The Branding of Green Energy

- Creating Brand Equity for Green Energy Companies

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Acknowledgements

When deciding for the topic of my thesis, I knew that I wanted to explore how I as marketer can contribute to the environment. This because it is one of my absolute greatest interests and I furthermore believe that the concept sustainable businesses will become even more important in the future. I found the energy market particularly interesting since the complexity of not having a tangible product would complicate the branding and communication process for sustainable products, something I found intriguing. Hence, I wanted to investigate how renewable energy could be branded and communicated to consumers to achieve a superior place in the minds of consumers' compared to conventional energy. The process has been highly interesting and inspiring, where a great number of people deserves my gratitude for their participation and support for my final project. Firstly, I would like to extent my sincere gratitude to the informants from the different organisations participating in this study; Charlotte Lindevall and Per-Oscar Hedman from Fortum Sweden, Emmy Tollin from GodEl, Magnus Jonsson form Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, and Elisabeth Vansvik from Svensk NaturEnergi. Secondly, I would like to thank Ronja Lidenhammar for your insights regarding my thesis from start to end, the participants of my conducted focus group and especially Michael Sejrbo-Petersen and Tobias Ekman for facilitating this process, and additionally all the respondents who participated in my conducted survey. Finally I would like to thank my beloved family and all my friends who have supported me throughout my entire education. I succeeded because of your support, thank you!

Abstract

[Tags] Marketing, Branding, Communication, Energy Market, Green, Renewable, Consumer Behaviour.

[Purpose] This study aimed to investigate how Swedish energy companies, that are exclusively offering renewable energy to consumers, can improve their branding and communication to create brand equity, with the purpose to increase consumer demand for the renewable energy product.

[Method] The data collection for this study includes both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative data sample consists of four in-depth interviews from different organisations in the Swedish energy market and additionally one conducted focus group of energy consumers. This was supplemented with a quantitative data sample from a smaller survey of Swedish energy consumer including a total of 90 respondents.

[Theoretical Framework] Theories were chosen based on the collected data sample for analysing and understanding the data. This included theories related to marketing with a framework for achieving brand equity, level of involvement and product motivation for communication, and additionally theories regarding consumer behaviour.

[Findings] The findings of this study suggest that energy companies, that exclusively offer renewable energy to consumers, have been insufficient in communicating the benefit of the product. Additionally, the findings suggests that an energy company cannot solely be differentiated by its renewable energy production and further could address different views on energy consumption.

[Conclusion] To create brand equity, an energy brand with a focus on renewable energy needs to combine the benefit of its product with its future vision to explain what it wants to accomplish in relation to the consumer. Furthermore, the company would need to create strong, favourable and unique brand associations through different perspectives in relation to the customers' consumption behaviour.

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1. Introduction

In the first chapter of this thesis I will introduce the reader to the specific purpose and the outline of this study. Including a shorter background presentation of previous conducted research on the topic of the renewable energy market and its consumers. This is followed by a problem statement as well as a definition of the main research question and complementary research sub-questions. The chapter ends with the scope and delimitations for this thesis with a shorter statement in regards to whom this research will be most relevant to and further a description of the entire outline of this thesis and a short explanation of the Swedish energy market.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Climate change and renewable energy in Sweden

The human negative influences on climate change is clear and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) have never been higher (IPCC, 2014a). This increase of GHG emissions, prominently represented by carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane gas (CH_4) and nitrous oxide (N_2O), has been driven by large economic and population growth (IPCC, 2014a). The global population growth has increased the demand in a variety of different sectors, where one of these is the energy sector. In the last decade, a growing energy demand has been one of the most prominent contributors to GHG emission growth (IPCC, 2014b). Electricity and heat production represented 25 percent of the worlds GHG emissions in 2010, where 12 percent was related to buildings (IPCC, 2014b). Energy demand from buildings accounted for 32 percent of the global energy consumption in 2010 (IPCC, 2014b), where residencies could be considered to account for a big share of that consumption. Due to the sectors impact on climate change, higher ambitions and harder restrictions on energy sources are to be expected in the future. Countries of the world are facing a great challenge in the transition towards an energy supply fully generated from renewable sources such as hydro, wind and solar, e.g. green

energy[1]. Due to national and additional global environmental agreements and targets, the energy market is likely to be subject to great changes in the future. Consequently, several countries have initiated emission mitigation goals, and Scandinavian countries have been prominent in their performance (Burck et al., 2016).

Because of its joint Norwegian-Swedish electricity certificate system, Sweden is a country that could be considered to be one of the most eminent actors in relation to renewable energy. The electricity certificate system provides governmental financial support for renewable energy production with the purpose of increasing the production generated from renewable energy sources in a cost-effective manner (SEA & NVE, 2013). Sweden was one of the first countries to open its energy market for competition in 1996 and the first green power products appeared for the consumers (Bird et al., 2013). Since then the transition towards renewable energy has been in progress. For instance, the production of wind generated energy saw an increase by 14 percent during 2014 and governmental support is given to actors that enables installation of solar panels (SEA, 2013). Overall, green energy can be argued to have received much attention in Sweden the last couple of years and energy generated from oil have seen a drop of 70 percent during the time period of 1990 to 2015 (SEA, 2015). The Swedish government has shown proof of ambitious environmental goals in regards to renewable energy. The expressed aim for the country is that half of its energy usage shall originate from renewable energy sources by 2020, a goal already surpassed with a share of 52 percent during 2013 (SEA, 2015). Sweden could thus be seen as a country that is, relative other similar developed countries, well advanced within green energy, and thus of particular interest for the global transition towards a supply of renewable energy. It must however be recognised that the country's geographical position, offers a favourable situation with a great asset in hydro power possibilities. Therefore Sweden has to a great extent managed to transit into renewable energy sources, not only because of its efforts but also because of favourable natural conditions which other similar developed countries do not possess. Consequently it could be argued that Sweden, due to this favourable geographical position, should be even

