguish natural from conventional counterparts. Conclusively, scholars have also argued for the combination of health, environmental and appearance consciousness to holistically impact consumer preference for organic and natural products (Kim & Seock, 2009). This corresponds to the findings of Liobikienė & Bernatonienė (2017) and their argument of consumer sophistication. However, some studies have indicated that health consciousness does not represent one of the major motives for consumers’ natural product purchase, hence leaving the contemporary literature partially fractionated (Michaelidou & Hassan, 2008; Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2005).

In an attempt to present the comprehensive view of determinants in green cosmetics purchase literature, Liobikienė & Bernatonienė (2017) proposed a conceptual model encompassing factors which attribute to all dimensions of internal, social, and external for analysis of natural cosmetics purchase behavior. According to the model, the internal factors include environmental concern, value or awareness. Social factors are social pressure and its impact on one’s attitude towards purchase behavior. Finally, the external factors are environmental knowledge, price, and product-benefit-related confidence. Moreover, health consciousness and brand are suggested as indirect determinants of personal care product and makeup products respectively (Liobikienė & Bernatonienė, 2017).

Taking into account the relevance of these findings by Liobikienė & Bernatonienė (2017), we assume that they provide reliance, thus relevant framing to our intention to reveal consumers’ perception and preference for the natural skincare brand chosen for our study. As a consequence, this study will adopt influences from the study of Liobikienė & Bernatonienė (2017) to our exploratory approach to the given area from a cross-cultural perspective. Hence, since the focus will be on consumers from Denmark and Korea, this paper will complement and contribute to existing natural cosmetics marketing literature with a cross-continental and global perspective. Thus, the study is to add value to previous studies based almost exclusively on Western countries (Kim & Chung 2011, Kim & Seock 2009; Liobikienė & Bernatonienė 2017).
3.4. Global Consumer Culture & Complementary Theories

Culture by definition is very abstract and complex. The perspectives for studying culture are equally manifold, even debated for. In this section, we will present the different theories and perspectives to be used for the inquiry in this cross-cultural study.

Hofstede (1980) defined culture as “...the collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the members of one group from another” (p. 201). Hofstede’s (1980, 2001) studies on national cultures and dimensions remain the among most widely used in the field of marketing, advertising, and international business (Chandan, 2014; de Mooij, 2014). The differences of cultures are described and distinguished according to the six dimensions model, with the central proposition that the national culture is related to the self, personality, and attitude, hence to consumer behaviors (de Mooij, 2014).

For particular purpose of this study, the relevant propositions of Hofstede’s theory include the following: In high power distance cultures, it is hypothesized that high-end products and global brands will be used as status symbols and for social standing. This is proposed as opposite in lower power distance cultures (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). In individualistic cultures, people are more oriented towards the self, one’s unique identity and its expression. On contrary, collectivistic cultures see the concept of identity as tied to the that of in-group’s (ibid). Thus, some studies have referred to that brands from individualistic cultures use relatively more standardized marketing approaches internationally, compared to those originating from collectivistic cultures (Chandan, 2014; de Mooij, 2014). Coupled with high uncertainty avoidance, adoption of innovation and market penetration of new products tends to be slower in collectivistic cultures, as it relates to maintaining the status quo (de Mooij, 2014). Thus, with high uncertainty avoidance, marketers’ purpose is to persuade, inform and guide, as opposed to emphasizing the end-results and gratifications that remain relatively more important in low uncertainty avoidance cultures (ibid). As a specific implication affecting the cosmetics and personal care industry, it has been found that high uncertainty avoidance translated to a higher emphasis on being well groomed and appeals of purity and freshness (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). Lastly, the more short-term oriented culture is, the more emphasis it concerns to instant results and gratifications, whereas longer-term orientation refers to maintaining peace of mind, harmony, and sustainability (de Mooij, 2014).

Hofstede’s dimensional theory provides this study with the ability to discuss the cross-cultural implications particularly related to marketing and communications, therefore also presented despite the major criticism it has received during recent decade due to the limits on the national level of culture, and ignorance for
subcultural levels (Chandan, 2014). Further, the theory provides that the possible similarities in consumer perceptions are more easily defined as indicators of a global consumer culture (Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010).

Even within relatively homogeneous countries, individuals vary in the extent to which they identify with, adhere to, and practice cultural norms (Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010). As Markus & Kitayama (2010) stated, cultures are neither pure nor timeless, but rather that they constantly evolve due to either internal dynamics or external forces. One perspective to such changes is that provided by Inglehart (1997). On the grounds of his theoretical framing, culture is grounded in materialism and modernization theory. Inglehart identifies four clusters of national-cultural values, which are organized in two bipolar dimensions: Traditional versus Secular-rational values and Survival versus Self-expression values (Inglehart, 1997).

The Traditional versus Secular-rational values dimension reflects the contrast between societies in which religion is prominent and those in which it is not. A wide range of orientations are closely linked with this dimension: Societies near the traditional pole emphasize authority, along with absolute standards and traditional family values. These societies have high levels of national pride, and a nationalistic outlook in consumer choices (Inglehart, 1997; Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010). Societies with secular-rational values have the opposite preferences on all these topics.

The second dimension of cross-cultural variation is linked with the transition from industrial society to post-industrial societies, relating to a polarization between Survival and Self-expression values (Inglehart, 1997). The unprecedented wealth that has accumulated in advanced societies during the past generation means that younger age cohorts have grown up taking survival for granted. Hereby, priorities have shifted from economic and physical security toward subjective well-being, self-expression, and quality of life, as shown in emphasis on autonomy in consumer behaviors alike (ibid). Self-expression values also place priority on environmental protection, tolerance of diversity and rising demands for participation in decision making in economic and political life. Finally, societies that rank high on self-expressive values tend to rank high on interpersonal trust (ibid).

According to Inglehart´s typology, the contrast between materialist and postmaterialist values is a key component of the survival/self-expression dimension (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). With this overall distinction in mind, we may use the typology to distinguish and examine the similarities across countries as apparent in consumer perceptions.
Maffesoli (1996) among other scholars thus further argued that the postindustrial socioeconomic transformation has significantly eroded the traditional bases of sociality, instead encouraging a rise of individualism and personal distinctiveness and autonomy in consumption and lifestyle choices (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Conclusively, they demonstrate that there exist multiple ideologies embedded in the contemporary consumer behavior that pertain at the level of individual consumers rather than as country-wide patterns (ibid; Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). Similarly, Ritzer (2003) notes in his proposition of glocalization that the global and the local result in unique outcomes and potentially multiple consumer identities in different geographic areas (as cited in Merz et al., 2008).

Consumer acculturation is a subset of acculturation focusing on how individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that are appropriate to consumer culture (Peñaloza, 1989). Due to the global interconnectedness and deterritorialization, we now experience globally recognizable patterns of acculturation, defined as the ways “on how individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that are appropriate to consumer culture” (Cleaveland & Laroche, 2007, p. 252; Merz et al., 2008). These are referred to as Global consumer cultures (Alden et al., 1999), defined as market segments that transcend national borders (Firat, 1995), and those comprising of people who “associate similar meanings with certain places, people and things” (Alden et al., 1999, p. 75). For a particular relevance to this study, a definition by Domzal & Kernan (1993) is provided: They argued global consumer cultures to be “segments of people who regard a product category in essentially the same way, regardless of their country of residence”.

Whilst it is to be said that the participation to global consumer cultures is an increasing consequence of globally disseminated goods, media and fashion systems, it must not be forgotten that the global meanings embody themselves in parallel, sometimes even in competition with the local influences (Alden et al., 1999; Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; McCracken, 1986). Arnould & Thompson (2005) in their article “Consumer Culture Theory: Twenty years of research” argued that “particular manifestations of consumer culture are constituted, sustained, transformed and shaped by broader historical forces (such as cultural narratives, myths, and ideologies) and grounded in specific socioeconomic circumstances and marketplace systems” (pp. 869). This perspective in essentially inclusive to the global consumer theory as used in this study to account for the processes of one hand divergence, on the other the convergence, of consumer cultures. Especially, the perspective acknowledges the contemporary movements towards globalized consumer behaviors and values, while on the other hand refers to that consumers construct meanings based on a variety of contextual cues (ibid).
This study will acknowledge the dynamism and pluralism of cultures in its approach the cross-cultural comparison among 18-35-year-old Danish and Korean skincare consumers. Thus, we propose great interest to the degrees to which these consumers have acquired global influences along with the local ones, as they become visible in their behaviors and usage values for the category of natural skincare (McCracken, 1986; Alden et al., 1999).

4. Philosophy of Science

This paper exhibits an exploratory study on how the brand image of a Finnish born-global natural skincare brand is perceived cross-culturally by the female consumer between ages 18-35 in Denmark and South Korea, respectively. Additionally, the interest prevails in the Finnish country of origin- appeal and its implications for the product category and global branding. The consumer insights will further be used for our interest to evaluate and discuss strategic branding for the case company to enter to the Danish and Korean markets. Ultimately, this paper will aim at answering the question “How can a Finnish born global natural skincare company achieve a global brand image?”

This section introduces the methodology to be used in our inquiry. The section is constructed with the following parts: Firstly, the chosen research paradigm will be presented and argued for. Due to our interest towards investigating the extent consumer cultures propose anticipated similarities across countries and geographical territories, referred as “segments of people who regard a product category in essentially the same way, regardless of their country of residence” (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007, p17), we will employ social constructivism as underlying paradigm in the research process. After the introduction to the paradigm, the methods to inquire primary data will be elaborated on: First, an online survey method will be introduced, following the introduction to the focus group interview method as the qualitative inquiry in this study. In addition, the reasoning for triangulation among the two methods is argued.

While exploring the latter research area, this paper does not intend to provide a conclusive answer. Rather, it takes an interest in the unique elements of a specific situation, which can offer a single exploration of the research topic both academically and from a managerial perspective.

4.1. Research Paradigm: Social Constructivism

The theory of science behind this study is that of social constructivism. With this epistemological stance, the world is seen as having no reality out there one could observe as such, but instead it is seen as constructed by people in the ways language is used in collective activities (Daymon & Holloway, 2010). Defining meanings
is thus enabled by the social context in which these collective activities occur, including both a point in history, as well as the medium through which interaction occurs (ibid). Meanings are collectively used for certain purposes within the given historical setting. Much like language itself, consumer rituals are socially constructed, mutually agreed upon ways of behaving. Thus, the ways in which people make use of the products, the meaning is carried out and communicated to others who share a similar perception of the surrounding reality (ibid).

Bourdieu (2004) stated that there are different social systems, which he referred to as fields. The concept stands for looking into a field, such as a specific consumer culture, as looking into the specific social rules, conventions, and worldview that is shared among the participants. This leads to the important notion of symbolic capital: things that are of greater value, power and social status within the particular field (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). The constructivist view thereby proposes that value to objects is socially negotiated and that the different meanings and values assigned results from intentional actions made by the social actors when using these objects (Kukla, 2000).

Kukla (2000) discussed the different epistemological perspectives taken by scholars and concluded that there exists confusion to what degree and ultimately, what is being socially constructed. Taken our perspective defined above (Daymon & Holloway, 2011), it is more or less safe to argue that it is not the material arrangements that are socially constructed, but instead the ideology and value of its usage within the given social context (Kukla, 2000). Kukla (2000) similarly concluded that “communication changes how objects are perceived and the range of potential meanings they can embody” (pp. 163).

As from a cross-cultural perspective particularly of interest in this study paper, we may approach the movement of consumer goods from one culture to another, and the dissemination and negotiation of values, rituals and meanings of consumption, according to the two societies dilemma (Kukla, 2000): Goodman (1978) complied with the view that people do construct the realities, but adopted a stance of relativism into the field by acknowledging the existence of different realities among two groups of people (ibid). Moreover, Markus & Kitayama (2010) called for a dynamic social constructivist approach and argued that cultural constructions and individual selves are formed and shaped as an ongoing cycle of the mutual constitution, both portraying aspects of interdependence and interdependence. They argued that cultural priming, the commonly available meanings and symbols that impact to the psychological experiences and personal characteristics of a person, ultimately formulates the representations of reality. The propositions of such priming and dynamic perspective then affect that for consumer cultures and their constructions, the local
and global sources of cultural mediation ultimately lead to the dispositions given to objects, such as global brands (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). Complying with this, Kukla (2000) recognized that the two societies dilemma affect cultural constructions to a lesser degree when there is exists a state of interaction among societies. Consequently, the global movement of goods and meanings are crucial for the existence of globally recognizable cultural constructions.

Social constructivism offers this study the metaframe to approach the research question and enables to define the departure to the way culture is seen and discussed in this paper.

4.2. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to ultimately investigate and answer the following research question: “How can a Finnish born global natural skincare company achieve a global brand image?”. In order to achieve this goal, the research question is divided into three sub-questions. Firstly, we will seek an understanding of consumer perceptions regarding the respective product category, natural skincare, among Danish and Korean female consumers of ages 18-35. Secondly, we will seek for an understanding of the Finnish country of origin appeal and its potential value and function for branding within the given product category. Lastly, based on our consumer insight, we will seek to address the implications to the branding approaches for the case company Supermood to enter Denmark and Korea.

Taken the stated purpose(s) of the study to generate exhaustive understandings regarding consumer perceptions as the basis for designing strategic branding, we will be using several methods in our inquiry for generating answers in the most comprehensive manner possible. The design of the methodology of this study is visualized in the featured table (Appendix 9.2).
Firstly, the study will include a quantitative inquiry by online surveys for female skincare consumer aged between 18-35 in Denmark and Korea. The survey prevails explorative, hence inducing an inductive approach to gathering primary data (Saunders et al., 2007). Thus, by imposing relevant aspects from the existing research in the fields of global consumer culture, cultural theories, and studies relevant the product category, we will be able to establish measures particularly situated to the design of this study and to facilitate cross-cultural comparison among the two samples. Furthermore, the literature regarding country of origin- appeal (COO) will also be used in the inquiry. By including relevant pieces of theory, we will establish initial insight into the particular areas of interest as based on academic work from the field. Additionally to the theoretical foundations, the survey design will be complemented with a situational analysis, in which total of three online sources is used: The case company Supermood Ltd and its marketing mix, the industry and its current trends as detailed to Denmark and Korea, and lastly, the cultural particularities in Denmark and Korea as articulated by selected items from Inglehart’s societal development model (1997) and Hofstede’s dimensions of national culture (1980, 2001).

The survey study will allow for a descriptive analysis of the cross-cultural patterns, and the results will contribute to answering research sub-questions one and two. The survey thus provides a structured and replicable approach to the subject that provides the study design with validity and reliability and enables concrete insight to be used further in our cross-cultural research design (Saunders et al., 2007).

Following the findings from the survey inquiry, we will be drawing another approach to primary data to acquire a deeper level understanding of the cross-cultural consumer perceptions for the product category of natural skincare. The purpose of conducting a qualitative inquiry is to acquire an in-depth, detailed view of meaning-level constructions the consumers have for the natural skincare and the Finnish country-or-origin appeal. The primary benefit of the inquiry is the ability to formulate unique and real-life situated knowledge about the topic of our research (Saunders et al., 2007). This will enable us to construct highly valuable insights to complement the findings from the exploratory survey and its established cross-cultural patterns and to ultimately answer our set research sub-questions one and two. The chosen method for qualitative inquiry, namely focus group interviews, will be conducted as semi-structured. Such format allows the researcher to guide the discussion based on the initial findings of the survey, but simultaneously impose high flexibility (Kvale, 2007) and a deeper level inquiry for an in-depth understanding of the topic (Saunders et al., 2007).

Kvale (2007) argued that “in current marketing research, a combination of focus group interviews and questionnaires is a matter of course when introducing a new product” (pp 47). Conclusively, as we are
particularly dedicated to the discovery of cross-cultural consumer perceptions and to ultimately provide approaches for brand entry to new markets, the use both quantitative and qualitative based methodology is justified. On this account, the triangulation of the two methods is anticipated to provide this study paper the ability to develop insightful and relevant knowledge, which may enable us to approach the area of global branding. Namely, the ultimate goal is to place our empirical findings to the real-life context, and with the theoretical frame of global branding, to answer our stated research sub-question three. Leading to an overall discussion, we will complete the stated purposes of this study by generating an answer to our stated overall research question.

4.2.1. Online Survey

This study relays on an online survey study as one of its sources of primary data. The survey is particularly to serve a pre-screening purpose to acquire an adequate foundation of data upon which to base careful indications of quantifications and generalizations of the target group. The findings provide the grounds with which further elaboration using other methods, namely focus group interviews, will be conducted. Thus, the survey will be to obtain data from a larger sample, hence contributing to the validity of this research for our purposes.

The online survey method typically falls into the category of descriptive research, which includes attitude, opinion questionnaires, and enables the researcher to “identify and describe of the variability in different phenomena” (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 362). The online survey is a self-administered questionnaire (ibid), which allows the respondents to anonymously answer the survey whenever suits them best. The online context also enables the researcher to distribute the questionnaire to potential respondents regardless of their physical whereabouts and other administrative limitations such as time differences. Furthermore, as respondents are requested to answer the questions at their convenience and individually, the method thus minimizes the likelihood of respondents conforming their questions to what they believe is socially desirable (ibid).

Despite the aims and the benefits of the online survey method for this study, it has several shortcomings. The primary limitation of this research method is the inability to ask respondents clarifying and follow-up questions. Besides, the respondents are not able to request elaboration of the questions due to the set structure, imposing a shortcoming of potential misinterpretation of the questions (Saunders et al., 2007). Since the question will be administered using two languages, the possible misinterpretation is even greater when different languages are used for the two respondent groups (ibid). It must also be recognized online
surveys impose difficulties of controlling the respondents and their engagement (ibid). Therefore, we acknowledge the following advantages to our study: It enables us to conduct a pre-screening comparison and obtain statistically measured particularities in the attitudes and perceptions among the cross-cultural groups of Danish and Korean respondents. Furthermore, the online format enabled us to gain access to the respondents efficiently and effective despite the administrative limitations.

4.2.1.1. Sample Description
The samples for this study consist of female skincare consumers between ages 18-35 and divided into two samples according to their country of residence and nationality. These are Denmark and Korea, respectively. We chose the cohort of ‘young adult consumers’, the age segment from 18 to 35, for their relatively higher global connectedness and consumerism as compared to older generations (Rašković et al., 2016). We argue that the given cohort may represent the degrees there exists convergence and divergence in consumer perceptions, values, and preferences for natural skincare.

This logic derives especially from that the global information, product flows and media availability has increased tremendously during the recent decades, affecting that these consumers are considerably more ‘native’ for globally disseminated cultural influences, thus with digital media used in the inquiry (Ghemawat, 2016; Rašković et al., 2016). The sample is summarized in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic / sample</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample size</td>
<td>n = 101</td>
<td>n = 119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>18-35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The format of the survey in this study was chosen to be that online, distributed through social media channels. On the basis of the uses and gratifications model on the Internet, it is proposed that the chosen age cohort is highly involved with using digital channels to obtain information; moreover, these young adults express personal interests and values and connect with like-minded individuals online (Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005). While culture influences the purposes for social media usage, we establish our reasoning for the chosen format on the conclusion that despite the cultural background, common motives include opinion expression and social connection (Kim, Sohn, & Choi, 2011).
The survey is to be disseminated through social media channels as self-selection sampling (Saunders et al., 2007). Therefore, the individuals with identified desire to respond will take part in the research, and the data will consequently be collected from those participants. Such approach to data collection was chosen for that it enables the researcher to reach the respondents in an effective and efficient manner, thus complementing the ascribed tendencies among the target consumer segments’ media usage (Kim et al., 2011; Ko et al., 2005; Saunders et al., 2007). In addition, we approached the potential respondents in their social media networks, particularly in which issues of beauty and self-care are discussed, and in forums where we perceive the target segment of respondents to appear active. Accordingly, we seek to address the potentially higher cognitive effort to participate due to personal interest to for the given subject, and related interests for self-expression, -understanding, and intellectual challenge (Krosnick, 1999).

As the respondents consist of two samples of Danish and Korean respondents, the chosen online channels were selected to complement the respondents’ respective channel choices to enable reach and to appear attractive, credible and culturally situated. The survey was disseminated on two Facebook groups (one public and the other closed) for Danish respondents. For Korean survey, three outlets were chosen; two closed online communities and one closed Facebook Group. All online surveys were conducted for a week for both Danish and Korean respondents. Considering the time differences, the survey was run between 22nd to 27th February 2018.

4.2.2. Focus Group Interviews

Due to the exploratory nature of the current paper, and to counterpart the limitation of the questionnaire, focus group interviews are chosen to complement the research design. A focus group usually consists of three to five subjects led by a moderator, and the interview focuses on a particular issue for interactive discussion amongst participants (Kvale, 2007; Saunders et al., 2007). Focus group interviews function as an extensive exploratory tool in qualitative research due to the “lively collective interaction may bring more expressive views than in individual interviews” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Kvale, 2007, p150). For this purpose, they are extensively used in market research studies (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012).

In the current study, focus group interviews will provide the opportunity to delve into the depth and nuances of participants’ understanding and interpretation regarding the topic, namely natural skincare usage and Finnish COO. This is primarily due to the focus group’s characteristics of the loosely-structured non-directive style of interviewing (Kvale, 2007). This enables the use of group interaction in that it allows participants to
engage in the topic through brainstorming with others, which may lead to a vast amount of ideas and answers that they might not have thought of (Berg, 1998).

Furthermore, the advantage of focus group in comparison with individual interview is clear; Being a collectivistic research method (Denzin et al., 2018), it creates a comfortable and natural environment where participants feeling important for the research as well as safe to share their ideas accompanied by other people from similar cultural, ethnic or social background (ibid; Kvale, 2007).

However, the shortcomings of group interviews can be generated from its collectivistic feature. The social pressure within the group could condition the responses of participants, and it may lead people to be not willing to air their views publicly. It could be easily practiced within two dimensions; in the case of sensitive taboo topics and the relationship dynamics between the participants (Kvale, 2007; Saunders et al., 2007). As Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) outlined, this limitation can be overcome through facilitating it in the right criteria for assessing the technique.

Therefore, this study employs focus group interviews to seek potential in-depth ideas and opinions complementing and exploring findings from the survey, thus capture the possible implication that could be developed into strategies for the case company’s target audience in Denmark and Korea.

4.2.2.1. Sample Description
The eligibility criteria for participation in the focus group interview was age between 18-35, female, skincare products user and her nationality of either Denmark or Korea. The participants were recruited in Copenhagen area through convenience sampling method. A convenience sampling method is characterized by the researcher's proximity to the respondents and is used to ensure that the knowledge gained is representative of the population from which the sample was drawn (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Although the convenient sampling does not accurately reflect the whole population in the generalizability, it is often used in exploratory studies for overcoming administrative limitations such as cost and time constraints (Kim & Seock, 2009; Saunders et al., 2007). Additionally, using samples from a single geographic location decrease random errors and variability in the result by guaranteeing the homogeneity of the sample group (Kim & Seock, 2009). Therefore, convenient sampling is chosen to facilitate the advantages in the context of the current study. The limitations are acknowledged by the researchers when recruiting and conducting the interviews for the reliability and validity which will be described in the later section (4.2.4.) Consequently, the participants were recruited using the social networks of the two researchers’. The potential participants were requested on
social media platforms and invited to the interview. The focus group participants profiles are summarized in Appendix 9.6.

4.2.3. Method Triangulation
As this study paper relays of both quantitative and qualitative inquiry and uses the two as complementary with each other, we may refer to the methodological definition of triangulation in the research design of this study. Triangulation of research methods refers to the use of two individual methods to support each other in the research process as to minimize the impact of the weaknesses of each separate method, simultaneously ensuring that validity and reliability of the results are ensured (Saunders et al., 2007).

A triangulation of methods is thus considered to be of particular importance for the chosen subject of this thesis involving a complex social phenomenon situated in its real-life context, and that one method would alone be insufficient to capture the nuances, width, and depth of the given issue. In this regard, we propose that the combination of methods and the ability to address our research subject from multiple angles will significantly increase the efficiency of this given paper to answer the research questions of this thesis.

4.2.4. Validity and Reliability
Despite the careful selection and application of the methods, thus the process of triangulation among the methods chosen, this study is subject to several shortcoming and challenges. This section is devoted to addressing these limitations and the threats to validity and reliability in the design.