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[1] Paldino and Pandit (2012) states that green electricity is often referred to as "[…] the generation of electricity from sources that do not place harmful emissions into the atmosphere." p. 379. However, whether a fusion energy source would be considered as environmental friendly is questionable due to its highly toxic by-product, regardless of its low GHG emission contribution. The term "green energy" for this thesis is hence excluding nuclear power and only referring to renewable energy sources such as Wind, Solar and Hydro.

further supplied by green energy considering that the dependence on nuclear power is still very prominent. From a climate perspective, nuclear can be argued to have advantages since there is no GHG emission in its production of energy. There is however arguments that nuclear contributes with indirect emissions and environmental concerns because of nuclear waste management and uranium mining, additionally the construction and maintenance of the power plants is highly expensive (EPCNP, 2007). Swedish energy companies could be seen to have a great possibility and responsibility to accelerate further transition towards more renewable energy sources. A necessity for doing so is nevertheless that the Swedish consumers are actually demanding this green product. This thesis will thus investigate, within the field of branding and communication, how it is possible for a green energy company that is exclusively offering green energy to consumers, to increase the consumer demand for their product.

1.1.3 The green consumer

Sustainable and environmental friendly products, often referred to as green products, has seen a continual increase in demand and as a consequence, increase in production in Sweden during the last couple of years in particular (SEA, 2015 ; Willer & Kilcher, 2009 as cited in Hanimann et al., 2015). It has been found that green products are perceived, depending on category, to have comparable or superior quality to non-green products (Manget et al., 2009) which would be a reason for consumer interest and consumption. Previous findings from Manget et al. (2009) suggests however that 'Energy provider' is not a category where green product is perceived as higher quality compared to more tangible electrical products. Nevertheless, research has also found that this type of rational behaviour of consuming on the basis of better quality for a self-centred purpose is not always the main driver for green consumption. Green products are also purchased for unselfish reasons in sense of universalism[2] and benevolence (Thøgersen, 2011). Hence, both selfish and unselfish reasons might guide the consumer in purchasing a variety of green consumer products. Changing consumer behaviour with an aim to increase the consumption of green products might however be more difficult than just promoting high quality products to a preferable price and pander to the consumers'

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[2] Thøgersen (2011) defines universalism as a concept that "[...] captures concern for the welfare of anonymous others, including future generations, and for nature, including farm animals. In other words, universalism captures concern for the common good." (Tøgersen, 2011, p.1057)

good conscience. Thøgersen (2005) discuss the complications of cultural meaning and social norms that makes it difficult to change consumers' lifestyles to become more sustainable. This because some consumers' might live in cultures where unsustainable behaviour is part of the cultural norm. Thøgersen (2005) gives examples of unsustainable behaviour such as driving cars, flight-based vacation and eating meat. All of which, could be considered as part of everyday life for most people and a standard in the more wealthy parts of the world. Hence, cultural meaning and varying social norms needs to be taken into consideration as to affect consumer behaviour and lifestyles. The energy sector being no exception. From a business perspective, it is thus relevant to explore the consumers' social norms in regards to green energy to understand the different barriers that might hinder an increased interest and consumer demand.

A previous conducted study found that the trusting of an energy brand is one of the most important factors for loyal customers (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2007)[3]. Further findings from Paladino and Pandit (2012) highlights that consumers trust is of even greater importance for an energy company that provides green energy in comparison to a company providing conventionally sourced energy.[4] Consumers would expect evidence to be provided by the company retailing green energy to demonstrate and prove that the company actually is green. Another important factor for energy companies to create customer loyalty that was found by Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2007) were service- and switching costs. Switching costs here refers to the financial and psychological costs that occur as a result of changing energy provider. Hence, with a superior customer service and high switching costs increasing the consumer effort when changing energy supplier, the greater chance for keeping customers loyal. Further, the findings from Paladino and Pandit (2012) suggests that consumers perceives energy as a low involvement[5] and unpleasant purchase, where renewable energy is seen more as a high involvement and luxury purchase. Furthermore, in relation to

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[3] Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2007) defines customers as loyal to their energy provider if "[…] in addition to repeatedly purchasing the company's services, they also hold favourable attitudes towards it." (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2007) p. 2662

[4] *Conventional energy* refers to energy generated from non-renewable energy sources, such as fossil fuels, nuclear and gas.

[5] Involvement refers to what De Pelsmacker et al. define as "[…] *the importance that people attach to a product or a buying decision, the extent to which one has to think it over and the level of perceived risk associated with an inadequate brand choice*" (De Pelsmacker et al., 2013, p. 74). Involvement tends to affect consumers purchase behaviour and is therefore highly relevant for marketing communication (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012).

green energy, several studies has shown that consumers do not see a price premium as a great obstruct, and are willing to pay more for renewable than conventional energy (Rowlands et al., 2003; Vlosky et al., 1999; as cited in Paladino & Pandit 2012). It is thus argued that energy can be seen as both a higher and lower involvement purchase, which entails varying marketing efforts. Positive attitudes towards green energy has previously been found for Swedish consumers by Ek (2005), who concluded that Swedish consumers in general possess a positive attitude towards green electricity in relation to wind power, which could be considered to be one of the dominant generators for future supply of green energy in Sweden.

1.1.4 Problem definition

Governmental support, such as the Norwegian-Swedish electricity certificate, could increase market financial incentives for energy companies to expand the production of renewable energy (Wüstenhagen & Bilharz, 2006) as well as create a price reduction in relation to conventional energy. However, a price premium for green energy seem to exist and the interest for renewable energy from Swedish residential consumer has so far been limited (Bird et al., 2013). As emphasised by Hanimann et al., (2015) current consumer interest and demand, compared to market potential, could be better matched. Furthermore, there has been limited installation of new renewable energy capacity to meet a future demand (Bird et al., 2013), which might be necessary for an increased consumer demand. As mentioned, Sweden is still highly dependent on energy generated from nuclear sources, which represented 43 percent of the total supply in 2013 (SEA, 2015). Hence, the country is still facing great challenges in replacing energy supply generated from nuclear mainly but also to a smaller extent other non-renewable energy sources. From this it can be argued that despite a possibility for growing market within green energy there is still a lack of consumer demand for the product, which would improve the overall ambition to increase renewable capacity.

Marketing efforts, i.e. branding and communication, to promote green energy is often considered as highly important in order to increase consumer demand (Roe et al., 2001; Truffer & Wüstenhagen 2001, as cited in Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez 2012). This since marketing has the ability of increasing consumer awareness of choice as well as understanding of the benefits for purchasing green energy. The Swedish Consumer Agency has measured

and described the presence of environmental arguments in marketing communication for a variety of industries in Sweden and it was found that the energy industry is by far the market with the most frequency and usage of environmental arguments (SCA, 2015a). Most common environmental arguments used for consumer persuasion was versions of arguments related to the future, such as 'the energy of the future', 'future power' and 'future energy development' (SCA, 2015a). Highly recurrent has also been different arguments encouraging the consumer to be 'Smart', and this in relation to 'smart energy consumption' and 'consumers saving energy' (SCA, 2015a). This indicates the great attention to marketing efforts from the majority of the major energy actors in Sweden and their understanding of the importance of communicating green energy for increased demand. However, since the consumer demand and interest remains low, communication efforts as of current, could be perceived as inadequate.

In absence of financial incentives for the consumer, visible branded symbols, trust and involvement has the possibility of increasing consumer demand for green energy (Hanimann et al., 2015). Creating and executing effective and successful marketing strategies for green energy could however due to the intangible nature of the product be particularly challenging. Previous studies show consumer doubtfulness of receiving the green energy they actually purchased, and further emphasises the importance of consumers' trust for the energy brand (Paladino & Pandit, 2012). Environmental qualities are often not directly visible to the consumer and must, according to the findings of Hanimann et al., (2015), be made clear by branding and labelling and beneficially something that socially would signal the consumers' choice of green energy to others. This is seen from the perspective of the consumer choosing an energy supply company that will deliver energy for the residence, and thus not actual tangible products such as installation of solar panels for residential use. The difference between conventional and green energy will in this case not be perceptible, where consumer transition towards a consumption of a green energy supply will not implicate an increased quality of the delivered product. The possibilities for actors to differentiate their product is limited, where the only difference between conventional and green energy is found in the production. Previous conducted research emphasises the importance of communication for environmental concerns with psychological benefits, where the consumer will experience an

intrinsic well-being such as good conscience due to a green consumption choice and additionally increased positive consumer attitude towards an energy brand after exposure to natural imagery (Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012). For an energy company to position its brand in a favourable position compared to its competitors, relevant consumers associations with the brand needs to be identified (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2007). However, there has been limited research conducted so far in regards to how green energy companies could use marketing to increase sales and consumer demand for the product. An increased demand could contribute to an accelerated transition towards an energy supply that is purely generated from renewable sources and extensively decrease greenhouse gas emission. Energy companies that are exclusively offering green energy to consumers, hereinafter green energy companies, could increase the demand for their product by improving their branding. The objective for this thesis is thus to investigate how Swedish green energy companies can improve their branding and communication efforts, increasing the consumer demand and thus accelerating the transition from conventional to green energy. This thesis sets out to answer the followed stated *research question*:

- **How can green energy companies create brand equity to increase the demand and interest for their product?**

With the following sub-questions:

- *How can the consumption of energy be viewed from different consumer perspectives?*

- *How does the green energy product differ from the conventional from a consumer perspective?*

1.1.5 Focus and delimitation

Several different perspectives could be considered when improving negative environmental aspects in relation to the consumption of energy. One of these aspects includes encouraging and informing consumers of reducing energy consumption, such as switching off electricity devices when not used. Another aspect could be to exchange products with a high energy

consumption for more energy efficient products, such as LED-lamps instead of traditional light bulbs. The consumers' possibility for individual energy production, such as residential installation of solar panels, is another perspective which could have environmental benefits. It is acknowledged that all of these aspects could be considered to be of importance for environmental issues related to energy consumption. However, the primarily focus of this thesis is on the consumption of green energy in the aspect of consumers' choice of energy provider. It is nevertheless important to emphasise that the previously mentioned perspectives are highly intertwined with the focus of this paper and will thus influence the implications of the conducted study. It is recognised that the term energy could refer to more than just electricity such as heating. In this thesis however the term "Energy" is used synonymously with electricity and is also referred to as a product and not as a service.