This study is affected by issues related to cross-cultural communication and compatibility for comparison. Firstly, whereas the Danish respondents will be inquired using English, the Korean equivalents are to be inquired using their native language, Korean. This creates an issue of linguistic equivalence. Therefore, we aim at overcoming this by applying careful translations from English to Korean. Namely, two other Korean-English bilingual translators participated the proofreading process (Saunders et al, 2007). However, it remains that the Danish participants are to be investigated in English, consequently affecting that these participants use English as lingua franca in their responses. Given the central attribute of language in self-expression, the usage of the respondents’ native language would remain the most viable research instrument for ensuring validity (ibit; Collinson & Pettigrew, 2009). We acknowledge that the described linguistic equivalences remain shortcomings of the study.
Secondly, cultural tendencies and potential biases are present as follows: The survey design and especially the use of scale variables imposes a threat to internal validity. This is proposed to be due to the cross-cultural implications between individualistic and collectivistic cultures, the latter especially proven to pertain tendencies for central rather than polarized answers (Collinson & Pettigrew, 2009). In the focus group interviews, the researcher is from Korean cultural background. Consequently, while Korean respondents may perceive cultural closeness to the researcher hence increase mutual rapport and engagement, the Danish respondents are not approached with compatible cultural closeness (ibid). The potential ethnic and cultural biases may thus affect the degrees of interviewer and interviewee biases. In addition to the presence of biases among the researcher and the participants, the different ‘mental programming of the mind’ affect the communicative styles among the researcher and the Danish respondents/participants (Saunders et al., 2007; Hofstede, 2001). Furthermore, the tendency for social conformity may impose stronger in focus group interviews with participants from a collectivistic culture (ibid).

Therefore, we have chosen a semi-structured format for the focus group inquiry. This will allow more flexibility to explore meanings, including those more culturally bound (Saunders et al., 2007). Therefore, focus groups may partially help overcome the potential equivalency issues related to the survey study, and the influences of differences among the communication styles cross-culturally. The process of analysis and interpreting the findings will be done by both Finnish and Korean researchers, which may be perceived as increasing the validity of interpretations in this stage of the study.

Thirdly, we may identify validity and reliability issues related to the skills of the interviewer, and situational effects such unexpected contextual factors inferring the process. Kvale (2007) argued that “the interview practice does not follow content-and context-free rules of method, but rests on the judgments of a qualified researcher. The interviewer is the research instrument, and the quality of the knowledge produced in an interview depends on the skills, the sensitivity and the subject matter knowledge of the interviewer” (pp 50). We acknowledge these argumentations and seek for careful design, execution, and analysis of the findings.

Fourthly, as reliability refers to the question of whether a repetition of the study design may take place at another time and context (Silverman, 2016), we acknowledge that the replicability of the focus group interview remains low. Since the focus group interviews were conducted in Denmark, the Korean participants who reside in Denmark could have been influenced by the local Danish culture. As “the data yielded are a reflection of the circumstances under which the interview is conducted” (Lampard & Pole, 2015, p.127), the results may not be representative of those conducted in the Korean context. Similarly, the Danish participants
are students of international study programs, and thereby potentially skewed toward an international outlook.

Lastly, we acknowledge that there exists some conceptual and meaning-related threats to the validity of the study (Collinson & Pettigrew, 2009). Firstly, the conceptual issues concern especially the use of concepts such as “natural skincare” in a cross-continental context. That is especially due to the lack of sufficient universal definitions and certificates in the personal care and beauty sector (Bae, 2017; Chidley, 2017). We will seek to overcome this by providing clear definitions of the given concepts prior the survey. Another conceptual issue is related to the use of wording referring to Scandinavia. This relates to that the word Scandinavia is used directly in Korean, as an equivalent concept of Northern Europe in the inquiries to Korean participants.

Conclusively, as an exploratory and qualitative study, the reliability of the study remains low. Yet, the earlier described factors are to maximize the validity and reliability to fulfill the objectives of this study in its context, with no aims of providing universally generalizable results.

4.3. Research Design

The following subsections are devoted to articulating the designs of the online survey study and focus group interviews, respectively. Here, we will specify the use of each method for our stated purposes and provide preparative and procedural information.

4.3.1. Online Survey

Saunders et al. (2007) argued for the validity and reliability of the data collected to be to a large degree dependent on the design, layout, and administration of the survey questionnaire. This is applied to our design as introduced in this section.

Appendix 9.4 introduces the data requirements table, which is created for the particular purpose of ensuring all relevant aspects of inquiry are included in the survey design, while simultaneously ensuring that the layout of our self-administered questionnaire appears attractive to encourage the respondents (Krosnick, 1999). We have chosen to use the online survey tool SurveyMonkey.com for designing a visually and technically pleasing layout. Hence, the questions are limited to a total of 20 items agreed as the most central to our inquiry.
The ordering and formulation of the questions are considered to ensure the validity of the findings. We agree upon to avoid leading questions, or questions proposing a risk to the psychological effect of priming (Krosnick, 1999). For these purposes, we order the questions to first include items related to skincare product category and preferences in general, then moving to items with a specific focus on natural and organic skincare, and lastly, items including the country-of-origin on both supernational and national levels (Appendix 9.3).

The question types in the design include categorical questions for items with the purpose of acquiring attribute variables of respondents’ characteristics, including gender, age, and current use of skincare products. Particularly, we perceive that by separating the respondents on the basis of their use of natural skincare products, we enable to derive potentially relevant information. This is shown in that question 4 is attributed to those who use natural skincare products, and question 5 and its sub-questions to those who do not (Appendix 9.5). Furthermore, list questions are introduced for the particular items with the need to be sure that the respondent has considered all possible response alternatives. However, for the purpose of acquiring perceptions and preferences, items including opinion variables are introduced as rating questions. These include both independent rating items and matrixes, the latter which enables to record the responses to two or more similar questions at the same time (Saunders et al., 2007). Whilst less consuming for the respondents, the rating scales provide better validity compared to categorical ‘yes’ and ‘no’ questions (ibid). The type of rating questions used to consist of the Likert-style rating scale in which the respondent is asked how strongly she agrees or disagrees with a statement or series of statements, organized on five-point rating scales. By labeling the scale points with words, we thus provide clarity to the meanings assigned to the scale points for better response validity and reliability (Saunders et al., 2007). For the purpose of analysis, we use coding schemes to account for the scales agreeableness according to following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Completely agree</td>
<td>Very good choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Good choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Neither Agree or disagree</td>
<td>Nor good nor bad choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Bad choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Completely disagree</td>
<td>Very bad choice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By assigning these values, we establish a median of 3 to each rating question. These will enable calculations on distributions among the values, thus easier comparison among the two data sets.
To maximize the benefits of the survey to reach the stated objectives and minimize weaknesses and adjust the design accordingly, a pilot test is conducted both for the English and Korean versions (OECD, 2012). Therefore, the iterations facilitated by this feedback mechanism allow perfecting the question items also from a translation perspective: That is, focus points in relation to the lexical, idiomatic, experiential, grammar and syntax levels of compatibility among the two surveys using different languages (Saunders et al., 2007).

After the data collection was completed, the data is transferred from SurveyMonkey to Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for descriptive analysis. Due to the nature of the data items as categorical of nature, namely nominal and ordinal, the descriptive analysis covers the following aspects: Distribution and deviation for ordinal items, and percentages and proportional measures for nominal data items. Finally, based on the analysis for both two samples, major findings are summarized into the charts for the comparisons.

4.3.2. **Focus Group**
The purpose of the two focus groups is to acquire consumers’ perception of natural skincare and the particular aspects affecting their perceptions, preferences, as well as the influence of the Finnish origin appeal. This is facilitated through everyday ways of talking about natural skincare with both Danish and Korean natives. Two focus groups, one for each Koreans and Danish participants, are conducted to compare consumers’ similarities and differences. The interviews were held on separate days, 21st for Koreans and 22nd of March 2018 for Danish. The site of the interviews was at a meeting room in Dalgas Have of Copenhagen Business School. The Danish focus group interview was conducted in English and the Korean focus group interview was conducted in Korean with a native speaking researcher. The researcher performs the role of the moderator in all the focus groups, which includes asking the questions, taking notes and managing the discussion flow.

For the overall aim of employing two methods for primary inquiry in triangulation, the semi-structured interview guide is developed based on central topics similar to the survey design (Appendix 9.7). However, as for inquiring a deeper understanding of cross-cultural similarities and differences, hence to fully employ the unstructured and intuitive nature of the method, the focus group topics vary for the two groups. Common questions for both groups are chosen from the survey analysis for comparison, while country-specific questions regarding the English slogan of the case company Supermood for Korea are included for translation issue.
For the purpose of moving from merely product category associations and perceptions to the level of usage benefits and values assigned to natural skincare, a laddering model by Reynolds & Gutman (1988) is proposed. By drawing on Gutman’s Means-end Theory (1982), the laddering model ultimately acts as a marketing research technique that provides a chain of product features, benefits, and emotions and further brings out consumers’ emotional reasons and nuances towards the purchase decision (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). Therefore, a set of laddering questions from the broad question of features to specific probing questions regarding personal benefits are used to account for the emotional motivators for using natural skincare usage, which contribute to understanding the meaning of the product category in the lives of the consumer. The results using the laddering model will be illustrated as a figure for each country in the following sections; 5.2.1 and 5.2.2.

The participants are informed to speak freely that there are no right or wrong answers, and both positive or negative opinions are equally valued in the research. Their anonymity and the sole research purpose of use of the data is assured. Important rules are stated in that participants wait until each other finishes on their speech, and mobiles phones are requested to be switched off. As a practicality, refreshments of coffee and cookies are provided. The discussions are between 1 and 1.5 hours long and are voice-recorded. A complete Danish group interview transcription and a summary table of Korean group result in English are included in Appendix 9.9.

5. Analysis

This section is devoted to the presentation and analysis of the findings from the two inquiries of primary data in this paper. Section 5.1 concerns the online survey findings which will be presented by each country, followed by a comparison of two countries. The insights from the section will be incorporated to the analysis of the following focus group data in section 5.2.

5.1. Online Survey

The following subsections will present the findings from online survey studies, first by presenting the findings from the inquiry to Danish respondents, immediately followed by those from the inquiry to Korean respondents. Afterward, the section will discuss the similarities and differences among the two groups and provides insight to be used as reflective to the focus group interviews, eventually to answer the research questions. All survey questions are described in Appendix 9.3 and the result tables in accordance with the questions are presented in Appendix 9.5.
5.1.1. Denmark

The online channels for acquiring responses specifically from the target group of 18-35-year-old female Danish skincare consumers were found to be successful. This is argued based on that a total of 101 respondents were qualified to answer the survey questions, while only one respondent appeared to be under 18, and similarly, one identified as male.

The Danish respondents to a large degree are already users of natural skincare products, complying with that strong awareness and preference toward natural products exists in the given category. Among the total 67.3% of respondents who are already users of the products, 85.5% indicated that the price is not the most important determinant of their decision. This implies less price sensitivity, hence provides an interest to look further into their perceived usage benefits. Besides, 13.8% of the respondents do not know and 18.8% have not used natural skincare products (Figure 1). These respondents are grouped as ‘non-users’ segment in the rest of the analysis. Among these non-user respondents, 75.7% indicated that they have been considering using such products. Therefore, only 24% of non-users are not favoring natural skincare products. These findings indicate a perception among the Danish respondents towards natural skincare products as a viable choice, thus reflecting pro-consumerism toward natural products also in this category (Chidley, 2017).

![Danish Natural Skincare User Status](image)

(Figure 1: Appendix 9.5)

Despite that 67.3% of the total respondents use natural products and do not consider price as the most important factor, it is noteworthy that those who do not yet use natural skincare also consider the price of the products: 54% indicates willingness to pay a higher price, while 46% not. Hereby, one may argue that while price impacts others, it does not alone affect the decision not to prefer natural skincare products. This sets us to investigate the different elements that would ultimately contribute to the decision.

The last question item concerning behavioral tendencies was directed to the 24% of respondents who had not yet used natural skincare. They were requested to choose a reason within the listed items with an option to fill up an open field (question 5b, Appendix 9.5). 57% of these respondents attributed the lack of interest
in natural products as the primary reason for non-favoritism. The open question field thus revealed that allergies also impact the preference. While it is insightful that none of the respondents attributed the lack of trust to natural labeling as the reason, the sample for this given question, including a total of 7 respondents, remain relatively small for making any further judgments.

Question 6 requested the respondents to indicate the degree to which they perceive the use of natural skincare products as having a positive effect on the impressions made on others. Among users of natural skincare products, 61.5% neither agree or disagree, and 25% agree, whereas only 41.7% of non-users neither agree or disagree and 21% agree. Thus, 26% of non-users disagree. Similarly, the mean value for product users’ responses is 3.21 and lower, 2.87 for non-users. This shows that those Danish consumers who use natural skincare products perceive it mildly as positively contributing to their social standing, whereas non-users incline toward disagreement. Conclusively, the findings to do not particularly relate to strong conspicuous consumption in the product category of natural skincare, complying to Inglehart’s (1997) proposition of postmaterialism and that natural skincare is used according to personal rather than social benefits.

Question 7 provided the respondents with multiple choices as listed items to indicate the most influential sources of skincare product information (Figure 2). Friends were the most common answer with 80% of users and 74% of non-users conceiving with the item. Product reviews gathered 61% of the responses among users and 69% among non-users. Social Media (56.8% & 56.5%) and Family (52%) were also equally chosen by both users and non-users of natural skincare. However, slight differences arise in that while users emphasize organic certificates (53.9%) and ingredient reviews (38.2%) more compared to non-users (39% & 21%), beauty professionals were more popular among non-users (56%). Moreover, fashion bloggers and brand websites reflect the similarity of opinions, as both gathered some fractions of the responses. What concerns to be of particular importance is that most popular items reflect word-of-mouth sources, thus other pull-methods of brand product information. Thus, those favoring natural products perceive sources of category-specific information in their decision-making. Celebrity endorsement (3%) remains the least popular source among the Danish respondents. Generally, this may be a reflection of the tendency for the Danish culture as of low power distance (Hofstede, 1980), hence providing an interest for cross-cultural comparison.
Question items 8-14 were presented as scales from complete disagreement to agreement. First of the items indicated that the Danish respondents do not mind a brand which name is of foreign origin. This is especially the case for non-users of natural skincare, 92.2% of whom either agree or highly agree. For users, the agreement is also high (91.2%). One may argue that the Danish respondents are not particularly ethnocentric regarding their preference for brand name origin in the skincare category.

Moreover, complying with that both users and non-users consider friends as their source of skincare information (question 7, Appendix 9.5), the mild similarity was found when asked to reflect upon whether their current skincare routine reflects that of their friends’. In question 9, the mean was at 3.38 for users and slightly higher, 3.75 for non-users. The difference concerns especially, in that many users of natural skincare situate their answers to the middle quartile as “neither agree or disagree” (30%), whereas the vast majority (60%) of non-users of natural skincare products agree. While it may be argued that the Danish respondents derive brand information and influence from friends, they may also assign importance to their friends’ choices in their actual consumption behaviors. This may particularly concern for the consumers of natural skincare, as the product category may represent a niche, and also a community among like-minded consumers (Chidley, 2017) Thus, this represents a point of interest to further discuss the role of personal needs and values in decision-making among the natural users of skincare (Liobikienė & Bernatonienė, 2017).

With regards to the degree skincare products contribute to the individual self-esteem, both users and non-users of natural skincare incline toward agreement (question 10, Appendix 9.5): The mean values settled at 3.65 and 3.7, equally. As the Danish respondents show signs of skincare product usage as related to their self-esteem, we may derive that the choice of skincare product may be related to the expression of their
unique self and personality. Here, we may see the similarity to the Inglehart’s (1997) propositions of postmaterialism, thus Hofstede’s (1981) dimension of individualism. Thus, these comply with the current consumer insights for Europe in general (Chidley, 2017). Consequently, this proposes an interest for additional inquiry in this paper that how natural skincare products are embedded in the value of self-expression among the consumers.

Question 11 served to identify the degree to which youthful, glowing skin is a valuable social asset and identified as the beauty norm. While both users and non-users of natural skincare incline toward an agreement, non-users have a stronger agreement: While 47.5% of non-users completely agree with the statement, only 23% of users of natural skincare products do so. Instead, the majority of them situate their answers to the “agree” quartile (53%). Since this question was particularly devoted to investigating the values of the case brand Supermood (Appendix 9.1), one may argue that the Danish respondents perceive such value proposition positively. However, since the users of natural skincare appeared to agree instead of highly agree, unlike their non-user counterparts, we may derive an interest to the other usage benefits users of natural skincare products relate the category. Such insight, particularly in the context of cross-cultural comparison, provides valuable information for designing the global brand image later on in this paper.

Question 12 was designed for the purpose of assessing consumer preferences towards unknown brands. Non-users were shown to be less hesitant, 30.4% of them completely agreeing and 39% agreeing. Of the users of natural skincare products, only 9.6% completely agree and 44% agree with the statement. Consequently, the mean value for non-users is higher (3.87) than for users of natural skincare (3.29). Here, one may identify that the consumers of natural skincare may prefer familiar brands to those unknown. While the question does not account for the reasons behind this, we may, however, derive a supplementary interest whether the users of natural skincare are more conscious thus more uncertainty avoidant, or whether this relates to loyalty to a particular brand. For this paper, the result merely provides an interest for the cross-cultural comparison in relation to uncertainty tolerance in the consumer attitudes toward natural skincare.

The two scale items 13-14 were particularly focused on embedding the case brand value proposition of ‘holistic beauty’ in the questions. Thus, these questions address the strength to which consumers perceive skincare as part of their self-care and lifestyle choices. Question 13 reveals that 63.4% of users of natural skincare either agree or completely agree that skincare constitutes an important part of their lifestyle and self-care. Similarly, 73.9% of non-users either agree or completely agree. For question item 14, the agreement was slightly higher: 78.8% of users and 78.1% of non-users either agree or highly agree that
Skincare is important to combine with a healthy lifestyle, diet, and good night sleep. Here, we may identify that consumers perceive skincare coupled with other consumption choices, that the use of skincare products may serve as a functional element. Hence, the result reflects both our case brand proposition and the current findings regarding preference for product functionality among European consumers (Chidley, 2017).

Question 15a-d was particularly focused on consumer perceptions towards natural skincare category: Matrix was constructed using a total of four items articulated with belief statements and scale measures. First question (a) was to address the perceptions of natural skincare products in the minds of the consumer with respect to the quality: As the Figure 3 visualizes, 51% on the Danish consumers of natural skincare products agree and 12.4% completely agree that the natural product category is of higher quality, while 30.6% neither agree or disagree. The similar agreement does not occur for consumers who do not use natural skincare products, as only 30% of them either agree or completely agree, 40% neither agree or disagree, and 30% disagree or completely disagree. This reveals that those currently preferring natural products perceive the category as of higher quality.

![Chart](Figure 3. Appendix 9.5)

Secondly, question (b) focused on unraveling whether natural skincare products are perceived as healthier for the skin. As one may identify (Figure 4), 89.8% of current natural skincare users perceive the category as healthier for their skin. While 40% non-users agree, the mean values reveal that the users of natural products clearly posse health-related inferences for the category. The mean for users settled to be 4.04, and 3.6 for non-users, further justifying the claim. We may here argue that the product category essentially differentiates with the health-related belief (Liobikiené & Bernatonienė, 2017). While this may be related to consumer sophistication, it also proposes of interest whether natural skincare products are perceived as functional to increase the health of their skin or acquired as symbols of health as an important lifestyle value among the users on natural skincare.
Thirdly, the respondents were asked upon agreement to the degree to which they perceive natural skincare products as environmentally friendly and ethical choice. Here, the mean value for consumers of natural skincare was 4.3 and 3.9 for non-users. As one may see from the figure 5, the 44.9% of Danish users of natural skincare products highly agree, whereas a total of 10% of non-users even neither disagree or strongly disagree(Figure 5). This yet prevails that natural products are considered as sustainable by the users of the given product category. In this regard, it remains an interest for further inquiry whether the category is favored by the consumer due to values for sustainability and ethicality.

Lastly, it appears that those Danish consumers not using natural skincare products perceive the category as trendy compared to those using the products. The mean value for non-users settled at 3.6 with a total of 60% either agreeing or disagreeing, while the mean value for users settled to be 3.5 with 51.1% of the respondents agreeing (Figure 6). The given result remains interesting for two reasons. First, whether those using natural skin posit no benefit for being “trendy” in their consumption choices. Second, whether those who do not use
natural skincare products relate their awareness, familiarity and sophistication for natural products in general in their answers to the question (Chidley, 2017). However, such issues are subject to additional inquiry.

Question 16 served as the first item with a specific focus on the country-of-origin appeal of Finland, and its aim was to acquire general level perceptions. The respondents were requested to list three words of their own choice that came to their mind from the clause “Made in Finland”. A careful review of the answers revealed that in particular, the repetitive answers included: Quality, ethics, sustainability/ less emission, developed/ R&D, trustworthy, natural, pure, minerals, for pale and dry skin, Scandinavian, EU, neutral, unknown, expensive. Less frequently were mentioned: Purity of nature, OK/ could be good, traditional, as well as the name of the Finnish cosmetics brand Lumene. Particularly interesting was that the most frequent words were related to sustainability, purity and natural aspects of the products, namely those that were in the earlier (question 15) found to be positively perceived in the natural skincare category. Hence, the responses did not differ among those consumers who use natural skincare, and those who do not.

Question 17 presented a set of choices regarding the clause “beauty from Finland” which the respondents were asked to select (Figure 7). The question measured the Finnish COO appeal in the general self-care category. From the set of choices, natural and purity of the ingredients was thus far the most common answer with 70% of natural skincare users and 57.4% of non-users choosing the item. Secondly, the safety of usage was chosen by 40.8% of users and 45% of non-users, followed by sustainability (29.7%). The difference among users and non-users among the Danish respondents exist in that while non-users perceive quality higher (35%) than users (22.4%), who instead perceive value-for-money as stronger related to Finnish beauty products. These results reveal that the Danish respondents generally perceive Finnish beauty products to provide the
benefits much similar to what they perceived as natural skincare products to provide (question 15, Appendix 9.5). Namely, that the natural, pure and sustainable perceptions from the natural skincare products may, in the light of these findings, be mutually inclusive to the Finnish category-level COO. This certainly provides insight for further cross-cultural comparison.

Q17. “Beauty from Finland”

(Figure 7, Appendix 9.5)

The last set of questions (items 18-19, Appendix 9.5) focus on measuring the strength of consumer perceptions with regard to how good of a choice natural skincare product from Finnish or Scandinavia are, respectfully. In these two questions, visualized in the Figure 8, one may identify only slight differences in the perceptions how those who use natural skincare and those who do not. A noteworthy detail pertains to that 26% of the users of natural skincare products consider Scandinavian product origin as a very good choice, compared to only 15% of non-users. Hence, none of the Danish respondents consider either Finnish or Scandinavian product origins as a bad choice in natural skincare category. However, regardless of whether the respondents use natural skincare products or not, there appears to be a stronger preference for Scandinavian products compared to those from Finland. This is shown also in the mean values, which are 3.35 and 3.25 for Finnish products, and 4.08 and 3.9 for Scandinavian products. This result indicates that for the Danish respondents, the Scandinavians, supernational COO contributes to a stronger preference in natural skincare products. It was not, however, investigated whether they would prefer particularly Danish products over Finnish, which in turn would indicate a result closer to domestic versus foreign origin for those consumers (Josiassen et al., 2013).
Conclusively, based on the online survey conducted to the Danish participants, we may draw on several important implications for cross-cultural comparison: Firstly, the Danish respondents appeared knowledgeable and conscious regarding the natural skincare product category. Especially those already categorized as consumers of natural skincare appeared less price sensitive. Particularly, natural skincare products were perceived to be of quality, healthy, and sustainable by those who use such products. On the contrary, the category was perceived more trendy by those who do not use natural skincare products.

Secondly, the respondents posited friends, family, product reviews and Social Media to be the most influential sources of information related to the category. These reflect that the word-of-mouth impact consumer preference in skincare category. In addition, users of natural skincare products perceive organic certificates and ingredient reviews to be important sources of information. Besides, while the Danish respondents were not particularly uncertainty avoidant, those who use natural skincare products are relatively more hesitant to try new brands than those who do not use natural skincare products.

Thirdly, skincare products are generally regarded as contributing to individual self-esteem for those who use natural skincare, unlike for those who do not. However, skincare products were perceived as to complying with lifestyle choices.

Lastly, while naturality, purity, sustainability, and quality were perceived as also related to beauty products with a Finnish country-of-origin appeal, high quality and luxury were reflected more in the responses of those who do not use natural skincare. The natural skincare users emphasized value-for-money instead.
Furthermore, the Scandinavian level COO appeal was perceived more positively in the natural skincare product category as compared to the Finnish appeal.

5.1.2. Korea

The survey was distributed through online communities throughout Facebook and other online forums, and the sample consists of total 119 of respondents belonging to the target group of 18-35-year-old female Koreans. Almost half of the total number of respondents identified themselves as ‘users’ of natural skincare (47%). The other half, which consists of 26% who opted for “Don’t know” whether they use natural skincare and about 27% who chose “No”, is referred ‘non-users’ in the following analysis (Figure 9). Considering that one-fourth of the respondents identify the vaguely of whether they use natural skincare, this leaves room for elaboration in the focus group later in this study.