The actors concerned in this study are those that target consumer markets such as energy providers and energy trading companies. Grid companies that provides energy networks are not included since the user cannot chose these actors themselves In addition to energy companies, non-governmental organisations (NGO´s) are consulted with the aim of providing a holistic view of the energy market and actors that have the potential of affecting general demand for green energy. Other actors such as the government and media is not included for the scope of this thesis, but it is acknowledged that these might affect the consumer with different communication efforts. A smaller overview to clarify the Swedish energy market is included in section 1.2.

The conducted study is only concerned with the topic of (renewable) energy represented by the Swedish energy market. Empirical data is thus collected from sources with an origin and connection to the Swedish market. This entails a limitation of the thesis implications to do greater comparisons on consumers and organisations on a global scale. Despite this, the study is of relevance in more than just the Swedish context, where companies located outside of Scandinavia could obtain valuable information and benefit from the study. The Swedish market has been chosen due to matters of convenience in data collection but also because of the country's progression and accessibility of renewable energy as previously presented in section 1.1.1 and 1.1.2. The study does not focus on one particular case to create a customised framework for a specific organisation, but rather sets out to investigate overall

important aspects within branding and communication that has the potential of increasing demand for green energy for green energy companies. The findings is thus of particularly relevance for brand and communications managers in providing guidance for energy companies marketing activities. The study might also be of interest for companies offering low-involvement and homogeneous product categories due to the nature of energy as a product.

The outline of the remaining chapters of this paper, after a short overview of the Swedish energy market in this chapter, will firstly describe the chosen research methodology, followed by a walkthrough of the applied theory considered relevant for the research topic, which will be applied and analysed with the collected insights and data in chapter 4. The thesis will end with a discussion and overview regarding the findings and a short presentation of the implications and conclusion in regards to the research question.

1.2 The Swedish Energy Market

This section will briefly present the Swedish energy market from the consumer perspective, in order to clarify factors that have the potential of affecting consumers' choice of energy provider as well as factors that consumers have the option to control themselves. An illustration of the market can be found in *Figure 1* which aims to simplify and reflect the Swedish energy market from a consumer perspective. The figure is adopted and extended from a Swedish Consumer Agency report of the energy market (SCA, 2010, p. 12) and aims at giving a simple overview of actors within the Swedish energy market and why these actors have been given the focus in this thesis. It is acknowledged that they have all the possibility to affect the energy consumers in different ways, but the focus is put on those where branding is most relevant.

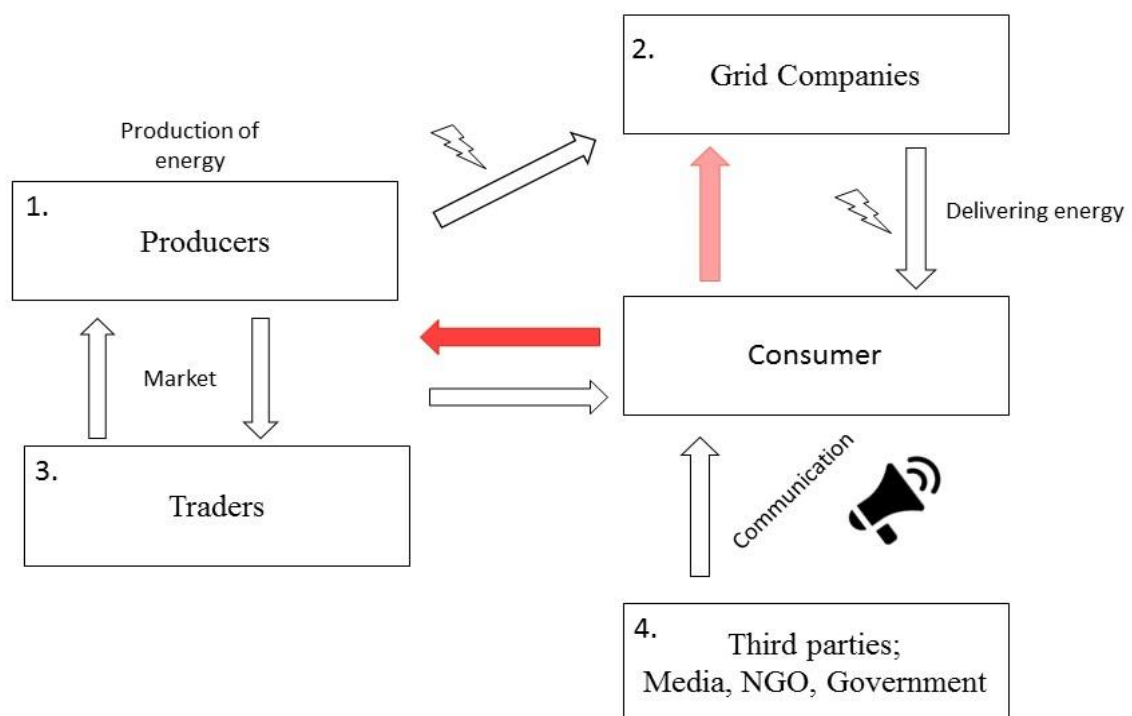*Figure 1 Swedish energy market. Source: SCA, (2010, p. 12)*