![Korean Natural Skincare User Status](image)

When it comes to the price, which was chosen as one of the deterrents of purchasing natural product in previous studies (Liobikiènè & Bernatonienè, 2017), our findings suggest inconsistent tendencies based on the respondents’ current usage of the natural skincare product, and their purchase consideration: Among the respondents using natural skincare, 64% indicate that price is not the most important factor for their purchase decision. This directs us to investigate other usage benefits and value important for the consumers of natural skincare.

For non-user respondents, two specific questions were asked to discover whether they would purchase natural skincare and if they have considered buying the products. It is worth mentioning that of those who have never purchased but considered to buy natural skincare products, 67% indicated a willingness to pay a higher price for the products. This implies that there exist consumers, including both users and non-users of natural skincare, who perceive the natural attribute as justifying a higher price.
As for the main reason not to consider natural skincare products, only one respondent (7%) chose the price, while the other respondents replied lack of trust on natural labeling (50%), and no interest (28.6%). Therefore, it can be assumed that price sensitivity among Koreans is not particularly high for both current and potential natural skincare customers, who have never bought one but consider the purchase, nor the main concern for those who do not consider.

In question 7, respondents were requested to choose the relevant information sources prior to skincare purchases. Overall, Product reviews, Ingredient reviews, Friends, Social media and Organic certificates were chosen as five most important sources in both users and non-users(Figure 11). Product reviews came out as the most popular source with 58.8% users and 63.5% of non-users. Friends were the third chosen in users group (41%) and second for non-users group (50.7%).

When it comes to product reviews and organic certificate, the differences between users and non-users are evident. Users opted for ingredient reviews as a second favorable choice (51.8%), followed by organic certificate (44%), whereas for non-users, Ingredient review was the fourth most popular (34.9%), and Organic certificate (22.2%) the sixth. Thus, Social Media coverage implies to the non-users (41.2%). These results reflect the trend according to which consumer preference to product and ingredient reviews for cosmetics products, in general, is currently listed as one of the top 10 trends in Korea (Bae, 2017). Thus, it can be said that Korean consumers are sophisticated about their choice, as highlighted in the popularity of proactive information sources regarding the quality, ingredients and peer opinions, rather than mere acceptance company communications, thus in line with the celebrity endorsement (1%, non-user) came as the least influential source.
Moreover, in question 5b (Appendix 9.5), a respondent indicated that natural skincare is considered as an alternative choice for sensitive skin problems. Over-sensitivity has been reported as major skincare concern by Korean consumers due to the environmental and seasonal change, stress from daily life and overuse of conventional cosmetics (Bae, 2017). Therefore, we may investigate whether the representation of natural skincare information in these sources contributes to particular user benefits for skincare category, hence into preference among the Korean consumers.

Despite the rising awareness and information search, however, consumer skepticism regarding the genuineness of product attributes available in the Korean market. Also referring to findings from the question 5b, it can be argued that mistrust on natural labeling exists. In line with the respondents who identified their current natural skincare product usage status as “Don’t know” (question 3), there is room to elaborate the hesitance of defining the meaning and value placed to the use of natural skincare among the consumers in Korea.

The cultural factors related to natural skincare perceptions were embedded question 6-14. Firstly, question 6 was the indicate whether the social norms affect the purchase of natural skincare, that is, to make a good impression on others. As illustrated on Figure 10, a total 30.2% of non-users indicated a disagreement, whereas that of users’ remains at 28.6%. Both users and non-users did not see the connection between natural skincare use and one's impression enhancement, with the mean values of 3 and 2.8 respectively. This shows that natural skincare consumption is not particularly a form of conspicuous consumption to present one’s status. Additionally, these mean values may also correspond to that the Korean respondents might also perceive low social pressure to buy natural skincare. The reasons could be explored through a focus group interview.
In the question 9 regarding perceived skincare routine similarity among friends, non-users show slightly higher agreement with 39.7%, whereas 35.7% of the users agreed. Combined with the Korean translation of skincare routine as the number, step and order of cosmetics one use on a daily basis in the survey, it can be assumed that there exist Korean respondents who highly specify their skincare routines in individual needs, other than merely following social norms. This reflects that Koreans skincare routines typically consist of multiple steps from cleansing to moisturizing, and extra functioning care, which can be highly customized as the user’s skin types and daily conditions (Bae, 2017). This is also presented in question 13 relating importance of skincare routine. 62.5% of users and 66.7% of non-users agree or completely agree that their skincare routine is an important part of their self-care and lifestyle, with means of 3.71 and 3.83 respectively.

As for the relation of using skincare product to self-esteem (question 10), the mean values incline toward disagreement for both users at 2.84 and non-users at 2.79. There were more non-users who disagreed with 41.2% than users with 32%, while the difference between two groups showed more visible in the middle quartile, where 42.9% of user and 25.4% of non-user responses were located (Figure 12). From Belk (1988)’s point of view, which highlights a distinctive connection between identity construction and consumption as ‘extended self’, the finding may indicate that the respondents are less likely perceive skincare product to match their current or aspired self-image, which opens further discussion of given meanings of the product in Korean society. As this paper pursues cross-cultural comparison, this finding suggests additional evaluation of each consumer groups’ skincare use motivation with self-concept in Inglehart’s (1997) postmodernism and Hofstede’s (1981) individualism dimension.

(Figure 12, Appendix 9.5)
Korean respondents have unanimous agreement on question 8 for that they do not mind the skincare brand name to be of foreign origin (mean 4.48 for users and 4.3 for non-users). This is in line with the prior study arguing for Koreans high adoption in global or Western brand names as well as models of beauty products (Nelson & Paek, 2007). In addition, question 11 indicates that of 79% the Korean respondents agree or completely agree that youthful and glowing skin is valued and perceived beautiful. With a high mean of 4 and 4.22 of users and non-users respectively, it implies the existence of a beauty standard and positively resonated with the case company’s value proposition in Korea.

In the question 14, “I believe skincare is important to combine with a healthy lifestyle, diet, and good night sleep”, Korean respondents showed high agreement as 82.1% of users and 87.3% of non-users either agree or completely agree with the statement. This could reflect Korean consumers desire for healthy life cycle for their best skin condition, resulting from the hectic and stressful lifestyle with longest working hours and hierarchical society structure (Hofstede, 2001). As Scandinavian values such as hygge, nature, happiness is often framed an ideal solution to the current highly competitive and fast lifestyle in Korea (Choi, 2017), the case brand proposition of “Holistic Beauty” with Finnish origin may positively appeal to the Korean consumers.

Despite the openness for foreign brands (question 8), the Korean respondents show rather a conservative stance with trying new or unfamiliar skincare brand (question 12). About a half of non-users (50.4%) responded negatively to try new skincare product, with a mean of 2.73. The mean for users remains at 3. Therefore, it can be argued that Korean respondents, in general, prefer familiar skincare products. Although whether they prefer local or global brands could not be measured from the survey, it is worth mentioning that Koreans tend to have a high preference in local brand when it comes to skincare, compare to color-make up which shows the opposite status which indicates a possible resistance for foreign skincare brands when entering Korean market (Bae, 2017). This result will be compared to Danish counterpart in the following session.

Question 15a-d addressed consumer attitudes towards natural skincare as high quality, healthy and environmental consciousness, and trendy choice. Overall, non-users presented more disagreement to all the questions compare to the users, which will be elaborated by each item.

As for the perceived quality of natural skincare products, users agreed slightly higher (48.1%) than non-users (44.5%) to the statement that natural skincare has higher quality. However, those who neither agree or
disagree in both groups were 42.9% each, setting the mean at 3.46 for users and 3.33 for non-users. Therefore, it could be interpreted that the perceived quality of natural skincare is inclined towards the higher end. While the users seem to take quality as an important factor in their purchase decision in natural skincare, the similar percentage found in the middle quartile suggest that there could exist other crucial determinants for the users buying decision in the given product category. Thus, the meaning of quality is of interest for the focus group interviews.

In terms of health consciousness (question 15b), which was found contradictory determinant for natural product purchase in previous studies (Liobikienė & Bernatonienė, 2017), our finding is that natural skincare users perceive the factor more positively than non-users. For the users, 69.5% “Completely agree” or “Agree” that natural skincare is healthier for their skin and only 5.4% “Completely disagree” or “Disagree” with the statement (Figure 13). Thus, the mean is at 3.75. On the other hand, non-users showed 47.6% of agreement and 17.5% of disagreement, the mean remaining at 3.38. Referring back to our finding of question 5, the open question field result provided an insight that Korean respondents might perceive natural skincare as a remedy for sensitive or troubled skin condition, this indicates that the nature of given product category as rather health related. Moreover, it is consistent with the trend that Korean consumers minimize skincare steps and consider using “pure” skincare items with natural ingredients when they encounter skincare problems (Bae, 2017).

Regarding environmental consciousness (question 15c), more than a half of both user and non-user groups, 53.4% and 50.8% respectively, agreed that using natural skincare products are better for the environment and an ethical choice. It is noticeable that more than a third of the responses were situated in the middle
quartile of “Neither agree nor disagree”, 41% of users with the mean at 3.7, and 34.9% of non-users of mean at 3.48 (Figure 14). Thus, it can be claimed that one out of three Korean respondents may not necessarily find the connection between using natural skincare products and environmental issue. Those respondents who agree with the relation of natural skincare and environmental issues could be interpreted through the lens of Inglehart’s (1997) postmaterialism with the environmental awareness. How to utilize such environmental consciousness as a brand appeal in Korea, with consumers only to a degree agreeing, remain to be explored from managerial aspects.

![Bar chart](image)

(Figure 14, Appendix 9.5)

With regard to the trendiness of natural skincare products, more than a half of Korean respondents, 52% of users and 54% of non-users agreed that it is a trendy choice. Hence 39.3% of users and 34.9% of non-users remained neither or agreeing, the earlier described slight mistrust and lack of information toward natural labeling and this finding reflect that natural skincare products remain in an introduction stage for Korean consumers.

Finally, Finish country of origin appeal is measured in three questions. Firstly, the three top images of “Made in Finland” (question 16), most often mentioned words by the Korean respondents were Clean, Nature and Foreign, followed by Reliable, High quality, Expensive. Korean respondents mostly associate Finland with the national values which reflect a focus on well-being and clean environment in northern Europe image while remaining widely unaware of the country’s other attributes. The specific words used are categorized in Appendix 9.5.

Question 17 presented a list of words regarding what comes to the respondent's mind from the clause “beauty from Finland”. The figure 15 illustrates that most frequently chosen items for both users and non-
users were natural/pure ingredient (83.9% and 82.5%), safety of use (57.2% and 60.3%) and high quality (32.2% and 30.2%), which are in line with the previous question about the image of Finland. For non-users, both sustainability and animal welfare also came out as the third most popular items (30.2%). Moreover, luxury was chosen by both groups at a similar percentage of 13%. The least chosen item differed among users and non-users; value for money for users (5.3%) and innovation (3.2%) for non-users. Taken together, the result gives us initial insight into how consumers currently perceive the adequate attributes for Finnish beauty products, which provides an interest in cross-cultural comparison in focus group interview.

Lastly, two questions were asked to seek respondents’ opinion about natural skincare products made in Finland and Scandinavia (question 18-19). Overall, there were no major differences in the results between users and non-users classification. 42.8% of users and 44.5% of non-users perceived that Finnish natural skincare products are a good or very good choice. The percentage remains similar when asked about Scandinavian natural skincare products, 41.1% and 41.2% for users and non-users respectively. The means of Finnish and Scandinavian skincare both indicate the similar degree of preference (3.44 and 3.45). However, it is worth mentioning that the numbers for “very good choice” are higher for Scandinavian origin with 5.4% for users and 6.3% for non-users, than Finnish origin with 1.8% for users and 1.6% for non-users (Figure 16), which could indicate the relatively less awareness of Finnish image.
5.1.3. Similarities and Differences

After the review of the results from both online surveys, we may draw on some of the similarities, thus the most prevailing differences among the two groups of respondents. Moreover, such notions will be valuable insight to be further used in the focus group interviews, and ultimately, in the discussion of this paper.

When asked upon the use of natural skincare products, 67% of the Danish respondents appeared to be already consumers of the products as compared to the Korean equivalents (47%). Hence, it was found that 26% of the Korean respondents did not know if they were using natural skincare products. The comparison reflects that whereas the Danish consumers are more sophisticated for natural products categories (Kaad-Hansen, 2017), there exists confusion in the terminology and definitions for Korean consumers. However, it was found that for both groups of respondents who use natural skincare products, the price does not comprise the most important determinant of their decision. This was shown in the 85.7% of Danish and 64.3% of Korean respondents respectively.
Among those respondents categorized as non-users, the results indicate that 77.5% of the Danish and 77.8% of the Korean have considered using natural skincare. This indicates awareness and interest in the category for both groups. Complementary to this is also that 67.4% of the Korean and 53.8% of the Danish respondents who use natural skincare indicate a willingness to pay a higher price for natural skincare products. However, those who have not considered nor used such products, the results were rather different: While 57% of the Danish respondents attributed no interest toward the category as their primary reason, 50% of the Korean respondents indicated the lack of trust in the labeling, along with no interest (28.6%), as the reasoning (Figure 17). Thus, we may relate to that the Danish consumers are in general more sophisticated to the natural labeling and products in general (Chidley, 2017) as compared to the Korean consumers who remain skeptical (Bae, 2017). This was also supported by the open field responses that indicated for the Danish to know about the product ingredient in relation to their personal allergies, as compared to for example Korean respondent who argued her lack of interest due to “her skin not being that sensitive” (question 5b, Appendix 9.5). Conclusively, it remains interesting especially for the Korean consumers which perceptions are related to this willingness for a premium despite their potential confusion and mistrust toward the natural labeling.

![Chart](Figure 17, Appendix 9.5)

When it comes to sources of information(Figure 19a), for the Danish respondents, Friends (80.7% for users and 73.9% for non-users), Product reviews (61% for users and 69.3% for non-users), Social Media and Family remained the most important sources of information. For users of natural skincare, important sources were thus Organic certificate and Ingredient reviews. While the Korean respondents selected Products reviews (58.9% for users and 63.5% for non-users) the most, Ingredient reviews (51.8% for users and 34.9% for non-users) were emphasized relatively more compared to Danish respondents. Thus, Korean users of natural skincare indicate Organic certificates as influential (44.6%).
These results indicate the opposite value emphases argued by Inglehart’s modern society theory (1997) by that there exists reliance for Danish consumer to obtain information from their close circles instead of radially making individual decisions. Thus, this result does not reflect the high individualism score of the Danish culture as argued by Hofstede (2001). Moreover, Korean consumers are generally regarded as knowledgeable of the skincare and cosmetics category (Bae, 2017) which affects their word-of-mouth occurs through online beauty platforms. On the other hand, Danish consumers are likely to discuss directly within their close circles. To some degree, we may also derive that Korean consumers rely on Organic certificates as cues for choosing ‘truly’ natural products, taken their skeptical attitudes toward the labeling.

Question 6 revealed that while the Danish users of natural skincare products slightly inclined toward an agreement to that the use of natural skincare enables them to impress others (mean value 3.21), both Danish non-consumers of natural skincare and Korean consumers incline toward disagreement. Hence, the majority of the responses are situated in the middle quartile, “neither agree or disagree”. This is the case for Danish users (61%), non-users (47%), and Korean users (48.2%) and non-users (47.7%) (Figure 18). The results for this question indicate no difference among the two groups. In general, we may conclude that natural skincare products do not represent status symbolism for either of the groups.
Q6. Buying natural skin care products make a good impression on other people

With regards to the question “I feel like my skincare routine is typical and similar to their peers,” 58.7%, the mean is at 3.45 for the Danish respondents, whereas for Korean respondents it is set to 3.14 (users) and 3.19 (non-users). Those who disagree and completely disagree are slightly more in Korea (19.7% for users, 20.7% for non-users) than Denmark (18.8%). Thus, the Korean respondents (44.6% of users, 39.7% of non-users) posit their opinion in the middle quartile (Figure 20). These differences may be speculated to relate to the cross-cultural differences in product usage, as for Korean routine typically consists of self-selected, multiple steps (Bae, 2017b), whereas the Danish routine may imply more coherence among the consumers.

Q9. I feel like my skin care routine is typical and similar compared to my peers

(Figure 20, Appendix 9.5)
We may also interpret that question 10 prevails difference between the two groups (Figure 21). The question focused on skincare products as part of the consumer’s self-esteem and revealed that while 69.9% of the Danish respondents agree or completely agree, only 25% of users and 33.1% of non-users among the Korean respondents posit opinions to those quartiles. Thus, a similar number of Korean respondents (32% users and 41.2% non-users) also disagree or completely disagree with the statement. The mean for the Danish responses settled to be higher, 3.7, versus for the Korean 2.82. This reveals that the Danish consumers identify with the use of skincare products as self-expression and identity. This may potentially relate to the individualism of the culture (de Mooij, 2014), and simultaneously appears to align with the Inglehart’s (1997) proposition of postmodernism. On the contrary, the Korean consumers do not identify with the usage of products for the individual self, as might be related to the more collectivistic construction of consumer identities. Moreover, the consumer-product relationship may be elaborated in the focus group inquiry.

Questions 8 and 12 served the purpose of identifying consumer perceptions towards new and foreign brand names, respectively. The results indicate that there exists a rather high acceptance for foreign skincare brand names, with over 90% of the Danish and Korean respondents either agreeing or highly agreeing. This confirms that both consumer groups are open to foreign brand names, also the use of globally standardized brand names would be perceived appropriate. However, the question about hesitance to try out new or unfamiliar skincare brands shows that while 42.5% of the Danish respondents agree not to feel hesitant, only 17.9% of users and 25.4% of non-users of the Korean respondents lean toward an agreement (Figure 12). In addition, the mean for the Danish responses is over 3 to indicate inclines for agreement, while the values for the Korean respondents are 3 for users, 2.73 for non-users. Accordingly, one may identify clear uncertainty avoidance among the Korean consumers, as compared to less among the Danish equivalents.
The survey included three question items for configuring how the consumers perceive the condition of the skin as related to socially agreed beauty ideal, thus which sort of purpose skincare products serve in relation to the overall lifestyle of the consumers’. These were of particular interest to the case brand and its established values (Appendix 9.1). Firstly, the results for question 11 reveal that healthy, youthful and glowing skin is valued among the consumers, represented in the mean of 3.95 for Danish and slightly higher, 4 for users and 4.2 for non-users of natural skincare among Korean respondents. These results indicate a relationship between skin condition and consumer perception of an ideal, hence providing an interest in the focus group interview and consumer values later in this paper.

Secondly, representatives from both countries agree or completely agree with the statement that their skincare routine is an important part of their self-care and lifestyle. The agreement is rather high, as indicated in that 63.4% of Danish users and 73.9% of non-users either agree or highly agree. Similarly, 62.5% of Korean users and 66.7% of non-users of natural skincare products agree or highly agree. Interestingly, while the result indicates agreement for both users and non-users, higher percentages among both Danish and Korean respondents are for the non-users of natural skincare products. Followed by this was a question addressing the combination of healthy lifestyle, diet and good night sleep (question 14). As for the previous question, the agreement for both groups is high: a total of 78% of Danish and 86% of Korean respondents agree or highly agree, with no significant difference among users and non-users of natural skincare.

One may argue that the findings from questions 11, 13, and 14 prevail importance for the case brand Supermood and its value proposition of Holistic beauty thus provides us with information to go further into...
the skincare category as positioned in the life of the consumer as a cultural manifesto. Namely, it pertains of interest to see whether there exist similar lifestyle-related values among the two country representatives that may translate into similar consumer behaviors in the natural skincare category, thus indicators of a global consumer culture (Cleaveland & Laroche, 2010).

As sections 5.1.1. and 5.1.2. respectively argue, the users of natural skincare products perceived the quality, healthiness, sustainability, and trendiness of the natural skincare products to a higher degree when compared to non-users (Question 15, items a-d). The mean values for each item are visualized in the table below (figure 15, Appendix 5). For question item a, one may identify a mean value of 3.69 for the Danish users of natural skincare. Therefore, they perceive the product category as of higher quality compared to non-users, and Korean equivalents (figure 15, Appendix 5). Moreover, a slightly higher agreement occurs for Korean users of natural skincare, as opposed to non-users. Further, question item b focused on measuring the health inference for natural skincare. The results reveal that the Danish users agree to a higher degree compared to Danish non-users and Korean counterparts which the latter results in 89.6%. Consequently, so far the matrix question 15 provides the insight that quality and healthiness are perceived to be more related to natural skincare products by the Danish users as compared to Korean users. However, the users of natural skincare in both countries have higher agreement on these factors than those who do not use natural skincare.

Question item 15 c measured consumer perceptions of the sustainability of natural skincare category. The results reveal that the Danish consumers perceive natural skincare as an environmentally and ethically viable choice compared to Korean respondents (Figure 23). Despite that the mean values are lower than the Danish counterparts’, 3.7 among users and 3.48 for non-users, the Korean respondents also indicate agreement. The incline toward an agreement is noteworthy despite the hesitancy and skepticism among Korean consumers toward the natural labeling (section 5.1.2.). Hence, 41% of users and 35% on non-users neither agree or disagree. One may also interpret that the Danish consumers derive their perceptions from their general sophistication regarding natural and organic products.

Lastly, item d in question 15 addressed the consumer agreement toward natural skincare products as a trendy choice. With the mean of users and non-users of each country, 3.5 and 3.6 for Danish, and 3.52 and 3.46 for Korean respondents, we may conclude that no noticeable difference occurs among the groups. Majority of the responses are situated in the middle quartile for neither agreement or disagreement (36.7% and 30% of Danish, 39% and 35% of Korean), or in the “agree” quartile (35% and 50% of Danish, 43% and 47%
of Korean) (Figure 23). This indicates that natural skincare does represent a trend, however, not a particularly strong one. This may result from that despite the market is growing (Bae, 2017; Chidley, 2017), it remains perceived as a niche category.

The last part of the survey consisted of the Finnish COO appeal. First, the basic origin image, “Made in Finland”, revealed differences in the perceptions among the Danish and Korean respondents. While Korean respondents emphasized cleanness, nature, and foreign, the most repetitive words for the Danish were quality, ethics, and research and development. Moreover, the Danish emphasized Scandinavian, and concrete product knowledge, as shown in comments such as “hydrating, “good for pale/dry skin”. The Koreans, on the other hand, also used words such as reliable, high quality, and expensive.

Besides, the Finnish category origin image revealed some similarities, thus slight differences (Figure 24): To the proposition “Beauty from Finland” (question 17), the Korean respondents indicated their perceptions to natural/pure ingredient and safety of use. Thus, some Korean respondents perceive the category as of high quality. Moreover, Koreans tend to perceive the Finnish beauty category as luxury (12.5% for users and 12.7% for non-users) other than value for money (5.3% and 6.3%). Taken that Hofstede’s (1980) uncertainty avoidance cultures are regarded as also those that emphasize purity, cleanliness, and predictability in marketing appeals (de Mooij, 2014), such strength in perceptions may represent valuable insight for the case brand Supermood with its proposition on “Holistic beauty from Finland”.

![Q.15(a-d) Consumer Attitudes for Natural Skincare](image)
Furthermore, while the Danish respondents generally selected similar items to Korean equivalents, it remains interesting that the Danish non-users of natural skincare perceived high quality, luxury, natural/pure ingredients more related to the Finnish category origin, as compared to users. Hence, the users of natural skincare products selected value for money (22.4%) more than non-users, and the Korean respondents altogether (5.3% for users and 6.3% for non-users). While the result from question item 15a revealed that especially the Danish users of natural skincare considered the natural category to be of higher quality, we may identify that the Danish consumers posit slight emphasis on both value-for-money and high quality. Thus, no strong similarity is to be found for natural skincare category and the Finnish country appeal.

![Graph](image)

(Figure 24, Appendix 9.5)

Last question set was devoted to investigating the supernational and national levels of the Finnish country-of-origin appeal. For natural skincare products made in Finland, the Korean respondents indicate higher incline toward agreement of the product as a good choice. Mean for the Korean sample is at 3.4 for both users and non-users, with 41% and 43% of agreement as well as 55% and 54% of the responses indicating indifference. For the Danish sample, the mean was 3.35 for users and 3.25 for non-users and natural skincare, with 69% and 75% indicating indifference, and only 25% and 26% of the respondents considering natural skincare from Finland as a good choice. This indicates that the Koreans prefer Finnish category image higher in the natural skincare than the Danish consumers.