(1) Companies that are considered the *producers* of electricity are those actors that in some way produce energy and sell it in a retail fashion to consumers via the joint energy market, Nord Pool, or directly to specific traders and consumers. Fortum and SNE are examples of this type of actor since they are producing energy from a variety of sources and

sell it both on the energy market and directly to consumers.[6] *Grid* operators (2) are all the actors that are physically delivering electricity to consumers and responsible for the maintenance of the electricity grids (SCA, 2010). It is necessary for the consumer to interact with grid operators in order to receive electricity, but they are not able to choose a specific operator themselves. Hence, these grid owners are not of particular interest for this study since the consumer cannot choose which actor that will deliver the electricity. (3) These actors are as previously mentioned energy producers but can also be pure energy *traders*. One example is GodEl, who procures electricity on the joint energy market or directly from producers, and then offers a variety of contracts to the consumer. In this way, the consumer is paying for the actual electricity to either traders or producers of energy, and further for the delivery of energy to the grid owners. Hence, mainly two types of actors namely, producers and/or traders are prone to consumer selection on the energy market. However, (4) *additional actors* (Swedish government, media sources and NGOs) also have the possibility to affect the consumer choice of energy. For example, the Swedish government are able to affect the consumers by subsidies and taxes for different energy technology production (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 59:20). Media actors are able to spread information regarding production and prices for the consumer on the energy market. NGOs, represented by SSNC in this study, communicate towards the consumers through a variety of channels and by the certification of energy (Jonsson, 2016). The political discussion and media coverage of the energy market is not included in this study because they are not considered to be specifically interacted in the building of and energy brand.

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[6] It is possible for consumers to produce and sell energy, however these are not considered to be of interest for branding purposes and thus not included in this thesis.

2. Methodology

In this chapter I will elaborate on the methodology that has guided the research presented in this thesis. The collected data consists of a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, including variety of different sources with the aim of triangulate[7] insights and provide a holistic overview of the energy market and its consumers. This thesis has similarities with constructivism where the research is focused on finding meaning in the experience of individuals (Killiam, 2013). In the following I acknowledge that there are several research perspectives and I presents the two opposite stances and briefly elaborate on the perspective for this thesis. This is followed by a presentation of the qualitative and quantitative research and I will conclude the chapter by presenting the method for data collection and elaborate on the quality of the data sample and conducted research.

2.1 Research Philosophies

In research, ontology is used to describe the beliefs about the nature of reality, and is concerned with what exists and what is true (Killiam, 2013; Snape & Spencer, 2003). My belief of reality influences how this thesis should be viewed and perceived by the reader. There are several perspectives in regards to the belief of reality and what is considered real and true. Rather than elaborating on all of these, I will focus on the most relevant and most contrasting ones, *Realism* and *Relativism* (Killiam, 2013). While the ontological stance of realism empathies that an external reality is independent of peoples' beliefs and that one truth exists, relativism points towards the opposite, where reality is only knowable through social construction where several truths exists and changes based on context (Killiam, 2013; Snape & Spencer, 2003). In this study, the reality is seen as something that is socially constructed by people and that multiple realities exists depending on different experiences and context of individuals. During the conducted research, I have encountered different beliefs about the Swedish energy market and the green energy product depending on who I am conversing with. For instance, the reality for the different interviewees that represented different organisations presented different beliefs about how green energy should be perceived. What these actors have in

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[7] Triangulation refers to the usage of more than one method or source of data in a study of social phenomena (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 397). Triangulation for this thesis is elaborated on in section 2.3.

common is the context of the Swedish market, and therefore this study is believed to have value and be applicable depending on the context similarities of the Swedish energy market and consumers. Since I believe that several truths exists depending on the individuals and context, my ontology in this thesis is more similar to relativism rather than the opposite perspective of realism.

While ontology is concerned with what is true, what is referred to as *epistemology* is concerned with how we know and learn about the social world and how knowledge about the truth is acquired (Killiam, 2013; Snape & Spencer, 2003). Hirschheim et al. define epistemology as:

"[...] the nature of human knowledge and understanding that can be acquired through different types of inquiry and alternative methods of investigation" (Hirschheim et al., 1995, p. 20).