In addition, a noteworthy difference was revealed when requested upon to evaluate natural skincare products of Scandinavian origin: The Danish respondents show high agreement, that 26.5% of users of natural skincare indicate Scandinavian origin as “a very good choice” (Figure 25). For the Korean respondents, the results show only a fraction of a difference in perception as compared to the result from the Finnish
origin. Hence, the mean values are slightly higher (0.2) for the Scandinavian origin due to more responses in the highest quartile, “a very good choice”. One can argue that the supernational level of Scandinavian COO is slightly more favored among Korean consumers while the specific country image of Finland is favored as much. For the Danish, however, the Scandinavian appeal is valued to a higher degree compared to the mere Finnish appeal, thus leaving the potential for further inquiry in the focus group stage.

(Figure 25, Appendix 9.5)

5.2. Focus Group Interviews

The following three subsections will introduce the findings and analysis based on the focus group interview method. First, the results from the Danish inquiry are presented, followed by Korean, and lastly, from the cross-cultural perspective. A full description for Danish group and a summary of Korean sample are attached on Appendix 9.9.

5.2.1. Denmark

The focus group consisted of three Danish participants, and the discussions will be introduced in this section. Firstly, the aim is to discover how the category is defined by the participants, and which sources of information the most influential to their perceptions. Then, further questions regarding self-esteem, health- and environmental inferences, and price and quality will be elaborated. The last section will aim at discovering how participants perceive the Finnish country of origin as national and supernational, the regional image of Scandinavia, particularly related to natural skincare category. Figure 26 (Appendix 9.8) will summarize the most relevant insights for product attributes, benefits, and values.
The discussion began by asking the participants whether they use natural skincare. While all three participants are users of natural skincare, Participant 1 and 2 were using considerably more than participant 3. Thus, they all consume natural products in their routines in combination with other, conventional products. For the participants, the question regarding their natural skincare preferences sparked a vivid discussion over the definition of the category and the variety in the terminology for natural. During the discussion, the Danish participants demonstrated both deep product knowledge of ingredients, different methods for labeling, and skepticism towards the usage of natural and organic as marketing appeals. In this regard, the perceptions of natural skincare are heavily related to product ingredients and their “legitimacy” by different certifications, such as the Swan mark used in Denmark. The following exhibits demonstrate particularly these aspects:

**Participant 2:** I would say something in relation to not having any preservatives or additives ingredients, damaging ingredients

**Participant 1:** No E-numbers, no chemicals that we can’t figure out. (1:40)

**Participant 3:** So instead we may say there are some chemicals that might be harmful, but then again we have to remember that in EU there are so many strict regulations of what you can and cannot be in products.

**Participant 2:** Cause they have some rules and regulations they need to follow in order to get this mark (5:00)

Especially noteworthy is how the participants describe the product category with emphasis on rationality and insight to the chemicals, and the production processes for the products. Ultimately, prompting revealed that the participants were motivated to obtain such in-depth insights as related to a concern for the effectiveness of the product to serve its purpose. The knowledge may be argued to contribute to the value of being a conscious and individually responsible consumer. Thus, the emphasis on knowledge may also relate to values of comfort and trust. While all participants indicated similar values, one articulated as follows:

**Participant 2:** I would say for me I am very ingredient focused you can have natural skincare but I actually studied a lot on this because skincare is something I like to a lot.. It is a hobby of mine! So I go for something that I know is something that will make a difference on me and my skin.. So mostly for me natural is as much of a marketing Ploy as anything else because you can say it has natural ingredients and therefore it’s going to be good but it might not make any difference when you put it on.
In addition to the mere category definition, all participants perceived the ability to find product- and ingredient-related information based on proactive, individual research on third-party sources as their main referent to guide decision-making. This is directly linked to their relatively wide knowledge on different certificates and regulations, and the value for autonomous consumption decisions. We may even argue that there to some degrees exists a negative connotation for using the brand’s marketing mix for the basis of one’s decision:

**Participant 2**: *I am more likely to go online to find product information then I am to go into the store and have like a representative of the brand. Because they will tell you Anything!* (08:15)

**Participant 1**: *At least they would like us to believe so (referring to the natural appeal)*

In this regard, the consumer decision-making and perceptions regarding natural skincare may be argued to reflect Hofstede’s (1980) argument of the high individualism and low power distance as cultural tendencies. Further, we may interpret these findings against Inglehart’s (1987) proposition that postmaterialist consumer behavior is reflected in the emphasis on autonomy which concerns the positive attitudes towards assessment and consumption decisions based on individual judgment.

The survey results indicated that the Danish consumers prefer friends and family as the most influential sources of product knowledge (section 5.1.1.). However, when asked upon in the focus group interview, the participants explained that the Danes do not particularly engage in such discussions. Instead, a preference for individual decision-making was emphasized for the given category. Thus, only one participant indicated a positive experience from using friends as a source of product information:

**Participant 1**: *Especially if it’s a good friend, they quite often know a bit about how your body works.*

With the intention to acquire insight to the expected and experiences usage benefits for natural skincare, and ultimately the values behind, the interviewer prompted the participants to describe their skincare routines and goals. It was found that while the participants use similar product combinations with little-customized variations, the usage purposes differed according to personal needs. For the three participants, the main benefits assigned to natural skincare were the ability to preserve sensitive skin from stress, reduce allergies and skin breakouts, and lessen irritation and damage from chemicals. Hence, we may derive similar findings to those by Kim & Seock (2009), for that health-related benefits were associated with the use of
natural skincare by all of the three participants. While participant 3 was using natural products merely as a remedy when issues arise, participants 1 & 2 favor the category as a part of their daily routine:

**Interviewer:** So what do you think people who use sensitive skin, do you think they use natural skincare more than others?

**Participant 1:** Yeah I think so because if it's natural yeah if you have an allergy you might get a reaction but I think it's less likely to make your skin react than something with the chemical

**Participant 1:** Yeah I mainly use it (referring to the application) to see whether a product can induce allergies. And whenever it says "can induce allergies" and there were more than five of them, I just did not go for the product

**Participant 2:** Also the redness in the skin.. Like also sensitive skin breaks out.

The primary health-related benefits relate particularly to the current usage purposes for skincare, as the participants expressed concern for product effectiveness and instant results. Moreover, it appeared that the product effectiveness mattered for natural products like conventional ones, which were used as the referent when deciding among natural and other products:

**Participant 2:** I don't really care about the buzzwords but reviews from those who have tried the products, yeah. Because I can actually get a Feeling whether it's going to work or not. Because we use all those marketing buzzwords and it will be nice and good, but it won't work on your skin and remove the dark circles under my eyes

**Participant 3:** Or my wrinkles (07:00)

In the sense, we may derive that product effectiveness is important for the consumer. hence highlighting to a degree short-term orientation. Paradoxically, however, the participants appeared to associate long-term benefits with natural skincare use, particularly as one age. Prompting question resulted in that the participants assigned the values of self-care, youthful looks, and good skin as a personal asset as their underlying motivations for natural skincare:

**Participant 2:** Also when I look at myself in the future when you get older. People can usually tell how well you take care of your skin while when you were younger. Also, I see it (use of natural skincare) as an investment in yourself and future-self.
Participant 1: Yes especially in the long run. Let's say unless the chemicals can actually preserve us (sarcastic expression)

The survey result complemented the findings by Liobikienė and Bernatonienė (2017) in that particularly consumers of natural skincare perceive natural skincare as an environmentally better choice. However, the focus group participants perceived that natural skincare was for their personal purposes and that the sustainability of the products is debatable due to the complexity of production and mistrust for sustainable sourcing of the ingredients. Therefore, we may argue that skincare products primarily contribute more to one’s personal self-esteem to serve individual agenda instead of environmental sustainability. This may be seen as follows:

Participant 2 I would say the people that I know who would use natural skincare and things like that, who are people who do it for themselves. Not so much for the environment. I do other things for the environment. But for my skincare, it is for me to feel good. (17:00)

Despite that the main benefit of natural skincare is more related to personal care and health than sustainability, there was one single ingredient from which we may derive values related to environmental sustainability:

Participant 2 I think the huge problem with personal care products right now is the microplastics. And they will put that in anything that is by far the most dangerous thing for the environment and the oceans are filled with it. And everything is going to s*** haha.

While only participants 1 and 2 agreed, participant 3 was not as familiar with the term. We may also refer this finding as complementing the survey results, whereby the users of natural skincare value sustainability slightly more compared to non-users, and due to their more intense information search, thus choose the category as a more sustainable choice (section 5.1.1.)

Later during the interview, the participants were requested to discuss the most important features of the product as it would affect their preference. Complementary to the earlier ascribed health-associated benefits and concern for product effectiveness for individual needs, it may be seen that the product packaging is also contributing to the consumer preference:
Participant 2: I think this is going to sound silly I would try a product if I think it looks pretty.

Interviewer: (Asking about) The design? (25:59)

Participant 2: Yeah exactly.

Participant 2: I guess so but you won’t really know that before you try it to see if it actually works. So the how I know could be through online, but friends but also the packaging.

However, while a visually appealing that appeals to the personal styles of the consumers appear as more preferable, the value assigned to appealing packaging ultimately relates also to the concern for its functionality. Similarly, product quality was perceived as related to the functionality, as seen in the following:

Participant 2: Yeah, I mean the quality of the product. Does what it has to do. Of course, it’s important to quality. If I like buying it and then it doesn’t do s*** then I’m not going to buy it again. Then I will use something else that has a lot of chemicals in. (as opposed to natural)

An additional factor relates to the packaging design is the need for information in form of localized product labeling. This was particularly related to the purpose of conducting information search prior the purchase decision as related to the value of comfort and certainty related to one’s decision. What is more interesting was that particularly participant 1 perceived it as a necessity to have the information in Danish despite her fluent skills in English. Hence, either domestic or localized product branding appears to be more culturally close and trustworthy:

Participant 1: I usually compare the length of the text. And if the finish one is longer than the Danish one I’m like what the f*** are they talking about in that part I’m not getting to know. And then, I will not choose that. Also, I want all the information that I can feel comfortable

Another important product attribute for natural skincare is the price of the product. All the participants indicated that price does affect. For participant 1 & 2, the price was more related to the quality in terms of the functionality, while participant 3 was more price sensitive in general. The participants further discussed that their choice for conventional products is related to their current status as students. Thus, it became evident that natural labeling alone does not provide for justification to premium pricing according to the participants. We may see this from the following:
Participant 2: I would say so price. While the product may be good, some cheaper products can be just as good as any. So just because it has the word natural in it, I don't feel the difference so much. I just get turned off because then it's really marketing. I mean it is obviously a marketing tool. Because we can justify the price setting high the price.

Participant 3: For me as a student, I am also concerned about the price. So that is also something I maybe think of more when I buy so when I have a job I can afford to buy natural in comparison to the more chemical one..

Whilst the participants emphasize the functionality and capabilities, it became evident that natural skincare was associated with several intangible benefits also related to the user experience with the products. This may be seen as follows:

Participants 2: I also think it's a way of taking care of yourself by doing something nice for yourself. Like when you go shopping and eat a nice piece of cake. You take care of your skin because it makes you feel good!

Participant 1: Exactly, it's something I sometimes relieve stress with. (30:31)

The discussion indicated that the usage experiences relate also to self-care, such as different facial masks and serums are used for the purposes of enhancing self-image, reducing stress and experiencing luxury in one’s everyday life. Thus, one participant perceived using a natural skincare mask as an entertaining experience:

Participant 3: And I also have this little thing which I believe is fun take snapchats of it. So I do it for myself but also I get a little bit of Comedy out of it. Because then I make strange Clips with a black mask on. Sometimes I just draw on my face with it when I'm alone.

As is argued thus far, it remains that the Danish participants perceive natural skincare related to their individual needs and values. Additionally, natural skincare consumption does not represent a category for conspicuous consumption. This was revealed as the consumers were asked whether their skincare routine is similar compared to their peers:

Participant 3: (Laughter). We don't really talk about it like that
Besides, promoting natural skincare usage was perceived negatively especially when associated with a pro-organic lifestyle. This appears rather paradoxical to the fact that Danish consumers are among the heaviest users of natural and organic products (Kaad-Hansen, 2017), thus to the fact that all participants use natural and organic products in several other product categories besides mere skincare. In this regard, the prompting question revealed a surprisingly negative discourse to describe those perceived as publicly promoting the use of natural products:

**Participant 2** I feel like people who would go for natural and organic products tend to have this idea that they are saved all the chemicals. So maybe it’s not so much us, but they will look at us like like what about yourself, your future children or the Mother Earth?

We may hereafter argue that the Danish consumers are knowledgeable and self-esteem, postmaterialistic about their perceptions for the category. Taken these together, natural skincare category is not associated with benefits for social status, nor that is desired by the consumers.

The survey findings indicated that the Danish consumers prefer Scandinavian product origin to that of Finnish (section 5.1.1.). This was elaborated towards the end of the focus group as with the purpose of uncovering the underlying perceptions and related associations.

Firstly, one may argue that the importance of information availability, and related value of being a conscious consumer, relates also to the preference for the country of origin. That is evident in how the participants described their lack of knowledge regarding Finland in general, thus the category-specific capabilities:

**Participant 2:** They’re not exactly known for skincare. I mean, what are they known for? So, for me it’s kinda hard to say what I would expect because of that

**Interviewer:** There is not so much information, or?

**Participant 2:** No.. They don’t really have an image of in that sense.

As to encourage the participants to answer, the interviewer forwarded the discussion to the expectations towards natural skincare from Finland (44:00).
Participant 3: I feel like the Finnish people are very functional. And I have nothing to base this on. This is just like a stereotypical thing I have in my head. So I would think that the product would have a function. But there would still be quality.

Participant 2: Yeah, I would base it on that they are like any other Scandinavian beauty products. So I would say at least that they are of good quality.

While the Finnish country-of-origin was perceived with quality and compatibility with Northern European equivalents, the main difference may be found in cultural differences between the nations. These related to the language differences, cultural heritage and perceived closeness:

Participant 3: And our cultures are different, too. And I have basically never been introduced to them. So, I don't really know what they can and cannot do.

When compared to the Scandinavian product origin, the Finnish product origin was perceived relatively similar, yet however, with considerably more uncertainty and unpredictability compared to Scandinavian products. The Scandinavian product origin is thus related to a certainty as described by the participants as “more naturalistic”, yet more suitable for their needs and preferred functionalities. It may be derived that the Scandinavian product origin is favored over Finnish origin, for being more trustworthy with higher compatibility to the unique needs of the consumers’. Especially the element of trust is present in the findings as follows:

Participant 2: I think for me as a Scandinavian, I have a tendency to trust products from my own region more. As soon as we step outside, like even to Finland, I would already feel like näääh!, I'm not sure about that! (52:00)

Participant 3: I feel like people have a tendency to be very naturalistic when it comes to products. And thereby people would rather choose products from their own country or neighbor country than ones from other, like a further way country. So if I stand in front of a Finnish and Danish product, I would probably go with the Danish one.

Particularly, the Scandinavian product origin reflects values of certainty and ease of mind as underlying drivers for consumer preference in the category. Thus, we may derive that the participants have a preference towards domestic products over foreign ones in the natural skincare category. In this regard, the Danish
participants posit value importance for neither cosmopolitanism (Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010), nor related social status (Han et al., 2010) in the category.

5.2.2. Korea

The Korean focus group discussion began by requesting the participants to indicate whether they use natural skincare. This caused some hesitant silence among the participants, as participant K1 stated: “I guess so? But I am not quite sure what exactly natural skincare is”. This reflects the vague user identification of the category as shown in the survey (section 5.1.2.). When asked the reason for the confusion, some participants mentioned about the absence of authorized certificates regarding the category in Korea. All participants considered ‘dermatologically tested’ as a reliable standard to be “safe to use” in cosmetics instead, while organic certificate was referred as relevant by one participant because “it is for food, which can be an ingredient for natural skincare” (K2). The definition of natural skincare is thus vague among Korean consumers, and their image could be shaped through cosmetics brand marketing in the media as one participant said:

Participant K1: Whether the skincare product is natural or not is defined by a company’s marketing. For example, advertising with a female celebrity who has good skin and pure image, showing the product with some green ingredient. Then she says, it is “natural”, and people just buy it.
Combined with the survey findings (section 5.1.2) about why non-users haven’t considered purchasing natural skincare products, and the existence of consumers who indicated they do not know whether they are using natural skincare, we may derive that the absence of natural labeling in Korean market results in the confusion of the category definition, and even a skepticism about how the category is described in marketing practice.

On the other hand, only two out of five participants were confident to define their status as users of natural skincare, which led to a discussion of the meaning of natural skincare in their own words. All participants agreed that natural skincare is defined in accordance with the main ingredients; either originated from nature or produced in organic methods. Another definition was regarding the exclusion of allegedly harmful chemical ingredients such as preservatives and additives (i.e. perfumes and surfactants). These are illustrated in the following quotes:

**Participant K1**: Main ingredient as natural-oriented [...] and is used as a product name

**Participant K2**: Natural-oriented ingredient. Not having additives, surfactants.

**Participant K3**: Natural ingredient, Microplastic-free..

**Participant K4**: Natural ingredient, no preservative so that should be kept in a fridge.

**Participant K5**: No harmful ingredient, less preservative, and simple design.

When it comes to information sources, product and ingredient reviews were used by all participants. Their main purpose was to “check if harmful ingredients are included on the product that I consider to buying”, or “read reviews of beauty experts and other users” (K2, K4). Certain names of a mobile application (Hwa Hae) and beauty YouTuber’s name (Director Pi) were mentioned as popular by four participants, which corresponds to the growing trend of using ingredient check and product reviews among Korean consumers (Section 2.2.2.). In addition, participant 1 and 4 mentioned recommendations from friends and sales representatives.

Overall, the pro-active information gathering in relevant online sources seems to become essential for the Korean respondents due to the lack of certificate authority. The Korean respondents also demanded the company's responsibility to present ingredient information “to show which bad ingredient they don’t have,
and what kind of natural ingredient is used, and where does the ingredient come from, right on the (product) package” (K4).

After the initial discussion over the definitions, four out of five participants identified and modified their current stance as a user of natural skincare while one participant (K3) claimed as a non-user. Among the four users, Participant K1 was using less number of skincare products than Participant K2, K4, and K5, who all considered themselves as highly-involved in natural skincare consumption; they included natural skincare products to their daily skincare routines along with using conventional skincare products depending on their skin conditions, weather and mood.

To understand how these users and a non-user of natural skincare perceive the product category, two questions are asked. The first question is who they think natural skincare is good for (Appendix 9.7). Here participants who indicated having trouble or sensitive skin unanimously agreed that those who have skin problems would consider using natural skincare as they stated:

**Participant K4:** The first thing is to stop using the current (conventional) skincare and find something pure and natural one when her skin reacts badly

**Respondent K3** (non-user): My skin is fine, so I am not so concerned about considering using one (natural skincare product)

Meanwhile, one respondent viewed using natural skincare as a lifelong investment for her own health because “the chemicals can be accumulated in your body in the long-term” (K1). Consequently, natural skincare was perceived both as a remedy for sensitive or troubled skin for imminent soothing effect on their skin, and a long-term investment for the health. The health was hence a strong benefit and appeared as a central value for the participants. This is illustrated in the following quotes:

**Participant K4:** Facial skin is the indicator of your health. You don’t want to be looking sick or old. I know depending on my physical condition some chemical ingredient could react badly one day, then, (I use) Physiogel (name of a natural skincare product).

**Participant K5:** Simple ingredient is better. I know which ingredients are bad for my skin, so I pay special attention to it. What it does not have is more important for no harm to my skin.
Another benefit was about the ability to make an individual decision for themselves, rather than being persuaded by marketing tactic, as one participant said:

**Participant K2**: *I like that I make a well-informed wise decision for myself, not just affected by the marketing tactic, [...] I use various sources (of ingredient). For example, Director Pi (name of a beauty Youtuber’s channel) makes me feel smart and proud of myself.*

In terms of environmental contribution related to natural skincare use, the only non-user participant, K3, stated that saving animals and ecosystem in relation to the banning of microplastic in cosmetics and personal care products. Thus, it can be said that there were less of environmental contribution aspect to be considered as a benefit.

Upon being asked to the relation of using natural skincare and their image to other people, most participants did not find a connection between two elements. Four participants disagreed or limited their interpretation of using natural skincare and signaling their choice to mere personal pleasure or share information with people with similar taste. This is indicated in the following quotes:

**Participant K4**: *Yes, I like my choice of using natural skincare. But I didn’t do it for pleasing other people. I mean, mature people, like, at least people in my age(30s) would not care.*

**Participant K1**: *By showing what I use, I can attract more people who have the same interest, so we can bond and share information. [...] as wise consumers.*

On the other hand, the non-user K3 refused to connect self-esteem to skincare use, and expressed a negative view as she said:

**Participant K3** (non-user): *When I hear someone openly say ‘I use natural skincare’, it gives me the impression that the person is showing off, in a way that the person is better than others. [...] It reminds me of some vegetarians who are too proud of their choices”*

This comment is in line with the survey findings of the non-users’ negative sentiment toward natural skincare usage and its contribution to one’s public image (Section 5.2.2).
As for the relation between using natural skincare and self-esteem, the participants more easily connected the value of taking care of themselves with their choice of natural skincare. Participants described their user experience as “a way of figure out what makes me happy” (K4) and as a “part of taking care of me as a way of being myself” (K2). Similarly, their individual traits reflected on how they regarded their skincare routines different from their peers as one participant elaborated: “It really depends on many; my daily skin condition if the weather is dry or windy, my indoor or outdoor schedule...or merely my feeling of the day” (K4). Altogether, the participants saw their usage of natural skincare as a matter of individual choice for their own benefits which is rooted on Inglehart’s (1987) definition of a postmodern feature of self-concept, rather than a way to signal their status in a social group. Thus, this may also relate to the tradition of customizing skincare routines among Korean consumers, proposing a limitation to analyze the result simply in Hofstede’s dimensions of collectivism or individualism.

In conclusion, natural skincare’s meaning and user perception among Koreans primarily based on their perceived health benefits as described in figure 27. First, natural skincare is seen as a remedy or an alternative for their current skincare for skin problems; such as sensitivity or troubled. Therefore, they expected to have less side effect on their skins thus have healthier skin and eventually healthier lifestyle. It was the case for the two participants (K1 and K3) who have healthy skin, thus showed relatively less interest in using natural skincare products. Nevertheless, the participants acknowledged the long-term consequences of chemical exposure on their health.

When it comes to the environmental concern which has been argued by Liobikiene and Bernatonienė (2017) as a determinant for green cosmetics purchase, the focus group results revealed the environmentally-related value to be less relevant to Korean participants. They only indicated their acknowledgment of microplastics as a threat to the ecosystem. Similarly, they also perceived the air pollution with microdust in Korea as a health-related threat. This was discussed as a sign for choosing skincare products to alleviate the possible harm for themselves, rather than a long-term perspective of using more green products as an environmentally sustainable choice.

Overall, the main benefit of natural skincare is more related to health than environmental concern. Health consciousness scores of each participant correlate their the involvement in using natural skincare which compliments Kim and Secok(2009)’s findings of health consciousness as a most influential factor on consumers purchase decision on natural cosmetics. Further, the participant’s prescription for the natural skincare product attributes, benefits and values are illustrated in figure 27.
Additionally, the meaning of holistic beauty, the case company Supermood’s tagline was tested for Korean consumers. The purpose of the questions was to gauge the potential to import the English phrase as it is, considering English is often used in marketing phrases in cosmetics in Korean market (Nelson & Paek, 2007). Also, there exists a possibility that Korean consumers associate the slogan with the other brand, since the similar line has been used by the major Korean cosmetics company with their herbal skincare brand.

As a result, the Korean participants turned out to feel wary for the phrase, as one participant phrased: “it sounds weird, and it doesn’t give me any image”. However, all participants showed positive stance to the meaning of the phrase after the interviewer gave the definition as described in the case company’s website. Therefore, it can be argued that the English slogan alone would not convey what it means to local Koreans.

Finally, two questions are asked to reveal how Korean participants perceive the national image of Finland. The supernatural image of Scandinavia is also compared to Finnish image due to the predominant popularity of Scandinavian, also known as a Northern-European image across design and lifestyle in Korea.

Korean participants showed overall positive impression about the Finnish COO for the natural skincare category along with associations to nature, purity, safety, and cleanliness. However, all Korean participants admitted that they might have learned and be influenced in their opinions compare to local Koreans, considering their living experience in Denmark and exposure to Nordic cultures. When requested to situate themselves as local Korean consumers’ aspect, three participants mentioned that Finland would be perceived
as a foreign country without much information about the country. One interesting topic followed by was the Finnish panel members who starred in the recent Korean TV show\(^1\) as stated following:

**Participant K3:** “They (the Finnish panel members) seemed very down-to-earth [...] Finland is unfamiliar but watching the show made me want to visit there.”