There are two opposites of how we could gather knowledge and learn about the world. The first is *positivism,* which sees the world as unaffected and dependent by the researcher and believes that research can be conducted in a completely objective way (Snape & Spencer, 2003). The other one, known as *interpretivism*, emphasises that the researcher and the world impact each other and that the findings in research are influenced by the researcher's perspectives and values, making it impossible to conduct fully objective research (Snape & Spencer, 2003). The epistemological stance that I have in this thesis is towards the one of interpretivism, where the researcher's interpretation and subjective approach to reality and the collected data generates the findings of the research. It is believed that interaction with other people is necessary to get an in-depth understanding of the researched topic and possible to interpret and give meaning to given insights when looking at the social action with context, rules, conventions and beliefs (Moisander & Valtonen, 2012). This has further resulted in the choice of a greater focus on qualitative data sources, where my interpretation and understanding of the retrieved data is resulting in the findings of this study in line with interpretivism. Nevertheless, I have chosen to include an additional quantitative data sample for this study to manage the shortcomings of qualitative data which is dependent on my

subjective interpretation. The quantitative data is restricted to include social context value and researcher interaction, and thus more objective. This thesis could hence be seen to have used a mixed method combining qualitative and quantitative data (Snape & Spencer, 2003).

The most common view of the nature of the relationship between theory and research could be considered as *deductive reasoning*, where a theory is tested by the collection of data that provides a result that either confirms or rejects the theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Deductive reasoning thus takes its initial steps in theory, and data is then collected in regards to that theory to investigate if the conditions of the theory is true. For *inductive* reasoning, theory is the outcome of the conducted research, where the process of induction involves drawing generalizable implications out of findings which results in theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This thesis shares similarities for both inductive and deductive reasoning and is thus considered to have an *abductive* approach. Collecting data to explore and generate new theory which further is subsequently tested through different data collections is referred to as an *abductive* approach, and includes both deductive and inductive reasoning (Saunders et al., 2016). In this thesis the purpose of used theory has been to analyse and understand the relevant insights within the different categories that emerged from the data. It is thus not a question of confirming or rejecting the used theory or previous research as would be the case in a deductive research, but rather find relevant implications in regards to the research topic. The qualitative data was firstly collected from several sources and then analysed to find different patterns and categories which generated relevant findings. Nevertheless, the different patterns and categories had to some extent emerged from previous research regarding energy. Quantitative data was collected to test the findings in the categories that emerged from the qualitative data. These approaches includes both deductive and inductive reasoning, leading to abductive relationship between theory and research. Furthermore, when analysing the collected data the process entailed going back and forward between data and theory to understand the insights, a strategy often referred to as *iterative* (Bryman & Bell 2011).

For the purpose of this study both primary and secondary data has been utilised. The data was analysed to identify patterns and possible strategic insights for energy companies branding and communication efforts. Primary data refers to all the information collected specifically for this study from various methods to answer the previously stated research

question. Secondary data for this thesis refers to data that has been used from sources such as reports presenting statistics regarding Swedish energy consumers. The purpose for complementing primary with secondary data, was that it contributes to the analysis and the implications of this study in a cost- and time efficient manner.

2.2 Qualitative and Quantitative Research

As previously mentioned, this thesis combine qualitative and quantitative research methods. Quantitative data can be described as the collection of numerical data and presenting the view of the relationship between theory and research in a deductive reasoning with preference towards a natural science approach of positivism (Bryman & Bell, 2011). On the other hand, qualitative data focus on words rather than numbers, with an inductive view of the relationship between theory and research, and an understanding of the social world by examination of its participants in an epistemological position towards interpretivism (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The conducted research for this thesis has in broad terms aimed to follow the sequence presented in *Figure 2*, a model that has been adopted from Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 390).
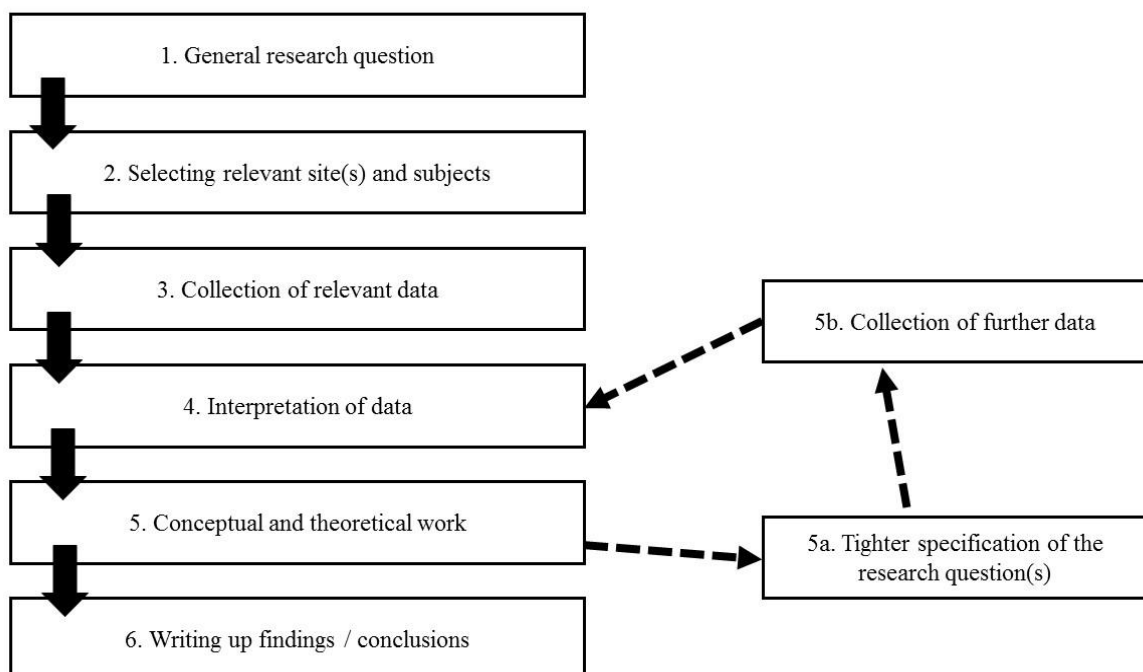