As for the price range and positioning of Finnish natural skincare products, participants assumed that it would be a middle price as similar to the European pharmacy cosmetics i.e. Eucerin. Based on their willingness to pay extra for the promised natural skincare features (section 5.1.2.), it seems that the Korean participants equate higher price for a better quality. Specifically, the quality incorporates effectiveness and product capabilities in association with the Finnish COO in the given product category. One of the participants stated the following:

**Participant K2:** *I imagine the natural skincare from Finland would be the safest and fullest level of basic function such as hydrating [...] considering the cold weather and Finnish beauty standard pursuing looking 'natural'.*

Since all participants have lived in Denmark at least for 2-month to 3-year (Appendix 9.6), and have acquired knowledge of Scandinavia in general, they concerned the supernational image of Scandinavia as “vague”. However, some participants partly said that “Scandinavia is preferable among older generations (in comparison to Finland, due to the low recognition)” (K3) and “is more effective to catch attention in the short-term” (K4). This view adds a weight to the survey finding (section 5.1.2, question 19) of the slight preference to Scandinavian image among the Korean respondents.

In line with their expectation to see the origin of the ingredient on the product package, the Korean participants seem to prefer the more specific information about the origin of the ingredient on the product. This may be perceived as relating to Hofstede’s (1980) concept of uncertainty avoidance, conceiving that Korean consumers resemble high avoidance for vagueness in their preferences in natural skincare category. We may see this present in the following:

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\(^1\) MBC every1’s hit show ‘Welcome, First Time in Korea?’, epi.17-20. The show depicts a group of visitors from foreign countries visiting various places in Korea. The latest episodes of Finnish panels scored the highest ratings, an audience of 5 percent, according to Total National Multimedia Statistics.
Participant K1: *If the product says ‘beauty from Scandinavia’, I would ask, so where in Scandinavia? I prefer it says the exact country name, Finland. I think at least women in 20-30s, women in my age, know where Finland is and have a good impression about Finland*”

Participant K2: *Korean natural skincare (brands) always provide the exact region of the ingredient is produced. Like, ‘Green tea from Jeju island’, of innisfree (a Korean cosmetics brand name). And we know where exactly is and we can even visit the green tea farm there. So at least I want to know which country in Scandinavia it is from.”*

In sum, Korean participants share some positive impression about Finnish COO in natural skincare. When compared to the supernational COO of Scandinavia, they interpret the supersnational image less reliable than the Finish COO. Therefore, it became evident that Koreans perceive Finnish COO as a fresh and new concept to be used in the Korean market.

5.2.3. Similarities and Differences

This section will introduce the main similarities and differences found in the focus group inquiry. Firstly, the Danish participants defined natural skincare category according to the ingredients, which should be natural by origin and production method. Thus, the product should not contain any additives, perfumes, or microplastic. Similarly, ingredient-related information was guiding the consumer decision-making. The Danish participants perceived a product brand more positively when they were able to conduct pro-active information search regarding the whole production chain. For Korean counterparts, the definition of natural skincare is limited to the main ingredients of the product, which similarly to the Danish, should originate from the nature. Slightly different from Danish participants, the Korean participants’ definition of natural products was more influenced by the brand appeal and the stated functionalities, such as less “harmfulness” of the ingredients.

All the participants expected to find ingredient-related information on the product labels. The difference arises in that the Danish participants perceived the use of “natural” as a marketing appeal rather negatively and with skepticism, instead emphasizing the official sources of information, such as natural certificates and eco-standards. Particularly, the EU standards are perceived as trustworthy in the product category. This relates to that the Danish consumers are familiar with different standards for natural and organic products, while there currently exists no similar standards in the Korean hence Koreans obtain the relevant information from marketing.
The most prevalent information sources for the Korean focus group participants consisted of product and ingredient reviews. Thus, Social Media was the most popular platform for gathering those reviews. Friends and sales employee recommendation are used to a degree. This corresponds to the survey results for the Korean respondents and indicate relatively more emphasis on collective opinion (Hofstede, 1980), and the prestige formed around certain brand preferred by opinion leaders, such as YouTubers. Pro-active information search from these sources thus provides the consumers with a personal value of being a ‘wise’ consumer. Variously, the Danish participants indicated that peers had only little influence and that their decision-making is primarily based on individual, pro-active information search to product reviews and official certifications. Thus, it was found that for the Danish participants, skincare is particularly related to value for individualism and autonomy, thus self-consciousness as a consumer.

The main benefit of natural skincare products was related to the perception of the healthiness equally for both the Danish and Korean focus group participants. Slight differences arise on this level, as the benefits relate to the individual needs of the consumer: Overall, the Danish participants associate natural skincare as suitable for sensitive skin, and to reduce tightness, redness, and breakouts. The Korean participants mentioned the use of natural skincare as a remedy for troubled skin, and that natural products would reduce the existence of any side effects from cosmetics and air pollution when compared to conventional products. Therefore, we may argue that the perceived health benefits relate to differences in skin types and external conditions, namely the climate. Despite the perceived remedy effect, Korean consumers also distinguish the effectiveness level of skincare as lower than the “functional cosmetics” (Section 2.2.2.), a label authorized by KFDA. That is, they tend to be satisfied as long as there is no irritation or harm occurs when using the products.

On the level of values assigned to these health-related benefits for natural skincare, the Danish participants emphasized self-esteem and -care. Thus, on one hand, these were a paradox regarding obtaining instant results, and on the other hand, long-term results as to have youthful looks later on in life. This may be argued to highlight both individualism and slight short-term orientation on Hofstede’s (1980) terms. For the Korean participants, health may be regarded as an ultimate value, which may be seen especially in that natural skincare is preferred to keep themselves from chemical exposure. Similarly, air pollution in Korea constitutes a health-related threat, and natural skincare usage is perceived as providing security to the skin. Here, we may see reflections particularly of Hofstede’s (1980) long-term orientation and high uncertainty avoidance. Thus, the Danish’ emphasis on consumer autonomy corresponds to Inglehart’s (1987) definition of postmaterialism, whereas the Koreans’ emphasis on physical security, as here from pollution and external threats to the skin, relate to the propositions of a materialistic society. However, also Korean participants
show signs of postmaterialist values, but more as related to self-esteem as one usage value for natural skincare.

Environmental benefits of using natural skincare were only to a degree emphasized by both groups, as the participants indicated only the use of microplastics as their concern for sustainability. This results that equally for both Danish and Korean consumers, natural skincare products are primarily chosen based on the product functionalities to contribute to their own health, rather than the long-term perspective of using more green products. Similarly, social benefits were not perceived in the natural skincare category for either of the groups.

The brand design and positioning may be regarded as rather important for Danish consumers. Namely, natural skincare category is perceived as of higher quality and luxury if the brand design contributes to the consumer’s personal style. Thus, the brand appeal was preferred when localized. This arguably related to their preference to feel culturally close to their choice of natural skincare brand, contributing to their sense of being a conscious consumer. Hence, skincare products are perceived by the consumers as relaxing, fun and as an everyday luxury, which contributes one’s self-esteem. The natural appeal did not alone stand as a premium position and was perceived negative when used as justification for premium pricing. Slightly opposite was found for Korean participants as the natural appeal has a premium inference which regards the health-benefits provided by natural skincare products. Thus, for Koreans, ingredient information and the country-of-origin were value-adding elements.

The Finnish country-of-origin appeal appeared to be favored by the Korean participants due to the positive associations of nature, purity, safety, and cleanness. However, all Korean participants admitted that they might be influenced by their experiences living in Europe hence the Finnish origin might be less known in Korea. Overall, the Korean participants showed positive impression about Finnish COO in natural skincare category. When compared, the Danish participants had the opposite perceptions. For the Danish, the Finnish COO was perceived culturally relatively distant and unpredictable, consequently affecting that the consumers do not relate their needs well to the country image for natural skincare category. Thus, for them, unpredictability was perceived as negative, and the participants did not indicate a willingness to try out the products.

Furthermore, opposing results were also found for Scandinavian COO: For Danish, the Scandinavian image constituted a preferred choice over other origins. In this sense, the Danish consumers show signs of
ethnocentrism for the given product category. For the internationally experienced Korean participants, the
supernational COO appeared as vague hence less reliable. However, they proposed it to be suitable for
targeting older generations and as short-term promotion, thus the use of a specific COO appeal as a core
element in product branding.

Overall, the COO appeals contributed in the opposite ways to the two groups. Both preferences, however,
relate to the need to reduce uncertainty and to appear as a knowledgeable consumer.

6. Discussion

In the following sub-sections the findings of the analysis are discussed with an ultimate purpose of answering
our stated research question(s) and fulfilling to purposes stated for this study.

6.1. Natural Skincare: Cross-cultural Perceptions

The purpose of this paper is to first identify how natural skincare category is perceived by young female
consumers of ages 18-35 in Korea and Denmark. As scholars argued that both ongoing globalization and local
cultural forces affect consumption-related values and behaviors, and hence form a new type of basis for
international market segmentation (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007), the findings of this study conclusively
explored the similarities and differences in consumer perceptions in two the countries. From this perspective
of cultural pluralism, the findings may be used to understand that there exists global consumer culture (GCC)
amongst Denmark and Korean consumers in natural skincare category. That is given for GCC to refer to the
consumer segments exhibiting a set of similar characteristics regardless of physical whereabouts and cultural
backgrounds (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007).

The coexistence of global and local cultural influences is visible in consumer perceptions for the category of
natural skincare. Essentially, the cultural pluralism may be seen as integrally related as to how the consumers
on one hand impose very similar manifestos for the product usage and perception, yet with variations
grounded in the socio-cultural contexts. Thus, this study complies with the Arnould & Thompson (2005) in
that whilst globally disseminated cultural constructions are adapted on the local level, they are neither fully
replacing cultural heritage and traditions, nor fully integrated into the existing tradition. Hence, we may
examine the rise of new, hybrid consumer cultures, as may be argued for natural skincare product category.

Taken the cultural heritage, tradition, and ideologies, the market context in Denmark differ from that in Korea.
The powerful imaginary related to EU standards and well-established consumer sophistication in natural and
organic products can be identified as major contextual difference impacting the consumer culture in Denmark. Natural product categories may be argued to be readily embedded in the consumer tradition. For natural skincare, this embeddedness may be seen as manifestos in how the Danish consumers are highly sophisticated in their purchase decisions and confident to acquire and question information of natural and organic products. Therefore, natural product labeling, certificates, and the EU standards have created a market environment where merely highlighting natural or organic as central to the value proposition is not enough for the consumers to perceive a brand as having added value, and hence, quality inference.

In Korea, the authorized labeling or standards for organic product is limited to food category. The use of natural and organic category has not yet established a position as a cultural construction, thus no official standard exists. This generates confusion in the category definition and value proposition of the category among the Korean consumers. We may conclude that the Danish market is in a mature stage, while the Korean market can be specified to be emerging for the category. As related to this relatively early stage in the market penetration, Korean consumers’ expectation towards the product category is less established compared to the of the Danish counterparts; that is, the category is primarily associated with the exclusion of specific ingredients, as promoted together with the inclusion of those ingredients which are of natural origin. As a consequence, the global influences imported to the Korean market may be anticipated to bring about changes as to how natural skincare category will be established and manifested as a consumer culture in the future.

The cultural heritage and backgrounds as well as the local market context, affect consumer perceptions and were found to pertain further in levels of information sources, usage benefits and values as parallel to the similarities. Firstly, when looking at the consumer behavior in natural skincare purchase, the study identified rather similar uses of information sources perceived as influential to consumer decision-making in both countries; Both the Danish and Korean consumers emphasized the need for official standards and regulations for ingredients, and thus prefer authorized certificates as guiding one’s decision-making. In the dimension of traditional versus secular-rational values (Inglehart, 1997), therefore, both countries seem to possess traditional characteristic. Slight variations may be found cross-culturally, as also dependent on the market circumstances. This is that for the Korean consumers, the perception had more emphasis for authorized labels and certificates, even to a degree impacting the perceptions of the category by definition. The inquiry for authorized standards interpreted as signs of uncertainty avoidance and traditional values structure (Hofstede, 1980; Inglehart, 1997). In comparison, while preferring domestic products over foreign ones as a sign of traditional values, we may interpret that Danish consumers possess slightly higher Secular-rational
values in form of skepticism towards the trustworthiness of the official standards. That is, especially when compared to Korean consumers to whom authorities were accepted. When using self-expression scale, the result is clearly associated with a postmaterialistic side for the Danish consumers, and hence, higher individualism and lower power distance of the culture compared to Korean (Hofstede, 1980).

When it comes to word-of-mouth as an information source, our study findings are contradictory to Inglehart’s (1997) propositions: higher trust in in-group members, which is a major factor in traditional values, was found higher among Danish consumers. Reversely, we may argue that product reviews, the most prominent element in Korea, can be seen as the out-group opinion leaning towards the secular-rational value. However, the pursuit of product reviews itself can be also interpreted as a contemporary self-expression value and a sign of individualism as embedded in the perceptions among the young female consumers for natural skincare in the Korean market.

On the level of consumers’ perceived usage benefits for natural skincare, similar perceptual dimension was found for health-related benefits: What pertains the most interesting as a prevailing similarity is that consumers with specific skin issues such as sensitive, irritated or externally damaged skin associate natural skincare with benefits as related to their self-care and lifestyle. In this sense, natural skincare was also perceived as an alternative to conventional products to function as a remedy and precaution for the segment of female consumers with these particular skin types and conditions (Appendix 9.5). Here, this study may establish the most prevalent similarity and characteristic of a global consumer culture.

Especially among the Korean consumers, natural skincare was seen as part of a holistic solution to deter any damage from external causes affecting the health of skin and body. Hence, the difference to the Danish was reflected in customized skincare routines based on the health condition. Non-users were particularly perceiving the category as less effective due to this perception of the sensitivity of the products. In comparison, the Danish consumers particularly opt natural skincare based on health benefits provided to their individual needs, with more emphasis on product functionality, and less concern for damage control. The long-term value for natural skincare was hence strongly identified among both groups to be that of for preserving youthful looks, as related to long-term orientation in the perceptions related to natural skincare usage (Hofstede, 1980).

This study identified that health and environmental consciousness, two of the most often examined factors in natural goods literature (Kim & Seock, 2009; Liobikienė & Bernatonienė, 2017), are related to consumer
perceptions for natural skincare cross-culturally. Hence, whilst the health benefits are to be considered the core attribute in consumer perceptions, sustainability was somewhat associated with the product category. The difference in this regard pertains that the Danish consumers were found to be more aware of sustainability and consequences to the environment in the cosmetics industry, hence implying that the consumers preferring natural skincare have more personal involvement to their roles as consumers to promote sustainability. Thus, while natural skincare was not particularly chosen merely as a sustainable lifestyles choice, the Danish consumers impose higher concern compared to the Korean consumers. Consequently, the Danish consumers appear to be closer to self-expressive, individualistic and postmodernist dimension with their stronger inclination towards environmental protection. While Korean consumers also were concerned about the environment, their perception related to natural skincare was to acquire security from external damage, such as pollution, by natural skincare consumption. As compared to the Danish consumers, the Koreans have values closer to the survival pole of the particular Inglehart’s (1997) dimension.

The study contributed to the understanding that the usage values are ultimately driven by the consumer self-concept for the Danish consumers, who conceive natural skincare product as a way of contributing their self-esteem and its expression. This positions our findings to be in line with Inglehart’s (1997) proposition of postmaterialism and Hofstede's (1980) dimension of high individualism. As compared, the Korean consumers in this regard impose less connection to identify their self-image. One may argue that the Korean consumers have less emphasis on the self-concept in natural skincare usage, despite their avid interests in cosmetics consumption and rich cultural heritage. One can also say that despite the many emerging postmaterialistic qualities found in the perceptions among the Korean consumers, the self-concept is relatively less discussed or identified in connection with cosmetics usages.

Moreover, this study provided insight that among the Korean natural skincare consumers in the age group of 18-35, the values are identified to be in transition towards postmodernism, a stage where the Danish counterparts may readily be. While Western product concepts and embedded attributes are perceived positively as signs of modernity (Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010), however, the prevailing cultural heritage impacts so that the cultural homogenization of perceptual frames or values is not yet complete. As a result, it may also be posited that while the transitions take place during the years and decades to come, full transformation into globally uniform perceptions and value systems is unlikely to occur, nor it is mandatory for the purposes of discussing and studying global consumer cultures for marketing purposes.
In essence, consumer perceptions from Denmark and Korea were explored in the light of cultural studies combined with the natural product literature. This study provides an insight into consumer behavior in the category of natural skincare especially by recognizing the differences arising from the market context, cultural heritage, and traditions, thus also simultaneously revealing arising globally identifiable similarities for product usage benefits and values within the particular consumer culture. In this way, our study contributes to the international marketing and consumer behavior studies by its examination of the multidimensional and contextual nature of local and global culture influences on consumer perception and behavior.

6.2. The Finnish Country-of-origin Appeal in Natural Skincare

The overarching purpose of this research paper is to discuss global branding for a natural skincare company using its country-of-origin in the brand appeal. The approach taken to the Finnish COO in the given category was highly exploratory due to the small number of studies conducted prior. Based on the following discussion in this section, one may detect that the Finnish COO does not translate from country-level to the level of product category as a straightforward Halo-effect, and thus, has different implications cross-culturally.

Ryan (2008) argued that the Finnish appeal may be used as a marketing tool to add on to the brand’s prestige image and add on to the positioning of price-quality dimension: In an overall country level, this paper identifies similar perceptions to be held in the minds of Danish and Korean consumers. Especially, the Finnish origin was identified as related to the technological advances, environmentally and socially responsible production methods, along with the purity of nature as a source of ingredients. In this sense, the overall image is much related to consumer knowledge of Finland as technologically advanced and modern society and thereby, translating into consumer trust towards the Finnish COO. Hence, the Finnish COO refers to reliability and may be identified as having an advantage for creating social responsibility appeals as a differentiator for product concepts. This applies to the perceptions of the Danish consumers, whereas when compared to Koreans, the Finnish COO provides a higher quality inference and prestige. Referring to the discussion in the previous section, we may relate these findings to that the country-level COO appeal translates into higher prestige in countries where the economy is less developed.

Further, this paper had its emphasis on how Finnish COO translates to the level of the category-specific image, that is, to natural skincare. Taken the intrinsic elements of the country-level Finnish COO to be those of design, innovations, and technological quality, relatively strong differences and nuances are identified in how the Finnish COO translates cross-culturally for the category of natural skincare. Here, the study essentially
imposes for the Halo-effect from country-level to category-level to translate only partially and differently across global markets.

The Korean consumers perceive the Finnish nature as pure, thus a safe and natural source of product ingredients. Relating that consumer perceptions of the category essentially include the purity and naturality of ingredients, there is an identifiable, positive inference between the Finnish COO and consumer perceptions in the category of natural skincare. Further, the perceptions of product advancement and safety of use were found, relating to consumer trust for the Finnish COO in the category. Thus, it may be argued the Finnish COO support the usage benefits and values among the Korean consumers, namely the perceived healthiness, the reduced exposure to chemicals, and ingredient safety. Conclusively, the Finnish COO appeal may be used to differentiate a brand, and hence, invoke consumer preference among the Korean consumers. Importantly, the purity of Finnish nature and product ingredients may reduce uncertainties for unknown products and help to fulfill consumer need for detailed information of the product origins. Accordingly, one may condense that the perceptions among Korean consumers relate to the reduced uncertainty, trust, healthiness, and quality, hence affecting that the Finnish COO forms a Halo-effect.

However, the findings propose that the positive value added by the Finnish COO might be limited to the younger consumer segments, whilst the older generations were out of the scope of this study. Here, it must be acknowledged that the knowledge and familiarity of Finland on a country level affects how perceptions translate to perceptions on the product category level. As is argued that Korea has relatively recently experienced a period of economic growth and due to this, relatively rapid expansion of Western and European brands into the market, consumer perceptions may in reality have intergenerational lines, with the older generations relatively less familiar with Finland as a country of origin (Inglehart, & Welzel, 2005).

When compared with the positive value-adding impact of the Finnish COO to the Korean consumers, this study proposes different, even opposing impact for the Danish consumers: Essentially, the Finnish country level appeal is perceived positively regarding the intrinsic elements, while the inferences do not similarly correspond to a preference on the level of natural skincare category. This was found to be related to two reasons. First, the Danish consumers prefer domestic products in the category, and hence, have loyalty for the Danish origin in natural and organic products, regardless of the product category. This is both contradictory and supportive to the Inglehart’s (1997) studies, as the Danish consumers appear traditional in their ethnocentrism. Hence, this relates to the Steenkamp and de Jong (2010)’s finding that traditional values are shown as higher preferences towards local products than global products. Particularly, the current
study identified the Finnish COO to be perceived as foreign, unknown, and not as strongly related to a natural category when compared to the Danish origin. From this one may derive further that the value-adding impact of a COO appeal is not only dependent on consumer knowledge or geographical closeness to the particular country but also dependent on the relative strength of the category-specific COO as compared to other COO appeals within the same category. Due to this overriding traditional value, and hence that the Danish consumers do not particularly perceive Finnish to be knowledgeable of the product benefits and quality, the findings consequently demonstrate that no particular value is to be added with the Finnish COO in the category of natural skincare in the Danish market context.

Secondly, thus inseparably related to the preference for domestic products among the Danish consumers, the study found the Scandinavian supernational COO appeal to be perceived more positively compared to the Finnish COO appeal in the category. The Scandinavian COO appeals to the Danish consumers due to the consumer knowledge, and perceptions of cultural closeness, heritage. Combined with the strong presence of natural and organic labeling across various product categories, the strength of the perceptions imposes a direct impact to that the more culturally close the product origin is, the stronger the preference for consumers to opt a particular brand in the category of natural skincare. In comparison, the Korean consumers did not particularly perceive the supernational, Scandinavian appeal as attractive due to the vagueness of the concept. By comparing these findings, one may clarify that the domestic preference and ethnocentrism among the Danish consumers is the primary reason for the Finnish COO appeal not to be a value-adding element in the Danish context.

Following the earlier mentioned, the current study established that there exist differences in how the country of origin affects consumer preference in the category of natural skincare. However, we may also argue that there exists no clear relationship between national culture and perceptions of COO: This was especially in that the Danish prefer domestic over foreign products, whereas the Korean consumers perceived Finnish origin as particularly appealing and even to a degree as having prestige.

The current study provides an interest for further inquiries to investigate the Finnish COO appeal in the context of other countries to establish the impact of Finnish COO and wider patterns in whether there exists a relationship between asymmetry in the country’s economic development, and perceptions for Finland as advanced and prestige origin compared to other countries. That is to particularly establish whether cultural and economic distances influence consumer perceptions for a COO appeal in countries, where the process towards postmodern and -materialistic values remains ongoing. In the category of natural skincare, the
interest essentially consists of empirical research into differences among the COO appeals in order to more accurately establish the countries of origin that provides the most value in the category of natural skincare, considering the growing size of the given market in Asian countries, and hence, the increasing global connectedness of the younger generations and the rising purchasing power of Asian consumers as particular motives to enter these markets. In the Danish market context, the interest would particularly be the comparison between other product categories of both Finnish and Danish origin to establish the width of the domestic preference among Danish consumer across various product categories.

6.3. Global Branding

The current study established consumer perceptions regarding natural skincare and the Finnish COO appeal both have similarities and differences among the young adult female consumers in Denmark and Korea. With these findings in mind, this section will discuss global branding in the category, and ultimately provide a managerial contribution for the case company Supermood.

Based on the identified similarity in consumer perceptions, usage benefits and values cross-culturally, this study condenses that there are a globally recognizable value proposition and competitive edge for natural skincare category: That is, the products provide the consumer with similar health- and beauty-related benefits of both functional and symbolic quality. Thus, the rising concern for the environment, especially the use of microplastics in cosmetics provides natural products a symbolic attribute for competitiveness over the conventional products in the category.

Overall, it may be concluded that a competitive position in the category of natural skincare may be established by partially standardized, partially localized strategies: Conceiving with Merz et al. (2008) and Alden et al. (1999), this essentially means creating a glocalized approach as a blend of both globally disseminated and locally shared cultural symbols. Firstly, with the utilitarian needs and functionality of the products for the consumers, brand standardization may appear to be justified. In this regard, a common element to be included in the brand appeal consists of functional benefits, and the inclusion of relevant information of the product ingredients as to add on rationality to the appeal.

Product pricing may, in principle, remain standardized due to that while the category is perceived in the middle of the price-quality axis in Denmark, Korean consumers perceive the category as more toward high-end, and are thus willing to pay a premium for natural ingredients compared to Danish consumers. Combined with other marketing mix elements, such as packaging, retail outlets, and the Finnish COO, a higher price
may be used to create a higher-end positioning in the Korean market. Furthermore, it may be that in Korea, there is less competition in the natural skin category, and there is an advantage to position a brand slightly towards premium for differentiation. In Denmark, the natural category and the Finnish COO both were not perceived as justifications for premium pricing. This indicates the need for other value-adding elements in the brand appeal.

Furthermore, it may be proposed that when positioning a brand to the Danish market, the placement is one way to position a brand with added value. This relates especially to the sensitivity of consumer perceptions to comparisons between not only brands in the same subcategory, but also with other subcategories. Therefore, the retail outlets may be chosen to be department and cosmetics stores, and pharmacies, instead of supermarkets and low-cost outlets. For the Korean consumers, the distribution channels may be similar, as also related to creating a premium inference for the brand.

Secondly, the study is conceiving with propositions of Yoon et. al (1996) and Ger and Belk (1996), among other scholars, in that global marketing strategies should be situated within the consumer-product relations and take category-specific variances into close considerations. Thus, the differences in the contexts and category-specific cultural heritage must be recognized in the brand strategy. Namely, in Denmark, the mature market context and strong favoritism for domestic products. In Korea, this implies to the customized skincare practices and long tradition of using herbal and natural products for curing and preserving effects. Hence, also the use of COO appeal is perceived differently.

Whilst the products, price and placement of the product may be used as relatively standardized in both Korea and Denmark, the current paper proposes that for promotional communications, a localized strategy is supported to establish a brand presence, especially in context-relevant information sources. Hence, this study may be used to propose communications as the most culturally sensitive elements in the marketing mix: This complies with Alden et al. (1999) in the sense of positioning the brand to the local cultural meanings, cultural norms, and identities. While the Korean consumers are more acceptable and to a degree place value to Western brands and marketing appeals in the English language written in Korean alphabet in cosmetics (Nelson & Paek, 2007; Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010), the consumer needs for product and ingredient information indicates localized labeling to be beneficial. Hence, the cultural heritage may be taken into consideration by emphasizing the product capabilities to preserve and secure the skin from external factors, and hence, the holism of the product concept as relevant selling points. As for the Danish consumers, English is not preferred. As a result, the product labeling would ultimately be localized in the Danish market,
hence product effectiveness may be emphasized to appeal to their needs for instant gratifications and easiness of the user experience.

In the category of natural skincare, this study implies that use of COO appeal does not constitute an element for brand standardization. As was discussed in the previous section, the Finnish COO may provide more benefits to brand equity in the Korean market, as compared to Danish. Hence, it may be used in communications to also to invoke trust and create a point of difference in the market. In Danish market, more central in the appeal would be other product benefits, leaving the Finnish COO to the level of labeling.

6.3.1. The Case of Supermood

Particularly in the Korean market, the digital platforms such as ingredient review applications, beauty YouTubers, and TV beauty talk-shows could be considered as pull-channels, and hence, as collaborative partners when launching the products to the Korean market. Provision of ingredient information in a customized-form for the digital ingredient platforms is thus to create consumer confidence for the product attributes and to promote transparency of the brand origins. This has a value to alleviate Koreans’ uncertain attitudes towards the category and the Finnish COO. The communications approach should consider the product effectiveness and benefits as more persuasive elements. Product lines may be presented as all-inclusive for the consumer to use as customized combinations. Thus, the Finish COO could be used as a legitimacy-enhancing element, and hence, introduced in as to evoke amicable attitudes among Korean consumers. In this, the use of Finnish celebrities who have built friendly images in Korean media can be used. Furthermore, sponsorships for product reviews and blind-tests in popular beauty talk-shows could be one strategy to introduce the product to the market. However, these are to be well-thought to ensure that the genuity remains intact due to the consumer mistrust toward PPL, meaning product placement, which has become also a popular way of indirectly advertising in Korea.

Upon introducing the brand to the Danish market context, Supermood may similarly seek a presence in relevant editorials, product comparisons, beauty blogs, and vlogs. The difference to Korean strategy is hence that the brand should be visible in relevant contexts to ensure exposure, and that the brand information is available during the phases of the individual decision-making process of the consumer. This could refer to concentrating on the attractiveness and information provided at the point of purchase in stores, and as content marketing through influencers on social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube. While these channels are harder to control the company, they are cost-effective and tap to the individualistic, convenience-driven, yet knowledgeable Danish consumer. Further, the product lines are best to be promoted
as three separate bundles to appeal to the Danish consumer with her specific needs. Additionally, Supermood might benefit from entering the Danish market also through beauty studios using all-natural and -organic products, where the products lines could be easily made available to consumers, and hence, provided by the professionals as an affordable alternative to typical premium products sold in such studios. In this regard, market penetration through such horizontal partners would benefit Supermood to gain relevance among the high-involvement, innovator consumers who opt new solutions based on professional suggestions. This hence translates well to the logic of word-of-mouth as an influential source of brand information in the Danish market.

By considering the Supermood marketing mix as suggested for the two markets, we may argue that entering both countries pertain incentive and relative attractiveness for the company. Overall, this study provided the insight that for consumer goods, and particularly in the category of natural skincare, the traditional internationalization models such as Uppsala model does not hold particular relevance. From the consumer research point of view, Supermood’s brand essence, including slightly toward higher-end positioning products and their design and the use of the Finnish COO, may even appear to bring higher value in the Korean market context. Hence, the Danish market pertains relatively more easiness to coordinate operations due to low geographical distance, such as time zones. Both markets, however, are appealing to entry with the proposition of holistic beauty.

Based on the current study, one may conclude that as contrary to many studies on traditionally internationalizing consumer goods companies, entry to both closer and the distant market is ultimately dependent on the opportunity and product-market fit. The case of Supermood may hereby be used as an example in the area of born-globals and global branding in that while it is possible the conduct business globally from inception, and consumer segments do transcend borders of national cultures, the particularities of market context moderates the pace at which a company can truly exercise standardized strategies similarly across its global markets. From this, born-globals may derive that brand strategy must be carefully reconciled and aligned with the new market context, and the company resources available at the given point of time.

7. Conclusion

This study sought to understand consumers perceptions of the natural skincare category cross-culturally in Denmark and South Korea. A Finnish skincare brand, Supermood, was chosen as a case to situate the study into a real-life context, thus to demonstrate the application of the Finnish COO(country-of-origin) appeal in
two distinctive market contexts; South Korea, a country with strong prevalence of cosmetics and rising interest for natural products; and Scandinavia as a marketing concept, and Denmark, a geographically and economically close market with pro-organic consumers. As for Supermood being a born-global company, the purpose of the paper was to ultimately provide managerial implications to the branding of born-globals in the context of natural skincare.

Inspired by the social contruvistic perspective into global consumer culture and its plurality, this study yielded a triangulation design. Quantitative data of an online survey and qualitative method of focus group interviews were opted to reflect the complexity of consumer research. Furthermore, with the aim of providing an in-depth understanding not reached by a single method, the design addressed the validity and reliability. The survey generated a total of 220 completed sets of answers (101 of Danes and 119 of Koreans), and the analysis was done by descriptive statistics. The two focus group interviews were conducted, and the laddering model was further used in the analysis to generate consumer values and benefits. Furthermore, with the aim of providing an in-depth understanding not reached by a single method, the design addressed the validity and reliability. The survey generated a total of 220 completed sets of answers (101 of Danes and 119 of Koreans), and the analysis was done by descriptive statistics. The two focus group interviews were conducted, and the laddering model was further used in the analysis to generate consumer values and benefits. Furthermore, with the aim of providing an in-depth understanding not reached by a single method, the design addressed the validity and reliability. The survey generated a total of 220 completed sets of answers (101 of Danes and 119 of Koreans), and the analysis was done by descriptive statistics. The two focus group interviews were conducted, and the laddering model was further used in the analysis to generate consumer values and benefits. Moreover, with the aim of providing an in-depth understanding not reached by a single method, the design addressed the validity and reliability. The survey generated a total of 220 completed sets of answers (101 of Danes and 119 of Koreans), and the analysis was done by descriptive statistics. The two focus group interviews were conducted, and the laddering model was further used in the analysis to generate consumer values and benefits.

Research question 1 addressed cross-cultural consumer perception of natural skincare. The findings proposed the trend for preferring natural skincare as essentially a by-product of Postmaterialistic values, whereby consumer individualism in decision-making, personal health, and concern for the environment are reflected on consumer perception and practice in both countries. Given the results, we proposed the existence of a globally transcending consumer segment among young female consumers of natural skincare in Denmark and Korea.

The locally attributable differences were analyzed within the context of cultural pluralism as interconnected factors of socio-cultural and -economic nature. The differences pertain that the definition of the category was found confusing in Korea, whereas it was familiar and less value-adding to Danish consumers. Hence, the finding revealed that information search behaviors and sources differ. Concern for health was proven higher among Korean consumers of natural skincare, whereas personal preference and environmental consciousness had a relatively bigger impact on the Danish counterparts.

Research question 2 focused on the Finnish COO appeal and concluded that the country-level appeal only partially translates to the category-specific effect as a Halo-effect. Hence, the Finnish COO is perceived more
positively in Korea compared to Denmark. Furthermore, the supernational image of Scandinavia was examined as a comparison concept and was acknowledged as more favored in Denmark.

As drawn from the consumer insights, this study proposed overall that the branding in the category of natural skincare should occur through a glocalized strategy, hence reflecting a global positioning with both standardized and localized elements. For Supermood, it was proposed that the standardization of product, pricing, brand name, and visual identity would bring benefits of a global appeal, hence enable a born-global to grow faster on a geographical scale. However, it was proposed due to the socio-cultural differences pertaining to the category and its specific sensitivity to the consumer self, the marketing communications, labeling and distribution choices should remain context-specific. The Finnish COO did not account for justification for standardization, as it may add value primarily in the Korean market.

7.1. Contributions, Limitations & Implications for Future Research

This study sought to contribute to the existing literature with the following: Firstly, we established a deeper understanding of global consumer cultures and the cultural pluralism as identified by using the GCC theory as an umbrella perspective supported by Hofstede and Inglehart, thus contributing to the global consumer culture theory in the context of personal care products as a typical culturally sensitive product category (Nelson & Paek, 2007).

Secondly, as for the focus on consumers in Denmark and Korea, this paper provides a contribution to the existing natural skincare marketing literature by inducing a cross-continental perspective to include both European and Asian countries. Therefore, we complement previous studies conducted almost exclusively in western countries (Kim & Seock, 2009; Liobikienė & Bernatonienė, 2017; Kim & Chung, 2011).

Thirdly, this study opens a field of research into the Finnish country-of-origin appeal for consumer goods, particularly natural skincare. With this understanding, the study has a unique way of addressing the lack of research conducted prior to the area (Gabrielsson, 2005; Ryan, 2008).

Lastly, this study provides insights into the literature of born-global branding strategies, especially the standardization and adaptation of the brand image upon entry to geographically dispersive markets (Gabrielsson & Kirpalani, 2012).
With the mentioned contributions, this study is subject to limitations that are proposed to be of interest for future inquiries: Since this paper discusses born-global branding from a consumer culture perspective, the level of corporate strategy on a wider scale is left out of the scope. In addition, complementing the findings of this study with additional perspectives regarding the organizational readiness, administrative, economic and financial factors would provide a comprehensive perspective leading to sufficient knowledge for managerial usage.

Consequently, this paper relies on a single case organization and to a limited empirical data. Moreover, it does not provide the ability to make wider generalizations to be used in marketing as is or induce strategies to be implemented on a truly global scale. Only through repetition of the study among different cases, with bigger data collections and cultural groupings would enable a wider set of implication, both those theoretical and managerial.

Lastly, this study is subject to situational conditioning to a set time, perspective, and data inquiry, and we acknowledge that changes in contexts would have an impact on the findings. Adding on to the earlier, the external reliability of this study would be improved by repetition across several country markets, larger sample sizes, longitudinal designs, and the use of multiple case companies.
8. Bibliography


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8.1. Footnote

Footnote 1: p.78. MBC every1’s hit show ‘Welcome, First Time in Korea?’, epi.17-20. The show depicts a group of visitors from foreign countries visiting various places in Korea. The latest episodes of Finnish panels scored the highest ratings, an audience of 5 percent, according to Total National Multimedia Statistics.
9. Appendix

9.1. Company Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turnover (1000€)</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in turnover %</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>78.1%</td>
<td>77.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue (1000€)</td>
<td>-33</td>
<td>-59</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit/ (loss) %</td>
<td>-30.5%</td>
<td>-28.1%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Product Lines

Egoboost series is described as follows: “All Egoboost products are strong and effective. A quick fix, if you will. They contain hand-collected Chaga mushrooms that grow on birch trees and contains massive amounts of antioxidants”

Beauty sleep series is to enhance a natural process of beautification: “Skin cells do their repair work most effectively at night when they boost the production of collagen, destroy harmful free radicals, and rectify cell damage.”

Youth Glo aims to provide the youthful, fresh and healthy look: “products provide the adult body with a much-needed vitality, energy, and youthful skin glow. They are peeling and pampering, and they give the skin radiance”

(Source: Supermood.fi)
9.2. Research Design

![Research Design Diagram]
9.3. **Survey Questionnaire**

Hello! This is a survey for Danish women between ages 18-35 who use skincare cosmetics. The purpose of this survey is to ask You about Your opinions regarding skin care cosmetics products, especially organic and natural. This survey is part of our Master’s thesis at Copenhagen Business School, and will be used for the purpose only. By referring to natural and organic products, we mean products that are made with environmentally-friendly sustainable ingredients, without synthetic ingredients, use of pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, toxic materials, genetically modified organisms or ionizing radiation. The duration is about 5 minutes. Again, the answers are anonymous and will be used for the purpose of our study only. We are ever grateful for your answers!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My age is:</td>
<td>Under 18&lt;br&gt;18-35&lt;br&gt;Over 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I am:</td>
<td>Female&lt;br&gt;Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Do you use natural skin care products?</td>
<td>Yes&lt;br&gt;No&lt;br&gt;Don’t know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Do you consider price as most important for your choice? <em>(if you say yes on #3)</em></td>
<td>Yes&lt;br&gt;No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5a</td>
<td>Have you considered buying natural skincare cosmetics? <em>(if no/ don’t know on #3)</em></td>
<td>Yes&lt;br&gt;No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5b</td>
<td>I have not considered buying natural skincare cosmetics because: <em>(if no to #5)</em></td>
<td>Price too high&lt;br&gt;Don’t trust the natural labelling&lt;br&gt;No interest or ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5c</td>
<td>“I would be willing to pay a higher price for natural skin care products” <em>(for those answering #5)</em></td>
<td>Yes&lt;br&gt;No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Buying natural cosmetics make a good impression on other people</td>
<td>Completely agree&lt;br&gt;Agree&lt;br&gt;Neither Agree or disagree&lt;br&gt;Disagree&lt;br&gt;Completely disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I find the following sources of information relevant for my choice of skin care brand <em>(may choose several)</em></td>
<td>Family, Friends, Social Media*(Instagram, FB, Pinterest, Twitter etc.)<em>, Well-known brand, Fashion bloggers, Magazines, In-store advertising</em>(flyers, samples, Product display)*, Product reviews, Celebrity endorsement, Beauty professionals <em>(salespeople, technician)</em>, Organic certificates, Ingredient review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>In general, I don’t mind that the skin care brand brand name is of foreign origin</td>
<td>Completely agree&lt;br&gt;Agree&lt;br&gt;Neither Agree or disagree&lt;br&gt;Disagree&lt;br&gt;Completely disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I feel like my skin care routine is typical and similar compared to my peers</td>
<td>Completely agree&lt;br&gt;Agree&lt;br&gt;Neither Agree or disagree&lt;br&gt;Disagree&lt;br&gt;Completely disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Agreement Options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Skin care products contribute to my overall self-esteem:</td>
<td>Completely agree, Agree, Neither Agree or disagree, Disagree, Completely disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I believe that youthful and glowing skin is valued and perceived beautiful in my social circles</td>
<td>Completely agree, Agree, Neither Agree or disagree, Disagree, Completely disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>In general, I am not hesitant to try out new or unfamiliar skin care brand products / brands.</td>
<td>Completely agree, Agree, Neither Agree or disagree, Disagree, Completely disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I believe my skin care routine is an important part of my self-care and lifestyle.</td>
<td>Completely agree, Agree, Neither Agree or disagree, Disagree, Completely disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I believe skin care is important to combine with healthy lifestyle, diet and good night sleep.:</td>
<td>Completely agree, Agree, Neither Agree or disagree, Disagree, Completely disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>To what degree do you agree with the following statements:</td>
<td>Completely agree, Agree, Neither Agree or disagree, Disagree, Completely disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>&quot;I believe that natural skin care products are of higher quality&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>&quot;I believe that natural skin care products are healthier for my skin&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>&quot;I believe that using natural skin care products are better for the environment/ an ethical choice&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d)</td>
<td>&quot;I believe that natural skin care products are a trendy choice&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Name three words that pop into mind when a product label says: &quot;Made in Finland&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Imagine: You are at a store and found a skin care product and the label says: “beauty from Finland”. Which of the following factors do you believe to be true for the product:</td>
<td>high quality, innovation, luxury, sustainable, animal welfare, safety of usage, natural/pure ingredients, value-for-money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>What do you think about natural skincare products made in Finland?</td>
<td>Very good choice, Good choice, Nor good nor bad choice, Bad choice, Very bad choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>What do you think about natural skin care products made in Scandinavia?</td>
<td>Very good choice, Good choice, Nor good nor bad choice, Bad choice, Very bad choice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 9.4. Theoretical Concepts of Research Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs/variable</th>
<th>Question Items</th>
<th>Theoretical concept</th>
<th>Type of data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>User status</td>
<td>Do you use natural/organic skin care products?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Categorical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I would be willing to pay a higher price for natural skin care products”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have not considered buying natural skincare cosmetics because: (if no to #5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price sensitivity for natural product users/ non-users</td>
<td>Do you consider price as most important for your choice? (if you say yes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buying natural cosmetics make a good impression on other people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I find the following sources of information relevant for my choice of skin care brand (may choose several):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In general, I don’t mind that the skin care brand brand name is of foreign origin</td>
<td></td>
<td>Categorical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>I feel like my skin care routine is typical and similar compared to my peers</td>
<td>McCracken (1986) and Inglehart (1997) Hofstede (1980), Han et al., (2010),</td>
<td>Scale (ordinal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Luxury skin care products contribute to my overall self-esteem more than mainstream brands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I believe that youthful and glowing skin is valued and perceived beautiful in my social circles:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In general, I am not hesitant to try out new or unfamiliar skin care brand products / brands.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer attitudes about natural/organic skin care</td>
<td>I believe my skin care routine is an important part of my self-care and lifestyle.</td>
<td>Steenkamp &amp; Jong (2010, Alden et al., 1999, McCracken (1989), Han</td>
<td>Scale (ordinal)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I believe skin care is important to combine with healthy lifestyle, diet and good night sleep

To what degree do you agree with the following statements:

“I believe that natural/organic skin care products are of higher quality”

“I believe that natural/organic skin care products are healthier for my skin”

“I believe that using natural/organic skin care products are better for the environment/ethical choice”

“I believe that natural skin care products are a trendy choice”

**Finnish country-of-origin (general & within the category)**

| Name three words that pop into mind when a product label says: “Made in Finland” | Ryan (2008), Josiassen (2013) | Qualitative |

**Imagine:** You are at a store and found a skin care product and the label says: “beauty from Finland”. Which of the following factors do you believe to be true for the product

| What do you think about natural skincare products made in Finland | Categorical (nominal) |

**Category-origin image with supernational level/national level**

| What do you think about natural skin care products made in Scandinavia? | Scale (ordinal) |
9.5. Survey Results

9.5.1. Figures 1-25

Figure 1. (Denmark)
Danish Natural Skincare User Status

- Yes: 67.3%
- No: 18.9%
- Don’t know: 13.8%

Figure 2. (Denmark)
Q7. Information sources

- Friends: 80.7 (DK), 73.9 (Non-users)
- Social Media: 546.5 (DK), 56.5 (Non-users)
- Blog: 257.7 (DK), 257.7 (Non-users)
- Influencers: 25 (DK), 19 (Non-users)
- Friends: 34.7 (DK), 19 (Non-users)
- Product reviews: 69.3 (DK), 61 (Non-users)
- Celebrity effects: 19 (DK), 19 (Non-users)
- Bottle price: 40 (DK), 40 (Non-users)
- Organic care: 56 (DK), 53.8 (Non-users)
- Ingredients rev.: 21 (DK), 21 (Non-users)

Figure 3. (Denmark)
Q15

a. “I believe that natural skin care products are of higher quality”

- Completely disagree: 0 (DK), 5 (Non-users)
- Disagree: 5 (DK), 6.1 (Non-users)
- Neither: 25 (DK), 30.6 (Non-users)
- Agree: 30 (DK), 40 (Non-users)
- Completely agree: 25 (DK), 25 (Non-users)
Figure 4. (Denmark) Q15

b. “I believe that natural skin care products are healthier for my skin”

Figure 5. (Denmark) Q15
c. I believe that using natural skincare products are better for the environment/ethical choice

Figure 6. (Denmark) Q15
d. I believe that natural skin care products are a trendy choice
Figure 7. (Denmark)
Q17. “Beauty from Finland”

Figure 8. (Denmark)
Q18-19. What do you think about natural skincare from Finland vs. Scandinavia?

Figure 9 (Korea)
Korean Natural Skincare User Status
Figure 13 (Korea)

Q15b. I believe that natural skincare products is healthier for my skin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Users(KR)</th>
<th>Non-users(KR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completely disagree</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither or</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agree</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely agree</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
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Figure 14 (Korea)

Q15c. I believe that using natural skincare products is better for the environment/ethical choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Users(KR)</th>
<th>Non-users(KR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completely disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither or</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agree</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely agree</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15. Korea

Q17. “beauty from Finland”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Users(KR)</th>
<th>Non-users(KR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Quality</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxury</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal welfare</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety of use</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural/pure L.</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for money</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 16
Korea

Q18-19. What do you think about natural skincare from Finland vs. Scandinavia?