Figure 2 Research sequence (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.390)

Qualitative data was collected from relevant subjects within the field of the green energy which later will be presented. The collected data was then interpreted and analysed in relation to theory concerning branding and consumer behaviour, presented in chapter 3, to find patterns and symbolic values that entailed a tighter specification of the research question. Additional qualitative data was then collected for further comprehension of energy consumers. This led to final findings and conclusion in regards to the stated research question. The generated data from a qualitative method have the possibility to provide insights for people's own perspectives, beliefs and behaviours, specifically and crucially also the understanding of the meaning that they attach to them (Snape & Spencer, 2003). The strength in applying these types of methods is the possibility to tap into an understanding of consumers' motivations, beliefs and decision processes (Snape & Spencer, 2003), which contributes to how consumers are affected by branding and communication. The inclusion of the conducted quantitative research is included to contribute with insights in a more objective and generalisable way. This since it provides a data sample that includes a wider range of consumer preferences which would supplement the limitation of the smaller data sample generated in the qualitative methods.

2.2.1 Interviews

The interview is probably the most widely used method when conducting qualitative research, where it can combine structure and flexibility which makes it desirable (Bryman & Bell 2011; Snape & Spencer 2003). In this study, both individual and paired interviews were performed. Individual interviews were conducted with a single person, providing an opportunity for an in-depth investigation and understanding of the interviewee's personal perspective (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Individual interviews were used in three out of the four conducted interviews, and all the interviews followed a semi-structured interview technique where a list of questions are formed to cover the specific topics that is desirable to attend (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Paired interviews were carried out with two or three people simultaneously, providing both an individual focus on the participants, but also the possibility for the interviewees to reflect on input from the other participants improving the dialogue, which is of particular value when the interviewees form a naturally occurring unit and in this case working colleagues (Snape &

Spencer, 2003). This was only possible for one of the conducted interviews. All the interviews were conducted in a flexible manner with focus on following up on relevant and interesting points during the interviews and letting the interviewees speak freely within the topic. All the in-depth interviews was aiming for using what could be referred to as a *laddering-technique*, encouraging the participant to elaborate and clarify given answers (Christensen & Olson, 2012). One of the interviews were held in closed office in a traditional face to face situation. Due to time- and travel limitations, the other three interviews were not possible to conduct while being physically present in the same room as the interviewees. Therefore interviews were held over video calls as a second best option.

A presentation of the interviewee representatives in addition to their organisation will now follow. It is acknowledged that each of these individuals are highly influenced by their own organisation, and hence an increased risk of biased answers in favour of the own organisation. Answering questions and discussing topics such as making more consumers chose green energy might thus be very dependent on the company's business model and vision.

2.2.2 Interview Sources – Industry actors

The in-depth interviews were conducted with four different organisations that are currently active within the Swedish energy market. To gather valuable insights and create a holistic view of the Swedish energy market and its consumers, the different organisations participating in this study were primarily chosen due to their engagement in green energy and their different types of business models including a different focus and approach to energy trading. All interviews were held in the participants mother tongue language, Swedish, to create a natural and comfortable feeling and to avoid any linguistic barriers that was assumed to perhaps occur if the interviewees' ability to communicate in English were limited. The question base is found in Appendix 1 and in *Table 1* an overview of the organisations participating in this thesis is provided.

Fortum is one of the three biggest actors in the Swedish energy market in relation to total amount of customers[8] (Forsberg, 2014). The company has a widespread engagement

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[8] Customers refers to consumers in a Business to Consumer (B2C) relationship and not Business to Business (B2B).

in green energy where it offers their customers an energy supply exclusively generated from hydro, including third party certified environmental friendly energy (Fortum, 2016a). As one of the biggest and well established actors in the Swedish energy market as both producers and traders of energy, the company has been engaged in more than just traditional hydro, wind and solar power, but does also have research and development (R&D) investments in wave energy (Fortum, 2016b) and recently constructed a new biomass fuel power plant (Fortum 2016c). In a study based on the most influencing digital opinion leaders within sustainability, Fortum was appointed the most renowned brand within sustainability in Sweden in 2015 (WhisprGroup & SBI, 2015). An in-depth interview was conducted with Marketing Director Fortum Sweden, Charlotte Lindevall and PR Director Fortum Sweden, Per-Oscar Hedman. Fortum were chosen for this study since it was believed that the company would be able contribute with valuable insight of the Swedish energy consumers and market due to its commitment to green energy, size and eminent position.

Svensk NaturEnergi (SNE) is an affiliated energy company that provides energy for the real estate parent company Wallenstam. The company was founded in the year of 2006 with the aim to create a self-sufficient energy supply for the residences owned by the parent company. The company's energy supply is provided from green energy generated purely from wind power. The consumer focus is hence within the own residential areas to convince the tenants to choose SNE as their energy provider. This was found interesting since company could be considered to possess a unique business model that combines residential leasing with focus on green energy. Insights was thus gathered from an in-depth interview with Elisabeth Vansvik, Head of Communication, to investigate why SNE chose to focus on wind power and how they are promoting this towards their residential tenants. It must however be recognised that even if SNE's is promoting and offering green energy to consumers, their energy service has a primary focus on other businesses (B2B).