- Finnish COC (KR users)
- Finnish COC (KR non-users)
- Scandinavian COC (KR users)
- Scandinavian COC (KR non-users)

Figure 17
Comparison: Denmark & Korea

Q5b. I have not considered buying natural skincare because:

- Non-user (DK)
- Non-user (KR)

Figure 18
Comparison: Denmark & Korea

Q6. Buying natural skin care products make a good impression on other people

- Users (DK)
- Non-users (DK)
- Users (KR)
- Non-users (KR)
Figure 19a, b
Comparison: Denmark & Korea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 4 Information Source Comparison</th>
<th>DK users</th>
<th>DK non-users</th>
<th>KR users</th>
<th>KR non-users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Friends(80.7%)</td>
<td>Friends(73.9%)</td>
<td>Product review(58.9%)</td>
<td>Product reviews(63.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Product review(61%)</td>
<td>Product review(69.3%)</td>
<td>Ingredient rev.(51.8%)</td>
<td>Friends(50.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Social Media(56.8%)</td>
<td>Social Media(56.8%)</td>
<td>Organic cert.(44.6%)</td>
<td>Social Media(41.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Organic cert.(53.8%)</td>
<td>Beauty pros.(56%)</td>
<td>Friends(41%)</td>
<td>Ingredient rev.(34.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q7. Sources of information: DK & KR Natural Skincare Users

Figure 20
Comparison: Denmark & Korea

Q9. I feel like my skin care routine is typical and similar compared to my peers
Figure 21
Comparison: Denmark & Korea

Q10. Skincare products contribute to my self-esteem

Figure 22
Comparison: Denmark & Korea

Q12. I am not hesitant to try out new/unfamiliar skincare brand

Figure 23
Comparison: Denmark & Korea

Q.15(a-d) Consumer Attitudes for Natural Skincare
Mean Value Comparison
**Figure 24**
Comparison: Denmark & Korea

Q17. “beauty from Finland”

![Bar chart comparing Denmark and Korea on various attributes related to beauty products.](image)

**Figure 25**
Comparison: Denmark & Korea

Q19. What do you think about natural skin care products made in Scandinavia

![Bar chart comparing perceptions of natural skin care products in Denmark and Korea.](image)
9.5.2. Complete Data Table Presentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>S. Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1 Age 18-35</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 Female</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q3. Do you use natural skin care products?</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>S. Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>n=</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>67.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yes (Users)  
No/Don’t know (Non-users)

Q4. Do you consider price as most important for your choice?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>S. Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n=68, %</td>
<td>n=56, %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14,3</td>
<td>35,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>85,7</td>
<td>64,3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q5. Have you considered buying natural skincare products?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>S. Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n=33</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n=63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24,5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q5a I have not considered buying natural skincare products because:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>S. Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-user(DK)</td>
<td>Non-user(KR)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price too high</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t trust labels</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No interest</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q5b I would be willing to pay a higher price for natural skin care products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
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<th>S. Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n=25</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n=49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>53,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>46,1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Q6. Buying natural skin care products make a good impression on other people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completely disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither or agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Completely agree</th>
<th>S. Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>S. Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users</td>
<td>5,77</td>
<td>1,79</td>
<td>5,77</td>
<td>26,6</td>
<td>61,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-users</td>
<td>4,35</td>
<td>14,3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15,9</td>
<td>47,8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Q7. I find the following sources of information relevant for my choice of skin care brand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Denmark Users</th>
<th>Denmark Non-users</th>
<th>Korea Users</th>
<th>Korea Non-users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>20.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>73.9</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand website</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>14.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bloggers</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-store adverts</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product reviews</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrity endors.</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beauty pros</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic certif.</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingredient rev.</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>34.9</td>
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</table>

### Q7. Top 4 Information Sources Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DK users</th>
<th>DK non-users</th>
<th>KR users</th>
<th>KR non-users</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Friends</td>
<td>80.7%</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
<td>Product review(58.9%)</td>
<td>Product reviews(63.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Product review(61%)</td>
<td>Product review(69.3%)</td>
<td>Ingredient rev.(51.8%)</td>
<td>Friends(50.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Social Media(56.8%)</td>
<td>Social Media(56.5%)</td>
<td>Organic certif.(44.6%)</td>
<td>Social Media(41.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Organic certif.(53.8%)</td>
<td>Beauty pros.(56%)</td>
<td>Friends(41%)</td>
<td>Ingredient rev.(34.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Q8. In general, I don’t mind that the skin care brand name is of foreign origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Completely disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither or</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Completely agree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td>Denmark</td>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>S. Korea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Users</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>7.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-users</td>
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<td>4.35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Q9. I feel like my skin care routine is typical and similar compared to my peers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Completely disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither or</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Completely agree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denmark</td>
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<td>Denmark</td>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>S. Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>19</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-users</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Q10. Skin care products contribute to my overall self-esteem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Completely disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither or</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Completely agree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>S. Korea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Users</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>42.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-users</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q11. I believe that youthful and glowing skin is valued and perceived beautiful in my social circles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>S. Korea</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>S. Korea</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>S. Korea</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>S. Korea</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>S. Korea</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Users</strong></td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-users</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>4.17</td>
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</table>

Q12. In general, I am not hesitant to try out new or unfamiliar skin care brand products / brands.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completely disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither or</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Completely agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
<td><strong>S. Korea</strong></td>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Users</strong></td>
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<td>8.9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-users</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q13. I believe my skin care routine is an important part of my self-care and lifestyle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completely disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither or</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Completely agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
<td><strong>S. Korea</strong></td>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
<td><strong>S. Korea</strong></td>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Users</strong></td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-users</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q14. I believe skin care is important to combine with healthy lifestyle, diet and good night sleep

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completely disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither or</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Completely agree</th>
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<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
<td><strong>S. Korea</strong></td>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td>3.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-users</strong></td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q15. To what degree do you agree with the following statements:

a. “I believe that natural skin care products are of higher quality”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completely disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither or</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Completely agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
<td><strong>S. Korea</strong></td>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Users</strong></td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-users</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. “I believe that natural skin care products are healthier for my skin”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completely disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither or</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Completely agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
<td><strong>S. Korea</strong></td>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
<td><strong>S. Korea</strong></td>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Users</strong></td>
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<td>1.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-users</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. “I believe that using natural skin care products are better for the environment/ an ethical choice”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completely disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither or</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Completely agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
<td><strong>S. Korea</strong></td>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
<td><strong>S. Korea</strong></td>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-users</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

d. “I believe that natural skin care products are a trendy choice”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completely disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither or</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Completely agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
<td><strong>S. Korea</strong></td>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
<td><strong>S. Korea</strong></td>
<td><strong>Denmark</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Users</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-users</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Q16. Name three words that pop into mind when a product label says: “Made in Finland”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Quality</td>
<td>Image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Ethics</td>
<td>Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Advanced</td>
<td>Other wording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D, “throughout”</td>
<td>Clean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>67 pure, fresh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavian</td>
<td>nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minerals, purity</td>
<td>51 natural, nature-oriented, nature-friendly, forest, tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palé &amp; dry skin</td>
<td>foreign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean, sustain.</td>
<td>19 rare, curious, not explored, scarcity, not famous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decent, okey</td>
<td>reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown/unfamiliar</td>
<td>responsible, integrity, animal welfare, safe ingredient(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santal/polar/ice/snow/artic</td>
<td>High quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14 consistent quality, guaranteed quality,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 high price, pricy,</td>
</tr>
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<td>Xyitol</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 gum, dental</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>eco-friendly</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>9 cool</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 positive, nice, cozy, calm, comfortable, easy-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 healthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Northern Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 snow, arctic water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>organic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 Can’t think any, no image, not proven,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Europe, welfare, sauna, sants, strong moisturizer, Nokia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q17. “beauty from Finland”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Quality</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxury</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal welfare</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety of use</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>60.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural/pure ing.</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value-for-money</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q18. What do you think about natural skincare products made in Finland?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very bad choice</th>
<th>Bad choice</th>
<th>Nor good nor bad</th>
<th>Good choice</th>
<th>Very good choice</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S. Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Users</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-users</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q19. What do you think about natural skincare products made in Scandinavia?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very bad choice</th>
<th>Bad choice</th>
<th>Nor good nor bad</th>
<th>Good choice</th>
<th>Very good choice</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S. Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Users</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-users</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 9.6. Focus Group Participants Profile

1. Danish Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Student/ Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Student /worker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Korean Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Duration of living in Denmark</th>
<th>Total duration of living out of Korea</th>
<th>Average Health / Environment consciousness*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>2-year(US)</td>
<td>4.5/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>1.5-year</td>
<td>7-year(US)</td>
<td>4.5/2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Tour guide</td>
<td>2-year</td>
<td>4-year(Germany)</td>
<td>2.5/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
<td>2.5-year</td>
<td>6-year(UK)</td>
<td>4.5/3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Designer / Student</td>
<td>2-month</td>
<td>4-year(UK)</td>
<td>4.5/4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Average Health /Environment consciousness*: from Appendix 9.7. Interview guide question #5.1-4
9.7. Focus Group Interview Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-1</td>
<td>Do you use natural skincare? why or why not?</td>
<td>Survey Question(SQ) 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>What is the meaning/definition of natural skincare product to you? what makes it natural in your opinion?</td>
<td>Research Question(RQ) 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>Is there a socially agreed definition of natural skincare in your country?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>Do you know any natural product related certification in your country? Do you think it is trustworthy?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>What is the meaning of using natural skincare to yourself?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Which feature do you like the best?</td>
<td>RQ1. Laddering model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What is most important feature to you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What does the feature do to you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Is there any emotional benefit/feeling?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What does the benefit/feeling do for you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>Who do you think natural skincare product suits the best? which kind of consumer will be benefited the most from using natural skincare?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>Do you use ingredient reviews before buying natural skincare? why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2. Tell about the last time you purchased natural skincare (Or new skincare brand)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-1</td>
<td>What were the 2 most crucial elements of your decision?</td>
<td>Laddering model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Why are those important?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Why do you need the feature?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-In what way it benefits you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-2</td>
<td>Where did you get the information before buying the product?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3. Impression, self-esteem, skincare routine</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1</td>
<td>Do you think buying natural skincare affects your image/impression to other people? Why?</td>
<td>SQ 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-2</td>
<td>Do you think using skin care products as part of the consumer`s self-esteem? How does it relate? Why?</td>
<td>SQ 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3</td>
<td>Do you think your skincare routine as similar as your peers'? Why?</td>
<td>SQ 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>4. Health and environmental consciousness in natural skincare</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-1</td>
<td>Do you think that using natural skincare is an environmentally friendly choice?</td>
<td>SC 15-c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-2</td>
<td>In which ways you think that using natural skincare makes you and your lifestyle more environmentally friendly? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-3</td>
<td>Do you think using natural skincare is a healthier choice?</td>
<td>SQ 15-b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-4</td>
<td>In which ways do you think that natural skin care is a healthier choice?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>5. Health and environmental consciousness in general:</strong></td>
<td>Health consciousness in Kim&amp; Seock, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree with the statements?</td>
<td>Environmental consciousness in Kim&amp; Seock, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-1</td>
<td>I think that I take health into account a lot in my life</td>
<td>Health consciousness in Kim&amp; Seock, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-2</td>
<td>I think often about whether everything I do is healthy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-3</td>
<td>I am concerned a lot about environmental problems</td>
<td>Environmental consciousness in Kim&amp; Seock, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-4</td>
<td>I try to make environmentally correct purchases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 6. Holistic beauty (Only for Koreans)

| 6-1 | When you hear “holistic beauty”, what comes to your mind? what kind of image is it? what is the definition you think? | RQ3. To test the English slogan of the case company |
| 6-2 | What do you think about the statement, that skincare is related to healthy lifestyle, diet and good night sleep? | SQ 14 |

### 7. Finish COO

| 7-1 | What comes to your mind when you hear made in Finland? | RQ 2. |
| 7-2 | Tell me 2 things that come to your mind when you hear natural skincare product from Finland | SQ 18 |
| 7-3 | What feature(function), quality, price do you assume about the product? What do you expect for the product? | SQ 17 |

### 8. Natural skincare from Finland vs. Scandinavia

| 8-1 | When you hear a natural skincare product from Finland, or Scandinavia, does the product perceive differently to you? | RQ 2. |
| 8-2 | If there is a difference in two national/regional origin in your opinion, what is it? you can describe in adjective or noun. (i.e. positive, negative, better choice, favorable, reliable, safety etc.) and why is it? | SQ 19 |

**Ending and dismissal**
9.8. Meaning of Natural Skincare: Meaning-Value Chain

Figure 26. Danish Focus Group

![Danish Focus Group Diagram]

Figure 27. Korean Focus Group

![Korean Focus Group Diagram]
9.9. Focus Group Transcript

1. Summary of Korean Focus Group Interview

✓ Interviewer: Yujin Jin
✓ Date and Time: 04/20/2018, 2:30-4:00pm
✓ Location: Dalgas Have, Copenhagen Business School, Copenhagen, Denmark
✓ Number of participants: 5(K1, K2, K3, K4, K5)
✓ Language: Conducted in Korean, and coded in English

### Theme 1: Meaning of Natural Skincare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>K3</th>
<th>K4</th>
<th>K5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural skincare user status (level of usage)</td>
<td>User(low)</td>
<td>User(heavy)</td>
<td>Non-user</td>
<td>User(heavy)</td>
<td>User(moderate)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### a) What does “natural skincare” mean for the interviewee?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition in their own words</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>K3</th>
<th>K4</th>
<th>K5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Main ingredient comes from nature(botanical), and is used as a product name”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Natural-oriented ingredient. Not having additives, preservatives”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Natural ingredient. Microplastic free.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Naturally ingredient, no preservatives so that should be kept in a fridge”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No harmful ingredients, Less preservative and simple design”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Precondition and explanation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precondition and explanation</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>K3</th>
<th>K4</th>
<th>K5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using the natural ingredient as a brand name or slogan, like Korean natural skincare brands.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microplastics, addictive should be excluded. Recognized that nature-oriented ingredient could be bad for skin, such as strong botanical oil.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process of manufacturing should be also eco-friendly. No animal testing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having troubled skin, side-effect of ingredients and preservatives is well known</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmful ingredients are the chemical-based preservatives and addictive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Initial confusion in the meaning of natural skincare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial confusion in the meaning of natural skincare</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>K3</th>
<th>K4</th>
<th>K5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Natural or organic in skincare is often shown in marketing, like ads with the female celebrity with good skin and pure image showing the product with some green ingredient, then the company says it is ‘natural’ and people buy it”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The confusion is attributed to the lack of official certificate. Thus, the package should show “which bad ingredient they don’t have, and what kind of natural ingredient is used, and where it came from”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeptical about the eco-friendliness of natural ingredient. “Not that I know of from Korea. But I think European safety standards are very reliable”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have not thought of definition of natural skincare. Dermatological safety is more important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only recognized organic certificate for food, which can be ingredient for natural skincare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### b) Information source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online Product reviews/Ingredient reviews (E-word of mouth)</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>K3</th>
<th>K4</th>
<th>K5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally / Don’t use ingredient reviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use both(including and Hwa hae(mobile app)). Only when considering buying a new product. and Hwa hae(mobile app)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use both(including and Hwa hae(mobile app)). Always check Hwa hae(mobile app) before purchase of skincare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use both(including and Hwa hae(mobile app))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word of mouth recommendation</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>K3</th>
<th>K4</th>
<th>K5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sales representative</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Friends’ opinion</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## c) Natural skincare category perception

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is it good for?</th>
<th>Problematic skin. But eventually it's good for everyone</th>
<th>Sensitive skin</th>
<th>People for skincare problem.</th>
<th>For troubled or sensitive skin.</th>
<th>People seeking anti-aging related skincare problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive effect on your health cause the chemicals can be accumulated in your body in the long term. It's a wise choice.</td>
<td>While admitting it's for the health, she likes to make &quot;a well-informed wise decision&quot; for herself</td>
<td>Saving the earth by banning microplastic</td>
<td>&quot;Facial skin is the indicator of your health&quot;. When her skin feels abnormal she only uses natural product</td>
<td>Simple ingredient helps healthier and younger looking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## d) Cultural effect (social pressure, self-esteem, cultural practices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation of using natural skincare and one's image to other people</th>
<th>Merely for my own pleasure. But &quot;by showing what I use, I can attract more people who have the same interest, so we can bond and share information&quot;</th>
<th>Does not matter</th>
<th>&quot;when I hear someone openly say 'I use natural skincare', it gives me the impression that person is showing off&quot;</th>
<th>Care to the extent to share information</th>
<th>No relation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>part of taking care of ourselves</td>
<td>If the person suffers from skin troubles, than maybe using skincare is related to the persons' self-esteem</td>
<td>No relation</td>
<td>A way of figure out what makes me happy</td>
<td>Taking care of your emotional and physical health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skincare routine</td>
<td>Personalized</td>
<td>Depends and often changes</td>
<td>Personalized</td>
<td>Personalized</td>
<td>&quot;It really depends on many; my daily skin condition, if the weather is dry or windy, my indoor or outdoor schedule or my feeling of the day&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is price important in buying skincare goods?</td>
<td>Not agree nor disagree</td>
<td>&quot;If it has good functions, I would invest&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Affordable price is very important&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;If it has good functions (wrinkle brightening) I would invest&quot;</td>
<td>Willing to invest for better functions (wrinkle treatment)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Theme 2. Holistic beauty

| Meaning of the phrase | Agree with the meaning, but the English phrase doesn't sound right. Heard of it from a Korean herbal cosmetic brand. | ‘holistic’ and ‘beauty’ don’t connect in my head | The phrase doesn’t give any image | "The phrase sounds weird. Of course, I like the definition. But I don’t buy the marketing tactic, saying the holistic beauty can be achieved by buying their products" | "Not intuitive phrase at all for Koreans." |

### Theme 3. Finnish COO

<p>| National image of Finland | Good, safe, nature | Clean and pure ingredient | Clean, safe, not known &quot;Local Koreans would not know so much (about Finland)&quot; | Nature, safe ingredient, foreign | Pure, white, nature, new |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finland in Korean media</th>
<th>Feel friendly to the Finnish men starring in a Korean TV show*</th>
<th>Korean TV show starring Finnish men. “They (the Finnish panel members) seemed very down-to-earth [...] Finland is unfamiliar but watching the show made me want to visit there.”</th>
<th>Xylitol gum advertising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;MBC every1, 'Welcome, First Time in Korea?', epi.17-20.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xylitol gum advertising</td>
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<td>Finnish natural skincare: price range</td>
<td>“Similar as other European pharmacy cosmetics, like La Roche posay.”</td>
<td>Middle range.</td>
<td>&quot;Pharmacy cosmetics prices, like Eucerin&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finnish natural skincare: Expected attribute</td>
<td>Don’t have any image of Finland cosmetics</td>
<td>Not so much expectation, because I trust more of globally known brand including Korean brands.</td>
<td>Simple package, simple design and display. Moisturizing could be nice.</td>
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<td>Comparison to Scandinavian image</td>
<td>I prefer it says exact country name, Finland. I think at least women in 20-30s, women in my age, know where Finland is and have good impression about Finland</td>
<td>&quot;Scandinavia is more effective to catch attentions in the short-term&quot;, although the term is vague.</td>
<td>So far the image of Scandinavia in design, furniture and lifestyle have been much popular than individual country image. inland is more colorful than other Scandinavian product image</td>
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<td>&quot;If the product says ‘beauty from Scandinavia’, I would ask, so where in Scandinavia? I prefer it says exact country name, Finland. I think at least women in 20-30s, women in my age, know where Finland is and have good impression about Finland&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Scandinavia is preferable among older generations (in comparison to Finland, due to the low recognition)” But in the long term, Finnish image would grow so then it will be better use Finland image.</td>
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<td>&quot;Korean natural skincare (brands) always provide the exact region of the ingredient is produced. Like, ‘Green tea from Jeju island’, of innisfree(a Korean cosmetics brand name). And we know where exactly is and we can even visit the green tea farm there. So at least I want to know which country in Scandinavia it is from.”</td>
<td>&quot;Scandinavia is more effective to catch attentions in the short-term”, although the term is vague.</td>
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"Korean natural skincare (brands) always provide the exact region of the ingredient is produced. Like, ‘Green tea from Jeju island’, of innisfree(a Korean cosmetics brand name). And we know where exactly is and we can even visit the green tea farm there. So at least I want to know which country in Scandinavia it is from.”

"Scandinavia is more effective to catch attentions in the short-term”, although the term is vague.

No difference between two origins in cosmetics, because I only use Korean and Japanese skincare.
2. Full Transcript of Danish Focus Group Interview

✓ Interviewer: Yujin Jin
✓ Date and Time: 04/22/2018, 5-6pm
✓ Location: Dalgas Have, Copenhagen Business School, Copenhagen, Denmark
✓ Number of participants: 3 (Participant 1, 2, 3)

Italic letters indicate additional sounds and clauses. Also includes Laughter and giggling as expressions.

00:08 (record of time)
Participants chatting about the weather in Copenhagen (in Danish)... 00:26

Interviewer:
Alright so welcome to my focus group. Thank you so much for your time today. I mean it is the end of the day so I really appreciate it.

Participants (all): You're welcome

Interviewer:
So as you know, I and Johanna are we are writing our thesis about natural skin care and how consumers in Denmark and Korea perceive it differently. So, this focus group will be to see why people perceive it (natural skin care) in such ways. So the questions will be about the same topic as our survey if you have done it, but with time to present your perspectives and opinions, and of course, discuss. It is of course not just one-directional. It will be about an hour, and when you say your opinion, please wait for the other person to finish prior.

Participants (all): Yeah

01:26
Interviewer:
How many of you use natural skin care?

Participant 1
What is meant by natural?

Participant 2 & 3 Yeah

01:39
Interviewer:
Yeah, that is true. So what is the definition in your words? In Denmark, what would you say is natural cosmetics?

Participant 2:
I would say something in relation to not having any preservatives or additives ingredients, damaging ingredients

Interviewer:
So so it’s about the ingredients?

Participant 3:
Yeah, something to do with the ingredients

Participant 1
No no E-numbers, no chemicals that we can't figure out.

Participant 3 Only organic stuff

Interviewer
So in that sense are you using any of natural skin care products, So like lotion, moisturiser or cleansers?

Participant 3
Well I use a lot of the Body Shop (referring to the brand), but I don't know if that is natural.

Interviewer Ok

Participant 2 No I'm not sure

Participant 1
At least they would like us to believe so

All Laughter.. True

Participant 3
I guess I really care about the ingredients and also that they are sourced sustainably..

All Agreement "hmm"

Participant 3
I guess I really care about the ingredients and also that they are sourced sustainably..

All Agreement "hmm"

Participant 3
Yeah I agree but then I don't use anything that says totally organic. I don't think so

Participant 1
No me either unless we count soap I've got a pretty sensitive skin and sometimes I make a homemade my facials mask which is all organic

Interviewer
So I can say that all of you have experienced using natural skin care, right?

Participant (all) Yeah (agreement)

Interviewer
That is one of our questions so what is that meaning of natural skin care to you, so as I can draw an example from Korea, we don't have the whole definition either so everybody is giving different opinions or following what the marketing company tells us
03:35
Participant 2
I think it's much more the same for us because it seems like there are these buzz words in skin care that's so in one minute it's... I can't even pronounce no perfume then it's all organic. They focus very strong on one thing for a time and all the products without this specific ingredient are perceived as good whether or not for at least we know that they can have a lot of harm of ingredients besides that.

Participant 1
Right now I noticed everything you've made now with no extract

All Haha really haha

Interviewer
Is this something that should be good for your skin?

Participant 1
I have no idea

Participant 2
Nobody knows it's bad or not

Participant 1 Natural, hmmm?

04:49
Interviewer
So in Denmark I see a lot of products that have a natural mark on them like the swan. Do you think that relates to the definition when you see it with the product. Do you conceive it as something natural?

Participant 1
Yeah definitely.. I see it as something that is not going to be hurtful for my skin

Interviewer
Okay so the certificate

Participant 1 Yeah

Participant 2
Cause they have some rules and regulations they need to follow in order to get this mark
But at the same time I have no idea what those rules and regulations cater to actually but I trust that it's good!
(Laughter)

Participant 1
But we have no idea!

All: Laughter

Interviewer
So you trust but you basically don't know much of the justifications?

Participant (all) No not really

05:26
Interviewer
But does it affect your purchase decision then If it's the same product but it has the organic label on it?

Participant 3
For me as a student, I am also concerned about the price. So that is also something I maybe think of more when I buy so when I have a job I can afford to buy natural in comparison to the more chemical one. Because I prefer natural for the chemical one. When you are student on one thing costs you fifty kronos and the other hundred and fifty.. so then it is not worth it

Interviewer Yeah, then it's true

Participant 1
Well I would usually do that as well but I have just one too many hideous rashes because I've got pretty skin sensitive skin I mean I can barely use makeup wipes. Because it makes my skin go all pink. So even maybe baby wipes, so I look into it (products I use)

Interviewer
So what do you think people who use sensitive skin do you think they use natural skin care more than others?

Participant 1
Yeah I think so because if it's natural yeah if you have an allergy you might get a reaction but I think it's less likely to make your skin react than something with the chemical

Interviewer: Hmm okay.. So the conventional ones?

Participant 1 Yeah

06:42
Participant 2.
First of all most of the Eco-labeled products should be nonperfume because perfume is one of the biggest issues that cause people with sensitive skin

Participant 1
That is weird I don't have trouble with perfume so is it something to do with other stuff..

Participant 3
I would say for me I am very ingredient focused you can have natural skin care but I actually studied a lot on this because skin care is something I like to a lot. It is a hobby of mine! So I go for something that I know is something that will make a difference on me and my skin. So mostly for me natural is as much of a marketing Ploy as anything else because you can say it has natural ingredients and therefore it's going to be good but it might not make any difference when you put it on. Maybe there are good
natural ingredients but they don't make the difference in your skin

All True

Participant 3
So I would rather go for the chemical one if I know that it is going to work for me

Participant 2
I agree. I don't really care about the buzz words but reviews from those who have tried the products, yeah. Because I can actually get a Feeling whether it's going to work or not. Because we use all those marketing passwords and it will be nice and good, but it won't work on your skin and remove the dark circles under my eyes

Participant 3 Or my wrinkles

All Laughter

Participant 3
It should be doing its purpose! Otherwise I don't care.. Natural ingredients are... A secondary factor

08:19
Interviewer
Okay. So let me ask in this way. You are about to buy skin care for yourself. So it does have to be any natural skin care it can be any skin care product. Where do you get the information? You just mentioned about some product reviews

Participant 3
Yeah I usually check some of the forums or websites that have product reviews on each product. And kinda lot of people do that. So it's easier to get a feel.

Participant 2
I am more likely to go online to find product information then I am to go into the store and have like a representative of the brand.. Because they will tell you Anything! I have bought many expensive products like that and then they ended up being way too harsh for my skin. I feel they are trying to pressure you to buy the product. so I feel it is more genuine 2 like half real people behind this experience.

Interviewer
Does it also include friends?

Participants (all) Oh yeah

Participant 2 Definitely

Participant 3
If I know that a friend of a friend has even used the product I buy because I know it must be good. Yeah over salespeople who do their job by trying to sell you something. And very often these are expensive products

Participant 2
Might be because when they do they get more money at the end! All Laughter

09:34
Participant 1
Especially if it's a good friend, they quite often know a bit about how your body works. Like the first time when you use something you might end up with are harsh. Not the kind you expect. So they know a bit more of what you may need and help you with that.

Interviewer
Yeah. Makes pretty much sense. then you mentioned about that ingredient? Do you track the ingredients?

10:15
Participant 2
Yeah well okay so let's say in skincare there's a lot of ingredients. But I have like a few different ideas about what some different exfoliants do. I read about it online.. Cuz I'm a nerd!

All Laughter

Participant 2
And that's not that I get everything and understand everything but I find it pretty interesting. For me it seems like there are few ingredients that actually make a difference. Few of them actually work. The rest of them are just fakers! So I'm pretty opinionated.

Interviewer
So is there any like ingredient website you go to? or any famous YouTuber who does reviews? because in Korea that is pretty much the fashion nowadays. A lot of people use the ingredient check application. So if you read to bar code of the product, it actually shows which kinda ingredient is based on which regulation.

Participant 1
There is one. "referring to a Danish website". In English it's like chemical check or something. I had it on my phone for a while but then I needed the space for something else.

11:32
Participant 2
I have an issue with them because they do this thing where they are very anti-chemical. And when you think about it that way and you wanna get technical, Everything is chemistry! Water is chemistry. So I just, it feels like they are anti-chemistry but it's more in a marketing Buzz way. It's not.. I don't know. It just gets to my nerves a bit. Because you may be steering people away from products that might work for them and be scarining them off things that could be useful.
Participant 3
I work in a chemical company so I might get fired for this...
But I see that an issue we talk a lot about is how chemical
and chemistry is becoming a scary buzzword.

Participant 2
But it’s everywhere! You can’t get around it, because then
there would be nothing.

12:34
Participant 3
So instead we may say there are some chemicals that
might be harmful, but then again we have to remember that
in EU there are so many strict regulations of what you can
and cannot be in products. But I think it’s a scare tactic.
Like a witch hunt!

Participant 2 I agree

Participant 3
So I am not a fan of that role for chemicals in that sense

13:00
Participant 1
Yeah I mainly used it (referring to the application) to see
whether a product can induce allergies. And whenever it
says “can induce allergies” and there were more than five
of them, I just did not go for the product

Interviewer
Hmm Yeah okey. So there were one natural skin care
product you bought the last time. So I wanna hear what
were the reasons to choose that instead of any other, let’s
say, conventional one? Cause there must be a reason why
you choose the natural other than the other. May be the
function or the philosophy, or anything..? I would like you to
think of two main reasons why you liked that product
better.

Participant 3
Well I used to buy mascara from “referring to a Danish
organic brand”, which is I guess a fully natural makeup
company that do only natural ingredients. Mostly because I
back then a lot of the mascaras were irritating my eyes so I
thought if I buy organic, which is also more expensive than
normal ones, then that would not irritate my eyes. And it
didn’t, so.

Interviewer
So you were expecting less irritation? But does it make a
difference now?

Participant 3
Yeah.. Back then. But now I’m back to Maybeline, so.. So
it’s more like a trial back then when that (irritation) was my
biggest concern.

Participant 1
Yeah I think my last time was the baby wipe experience

All Laughter

Participant 1
When you just wipe it down and your face just goes.. FUM,
all red!

Interviewer Right away?

Participant 1
Yeah, so then I think that I’m not going for that any longer.
So now I use Neutrals (referring to a Danish brand) I think
it’s baby wipes actually.

15:26
Interviewer
And the function of it that you like?

Participant 1
Does not cause me allergies! It’s not the best for removing
makeup but I have adjusted that instead of buying liquid
makeup that would require special remover, I buy minerals
that I can just wipe out.

15:34
Participant 2
Hmm, I try to think when I bought natural skin care. I have
to say I used makeup wipes from England if that counts.
It’s not a Danish brand

Participant 1
It’s okay

Participant 2
It’s a brand called Simple. And I buy it because it works
and they are cheap. Yeah, and they don’t irritate me so I
feel like when you find that product that just. Does what it’s
supposed to do, and it’s cheap, you’re just not gonna
branch into anything else. So I guess those were my
reasons.

Interviewer
So, would none of you say that you prefer natural skin
care, right?

Participants (All): Noo.. Laughter

16:17
Interviewer
That’s okey! I just really wanted to know why. But do you
think let’s say the public discussion, in news articles or in
the media about like the environment or smt like that?
Does it affect people who buy or consider natural skin
care?

Participant 3
I don’t know. I think it’s like certain segments who profile organic and natural stuff like Österbro (referring to a “hip” neighborhood in Copenhagen) people

**Participants (all) Laughter**

**Participant 3**
Like those people who really care about the environment and therefore everything needs to be natural and organic and clean for you and that kind of thing. so for me, it seems like a lot of people care about it but I just feel like that people who are that loud minority and then we only hear their point of view because I don’t feel like Danes in general.. Like we don’t care.

17:01

**Participant 2**
I would say the people that I know who would use natural skin care and things like that, who are people who do it for themselves. Not so much for the environment. I do other things for the environment. But for my skin care, it is for me to feel good. So it’s weird so I actually use Neutral (referring to a Danish personal care brand) for my laundry, and my body wash. but when it comes to my skincare I’m just like I need to get rid of facial wrinkles. like now!

Laughter

**Interviewer**
That’s true. So efficiency matters?

17:36

**Participant 2**
Exactly

**Interviewer**
So at least you can say that’s those kinds of public discussions don’t really affect you so much about your skin care.

**Participant 2**
No one comes to skin care not so much

17:51

**Participant 1**
I think that people who are like a decade younger than us who are starting to use makeup I think they are a lot more affected by that time we are because it has been more in the media now than when we started using skincare. Then it was just like no one talk about it. Haha

**Participant 3**
Yeah then it was just like having a little eye shadow and you just put it on and you don’t care what’s in it, you just put it on!

**Participant 1**
Or my eyes are puffy? My nose is running? Who cares I will grief! (with sarcasm)

All *Laughter*. Yes, true.

**Participant 1**
So I think in the last decade it has become more environmental focused

18:36

**Interviewer**
It could be. Then we mention about skin care but what about like other categories like food do you like those as natural or organic as important?

**Participant 2**
I will always buy organic milk and organic eggs. Can’t always afford the meat.

**Participant 2**
But, I don’t know, I just feel like I can’t buy anything else.. I’m thinking about the cows and the chickens and their miserable lives. I have always gone for those. If I were to choose something I prefer natural or organic, it would be those because of the animal welfare. Which, you know, is weird because I don’t really care about all of it. But I tell myself I’m making a tiny difference

**Interviewer**
Good point

**Participant 3**
I’m also going for the eggs as that was how I grew up. We did not buy like the normal eggs it was always organic. And also meat. I would love to buy organic meat but it’s super expensive. But when I’m done with the school thing and hopefully get a job some day. Then I will be more into buying that meat because of the animal welfare. So meat along with the turkey.

19:54

**Participant 2**
Yeah

All *Muttering about turkey farming*

**Participant 1**
So, my dad does conventional farming so I grew up with conventional farming products.. All *Giggling*

**Participant 1**
I also have a bit of a view into how different kinds of animals live and, it depends on how you define your organic. So if it’s organic eggs as happy animal free range, yes then, definitely I prefer that. If we are talking of cow milk, no, I’m not touching that shit. They are filled with boils, sorry, and they cannot get medicine because...

**Participant 2**
I mean I’ve been drinking it and I don’t have any boils!

Laughter

**Participant 1**
True, yeah, but hmm. Food definitely, but I am very picky which kind of organic it is. And also, so, the term
Interviewer
So, the term organic can also be very different? So there is not a socially agreed definition of organic. Especially, let's go back to skin care. In skin care, how many ingredients and to what extent is organic or natural? I mean it seems like people are little bit confused. What do you think?

Participant 2
We don't know! We have like Ökemark (ecological stamp) for food, but we don't really have the same for think for personal hygiene. We have the swan mark but that does not mean it is ecological.

Participant 1
Oh no.

Participant 3
That means it is environmentally friendly.

Participant 2
It's just rules and regulations what kinfs of chemicals and how much and whatever. Then there is this European Union Mark

Participant 3
Yeah that is that flower one. Well I don't know what it's called but..

Participant 1
So that's the green one that looks like a leaf

Participant 3
Yeah

Participant 2
There is also the one that says eco, but I don't know. You can have something that's not ecological marked and then I guess like some people will think that ekomark represents ecological. So in that sense, maybe labelling is not always right.. Hehe

Interviewer
Okay.

Participant 3
I would say so price. While the product may be good, some cheaper products can be just as good as any. So just because it has the word natural in it, I don't feel the difference so much. I just get rued off because then it's really marketing. I mean it is obviously a marketing tool. Because we can justify the price setting high the price.

Interviewer
What would be the second one? It depends of course.

Participant 2
Yeah, I mean the quality of the product does what it has to do of course, it's important so quality. If I like buying it and then it doesn't do s*** then I'm not going to buy it again. Then I will use something else that has a lot of chemicals in. Like I'm not going to switch it again.

Interviewer
And in this case, you have checked the product reviews already?

Participants
Yes, (always when I buy)
Because there are so many good options it is really hard to make a decision! So like what is good and what is s***.

**Participant 1**
So yeah the same. That's why I'm such a fan of Neutral (referring to a Danish brand) it's not too pricey it's not cheap either and it works. At least those products that I've used so far.. Just works.

**Interviewer** So price and quality.

**Participant 1**
And it does not have the nasty smell of some organic product.. A bit like fresh hay

**Participant 2**
It has to smell like natural. *Laughter*

**Participant 1** Not like that, please.

25:59  
**Participant 2**
I think this is going to sound silly I would try a product if I think it looks pretty.

**Interviewer** Asking about the design?

**Participant 2**
Yeah exactly. There is this one woman who made a line of skincare which has some different equal labels and most of their stuff is organic I think. And I bought a body lotion one time because I thought the bottle was pretty. And also I would say for me function is also very important. Of course I won't know if I don't try it but if it tells me something I need to do, that would be more important.

26:39  
**Interviewer** So by function you mean something that the product said it is going to deliver to your, right?

**Participant 2**
Of course, I will hope that it's going to do that.

**Interviewer** Is it also related to Quality?

**Participant 2**
I guess so but you won't really know that before you try it to see if it actually works. So the how I know could be through online, but friends but also the packaging. Could be through a commercial I've seen online or in the papers or whatever. Although you get kind of lying to them at one point because they're all like "I have the most amazing thing!"

**Interviewer**
Okay, so I'm going to move to the next question. It relates to so if you're buying naturals skin care product. Does it affect your reputation on other people, do you care?

**Participant 3**
*Laughter*. We don't really talk about it like that

**Participant 1**
This is like "oh you have done something for your lashes they look really good, so which brand was it?".

**Participant 3**
But other than that they won't be introducing that I bought this new thing natural. I would be like "where did that come from?"

28:16  
**Interviewer** So for you, it is very neutral doesn't make any difference.

**Participant 3** No not at all

28:51  
**Participant 2**
Well, I have a really good friend who am I writing my thesis with. She worked for the eco- label. And now she said only cares a whole deal about everything. We actually talked about it the other day we met. It's not like she perceives people negatively but in a way, I feel like people who would go for natural and organic products tend to have this idea that they are saved all the chemicals. So maybe it's not so much us, but they will look at us like like what about yourself, your future children or the Mother Earth?

**Interviewer**
That's an interesting point

**Participant 1**
I live in Österbro. I don't usually give a s***, but sometimes when you go shopping they really look at you. They're just standing there with their two kids looking down their noses when you feel your basket. yeah you're judging.

**Interviewer**
So you're influenced by that a little bit?

**Participant 1**
Yeah a bit. I try to just go for the white bottles so they think that's like organic. And that way I found one soap brand that's really suits my hair. Gives my hair some volume which it otherwise would not have.

**All Laughter**

**Participant 1**
And it looks like neutral so I bought it twice.

**Participant 2**
You get judged, haha.
Participant 1
I guess just by going to Netto means you get judged in Österbro.

30:08
Interviewer
But in general taking good care of your skin. Do you think that is part of your self-esteem? Contributing to your self-esteem in a way?

Participant 3
Well yeah you want to have nice skin

Interviewer
And that's for yourself, right?

Participant 3
Also when I look at myself in the future when you get older. People can usually tell how well you take care of your skin while when you were younger. Also, I see it as an investment on yourself and Future Self.

All Giggling

Participant 3
Yeah I have to look at my face haha

Participant 2
I also think it's a way of taking care of yourself by doing something nice for yourself. Like when you go shopping and eat a nice piece of cake. You take care of your skin because it makes you feel good!

Participant 3
Sitting with a facial on. Also very relaxing. Like a personal Spa.

31:31
Participant 1
Exactly, it's something I sometimes relieve stress with. Because I don't like my skin to feel tight and itchy and that's not nice, so I use moisturizer. And I also have this little thing which I believe is fun take snapshots of it. So I do it for myself but also I get a little bit of Comedy out of it. Because then I make strange Clips with a black mask on. Sometimes I just draw on my face with it when I'm alone.

Participant 3
Yeah the facial haha

Participant 2
For myself but also for fun: "I am the radiant today"! if that makes any sense

32:13
Interviewer
What about your skin care routine? Everybody has their own, but you consider yours as similar to people around you like your peers?

Participant 3
Yeah, I guess so we don't use wrinkled cream and stuff. Because we're young. So we don't need to apply the whole... (All Laughter, 32:30)
It's not like we're 45 and you're desperate so you buy like a hundred products

Participant 1
We don't need it. We're young.

Participant 3
So for me, I would say skincare routine is like eye cream and a moisturizer and then a nighttime moisturizer. And facial couple times a week. And also some serum before bed.

Interviewer
Okay

Participant 1
I use I have that black I'm not sure how to say it like cholera mask.

Participant 2
Yeah yeah the one to remove the pores

Participant 2
Yeah yeah the one to remove the pores

Participant 1
I think mine is different haha. I use sunscreen every day

All Laughter

Interviewer
But still similar to others

Participant 1
Yeah

34:52
Participant 2
I think mine is different haha. I use sunscreen every day

All Laughter

Interviewer
But still similar to others

Participant 2
Well, I do. that's pretty unnatural because most people you're never even if it's sunny they wouldn't. But being a bit of a nerd I know all the bad razors that are coming through
the clouds no matter what we do. I also use chemical exfoliants. They tend to make the skin more sensitive which is also a reason sunscreen. So yeah I think I know about products that most people are not as nerdy ask me about it what not know. So I try to spread awareness. (Laughing). That's because if I don't use my exfoliants. I break out still at the age of 28. So yeah I have to do that I guess most people in my age would not because they're done breaking out and being teenagers.

All Giggling

Participant 1
I guess I stopped breaking out when I was 22 or something.

34:52
Interviewer
There are some skin breakouts for adults as well it's a real thing. So I understand. What you're saying natural skin care is an environmentally your choice? Would you agree with that?

Participants No. giggling

Interviewer Why is that?

Participant 3
That is if you were to make a document for making the product from start to finish, we don't really know what happens during the process because you can call something organic while it's not really that much better environmentally. So not really.

Interviewer Okay

36:24
Participant 2
I think the huge problem with personal care products right now is the micro plastics. And they will put that in anything that is by far the most dangerous thing for the environment and the oceans are filled with it. And everything is going to s*** haha. Unless I would say a product with natural label and no microplastic I would by default think that that's some sort of marketing trick.

Participant 3
Then again, what is microplastic and what is not. Again about that the body shop scrub, it has stawberry leaves in it. So it can't be totally with microplastic.

Participant 2
Well sometimes the microplastic is so small you can't really see it. Like it doesn't have to in scrubs, because it's in anything. Toothpaste, that will put in everywhere. All muttering about plastic

37:25
Participant 1
Also because they don't call it microplastic. It's called follete and nobody knows really what that is.

All Muttering for agreement

37:42
Interviewer
So what about you do you think it's environmentally friendly?

Participant 1
Yeah but then again I'm the daughter of a conventional farmer. I also think that if you use the chemistry write as a conventional farmer you have off an less impact on the environment. It depends a lot on the Eco Farmers as well because there is a lot of the bad stuff when it comes to the maneuver of the animals. Even they can kill the field if you put oo much of the s*** on them. And then if you have field flowers, just regular field flowers, those flowers will die.. So that's not good for the environment.

38:44
Interviewer
So let me ask you this way. do you then consider natural skin care as a healthier choice for yourself?

Participant 2
Only if it's natural. I'm called on the natural part

Participant 1
Yes especially on the long run. let's say unless the chemicals can actually preserve us. Laughter

Interviewer
So next up on my scale of 1 to 5. Four sentences about the health and environment one and two are about the environment actually, and the two about health. So first, it doesn't impact my life, second, I think often about it, third is about that you concerned about the environment, and forth, I tried to make environmentally friendly purchase decisions. So where are you located? I just need the number actually..

Participant 3
So for 1 I would say 2, and then 2, I would say one, and three, I would say three.

Participant 2
So for me, I would say 2, the second one is probably a 2. And then the third one is probably three. And I would say three for the last one as well.

Participant 1
Yeah I'm probably 2 to 4. We're so healthy haha. Like suddenly I would be thinking like oh is this natural and is this organic, what about this meat's life quality haha. Haha. The f*** cares. But sometimes.
Participant 2
Yeah, I can only drink organic beer so. All joking (Laughter)

41:33
Interviewer
So, this is the last part actually, about Finland and Scandinavia. The reason is that in Korea the northern countries are more considered as a region instead of single countries because we haven’t had much communication before. So now it is more about the regional concept year. So let’s start with Finland. What comes to your mind when you hear the word made in Finland?

Participant 3
Trees.. I don't really know

Participant 1
That will be like a reindeer as well. I mean, haha. Why would they call ti Finnish if there were no reindeer in the forest?

Participants giggling

Interviewer
Okey

Participant 3
They have a lot of nature, nature, I think.. More than in here (Denmark)

Interviewer
So about when it comes to beauty products? Let’s say you go to Matas (cosmetics store in Denmark) and find a natural skin care brand that from Finland. Whar comes to your mind, and what are your expectations like, stereotype or guess?

43:26
Participant 3
I would guess it's made of natural and organic.. Like stuff, you can find from nature. Not also, not too much since I think it would also be elegant and simple. Not like entirely white. Like still cold colors, not like Italian Dolce & Gabbana.

Participant 1
So yeah.. What was it I thought...

Participant 2
They're not exactly known for skin care. I mean, what are they known for? So, for me it's kinda hard to say what I would expect because.

43:47
Interviewer
There is not so much information, or?

Participant 2
No... They don't really have an image of in that sense

Interviewer
Why is that, what would you say?

Participant 2
I don't know.. They speak funny.. All Laughter

44:02
Participant 3
Well, I would say that Denmark has like an image of doing skin care products and cosmetics products and all that.. At broad. But I have never ever heard of a Finnish skin care or makeup product.

Participant 1
Or if you have, you don't that it's Finnish.

Participant 3
Exactly, we're very like low key. And I'm not really quite sure what they're known for expecting the reindeer. And lakes

44:23
Participant 2
And it's also because we are in the Scandivania, and we relate to Norway, we relate to Sweden, and that's about it.

Participant 1
But also, those three countries are Scandinavian. If you wanna get technical, Finland is not included, it's in the North.

Participant 3
I think Finland identified more with Estonia and Baltic countries because their language is similar, versus they are such an outlier compared to Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Because we have no idea what they are saying.

44:54
Participant 2
And our cultures are different, too.. And I have basically never been introduced to them. So, I don't really know what they can and cannot do

Interviewer
Okey, so when you say ‘not really been introduced’, is that also in a personal level, and media, or in general?

Participant 2
Yeah.. Growing up, may in school they introduced us to Germany, but not really Finland. I've seen something on TV. They always seem drunk and silly.. And running around in the snow. That's what I know about. hahah.

Participant 3
We don't watch Finnish TV-series, we watch Swedish and Norwegian.

All Mumbling for agreement

46:28
Participant 1
You don't really get introduced to them until you're in early 20s or so. And then you're like oh, they've got a f***ing war with Russia, and what, what happened? So yeah, nobody really knows but I kinda just assume that because Finland is remote, things that are made in there must be expensive as well. Because it's so expensive to get anything in there..

Participants **Laughter**

Participant 2
Yeah maybe.. Or probably. Just don't really have an idea for skin care if skin care is something they do well

46:44

Participant 3
Also thinking that Danes are reserved, Finnish people are even more reserved. Those two just totally clashed because we don't know.. They're not the one's saying first like, it would be awkward.. hahah

Participant 1
And also, because Danes can be quite direct, versus Finns can be as well, but they prefer to just not say anything.

Interviewer
So very different personalities and styles as well. So hypothetically, although we don't really have much information based on what we have so far, what are the functions that you would expect? Like you mentioned about the ingredient would be natural, but other than that, the function?

47:23

Participant 3
I feel like the Finnish people are very functional. And I have nothing to base this on. This is just like a stereotypical thing I have in my head. So I would think that the product would have a function. But there would still be quality.

Interviewer
So let's say moisturising is a function and anti-wrinkle for example. So in that sense?

Participant 3
Yeah, especially the moisturising since it is so cold (referring to climate in Finland). They must have knowledge about what winter does to your skin, compared to maybe Southern European. So they know we get that and it f****s up our skin as well.

48:18

So for moisturising, I would go more for that when compared to other

Interviewer **Okey**

Participant 2 That's a good point
Participant 1 That, and sun cream.

**Participant 2 Yeah**

**Participant 1**
They are usually kinda pale like me. Cause they are further from the North than we are.. So, I kinda assume that they must have made something for my kinda skin

48:52

**Participant 3**
Also the redness in the skin.. Like sensitive skin breaks out. So I would trust them with that too. I assume they get the same thing as we do. We're pretty close

**Participant 2**
I just think it's pretty hard.. Because we have no idea what Finland even is, but I would think.

Participants **Laughter**

**Participant 2**
But it's a country.. I think they have much of the same needs as us. Because they are as close to us. Geographically.. And like you said for the skin type. So I would assume that their products would do as much the same as ours do. I know something about Korean skin care by now and those ingredients are way different from anything we would put to our skin here.. Like all that weird stuff. So I would not expect that from a Finnish product. I would expect more natural.

50:14

**Interviewer**
So let's say quality wise, would you expect like higher quality? Other than other products from different countries?

**Participant 2**
I guess so, because I don't conside them like.. They are not a poor country

**Participant 3** No no...

**Participant 2**
I would expect that they have a need for luxury as much as we do. So it might be that they make a selection of both expensive and much cheaper products.

50:38

**Participant 3**
Yeah, I would base it on that they are like any other Scandinavian beauty products. So I would say at leats that they are of good quality.

**Interviewer**
And does it also mean that they are more pricey, then?

**Participants**
Yes. / I would say pretty expensive/ **giggling**

**Participant 2**
Probably hand made in the old cabin somewhere
Participant 1
With probably an old witch making them

All Laughter

Participant 2
Johanna (referring to a common Finnish friend) is going to be so pleased to hear this

All Laughter

51:25
Interviewer
Well, this well leads us to the very last question. So when you hear the natural skin care product from Finland versus Scandinavia. Does the feeling from these two wording come differently to you? And why?

Participant 2
I think for me as a Scandinavian, I have a tendency to trust products from my own region more. As soon as we step outside, like even to Finland, I would already feel like näääh!, I'm not sure about that! Laughter

Participant 1
And I don't understand the text in the back of the package so.

Participant 2
First of all, the names would be really silly.

Participant 1
And technically, we wouldn't be able to say them

52:13
Interviewer
So, you're gonna say it is more trustworthy for you if its Scandinavian.

Participant 2
Yes, I think so. I feel like I know what it is at least

Interviewer
And what about you?

Participant 3
I feel like people have a tendency to be very naturalistic when it comes to products. And thereby people would rather choose products from their own country or neighbor country than ones from other, like a further way country. So if I stand in front of a Finnish and Danish product, I would probably go with the Danish one.

52:54
Interviewer
So what about Scandinavian?

Participants
Haha (that is the region yes). I know right haha

Participant 3
So that too, but maybe not Swedish though

All Giggling

Interviewer And what about you?
Participant 1
More or less the same. If it's Norway, Sweden or Denmark.

53:30
Participant 2
We more or less expect the other Scandinavians to have the same beauty standard as we do, and therefore.. It's more likely that they would produce a product that in my opinion.. That would, you know.. That fits to what I expect from a product. To give me what I perceive as beautiful

Participant 1
Also, this is a relief reactionary thing. When I look at the back of the bottle which I do with new products. I can see that okay this is not Danish, it isn't Swedish and it isn't Finnish. I usually compare the length of the text. And if the finish one is longer than the Danish one I'm like what the f*** are they talking about in that part I'm not getting to know. And then, I will not choose that. Also, I want all the information that I can feel comfortable. I won't it

Interviewer
Yeah, that's true. talk about how Koreans define Scandinavia

57:58
All Giggling. Small talk about US and how people do not know of the Nordics and the language in the Nordic countries, and the history

-End of the focus group-