GodEl which translates into Good Electricity, is a profit making energy trading company, who donates all profit generated from the business to specific charity organisations. The donations are dependent on what choice of the customers, who picks the charity that they themselves want to support. The company is still young and has only been present to the Swedish energy market for around ten years. It has however been eminent in the Swedish

energy market for its charitable work and awarded four times for the most sustainable brand in Sweden by insight agency *Sustainable Brand Insight* (SBI, 2015a). The company can be seen as one of the market's newcomers which in a rapid pace has grown its number of customers, challenging the bigger energy actors. Due to its unconventional business model, with the inclusion of only selling third party environmentally certified energy, insights from the company was considered valuable to further understand how the brands different attributes affects the energy consumer. Hence, an in-depth interview was conducted with Communications Manager Emmy Tollin.

Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) is a NGO and Sweden's most influential environmental associations, with prioritised areas of work concerning climate change, seas and fishing, forests, agriculture and environmental toxins (SSNC, 2016). The organisation offers the environmental certificate *Bra Miljöval* (BM) that translates into "Good Environmental Choice" which is the only third party certificate for renewable energy on the Swedish energy market. BM includes specific criteria for more than just renewable energy production and further demands specific environmental energy investments from the energy company once the energy is bought by customers (Jonsson, 2016a, 14:59). Insights was gathered from in-depth interview and a complementary e-mail (Appendix 2) with Administrator of BM energy certification Magnus Jonsson, with the aim to give another perspective of the energy market not focused on business which concerned both relation to consumers and companies. The certificate of BM was found relevant since it is the only third party certificate and thus could be considered a clear symbol that represents green energy in the eyes of the consumers.

Organisation	Category	Green energy	Contribution	Place
Fortum	Energy producer & trader	Hydro, Wave, Wind, Solar, Bio. BM-certified energy	Third biggest energy company on the Swedish market	Face to face
GodEl	Energy trader	Exclusively BM-certified energy	Unique business model with focus on charity	Video Call
Svensk NaturEnergi	Energy producer & trader.	Wind	Unique Business model, real estate comb. energy	Video Call
SSNC	NGO	Certifier of energy	The only third party certifier of energy	Video Call

Table 1. Interviewed organisations

2.2.3 Focus group - Consumers

A focus group differs from the previous presented interview where instead of interviewing one or two individuals, the method includes interviewing usually at least four interviewees simultaneously (Bryman & Bell 2011). The focus group were chosen since it was considered the best method for collecting consumer insights since the researcher has the possibility to take part in how certain issues are discussed by individuals as a member of a group (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Five Swedish consumers, in the ages of 27-35, who all had some interaction with energy companies in relation to electricity and heating contracts, participated in the focus group. As with the in-depth interviews, the focus group was held in the participants' mother tongue, Swedish, on the assumption that this would reduce risk for any linguistic barriers and elicit a more natural conversation feeling. During the focus group I was participating as a moderator, which included running and guiding the group session without being too intrusive (Bryman & Bell, 2011), and was accompanied by a secondary moderator with the purpose of taking notes and follow up on topics and comments that might have been missed.

The sampling of the focus group participants, which took place in an open office area for entrepreneurial companies, could be considered similar to a snowball sampling approach.[9] This sample method entails that the participants was not selected randomly and thus cannot be considered representative and generalised for a population (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, this was not the purpose of the focus group, where insights was rather gathered to be compared and analyse together with insights from conducted interviews. By starting out with one participants, several other potential individuals, who lived up to the criteria, were approached and asked to join the group. Gathering participants that are somewhat acquainted to each other, entails the risk for biased answers since the participants might have similar values and views on the discussed topic, leading to a limited perspectives and insights. It could also create a group dynamic where the individual creates false personal assumptions and prejudice based on previous personal contact of the other participants, which would limit the insights that might evolve with a session of complete strangers. The limitations of this sampling approach is recognised and taken into consideration, but due to time- and cost efficient reasons, this sampling approach was considered the most appropriate. The chosen sampling method has also a benefit where it on the other hand could reduce risk of limited discussions. This since a focus group conducted with participants that are complete strangers to each other entails complications for the individual such as creating anxiety about meeting and spend hours with people that whom does not know (Gordon, 1999), and it could be argued that the individual is more likely to have less trust and be more careful in statements due to the risk of being judge by the other participants. Exploring collective understanding or shared meanings is often easier to achieve if the participants are members of the same group (Bryman & Bell, 2011). During the session the focus group proved to be consisting of participants with different views, opinions and values on many points, creating a great discussion in several cases.

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[9] A snowball sampling approach entails that […]"the researcher makes initial contact with small groups of people who are relevant to the researched topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 192)

The purpose of collecting data through a focus groups was to gather insights from consumers of energy that would contribute with an understanding of how a green energy company can use its brand to become more attractive to consumers. Before the session started, the participants were informed about the overall topic of energy, but was never introduced to the topic delimitation of investigating green energy. This to avoid any risk of priming[10] in the sense that the participants would answer questions and discuss the topic in a way to please the researcher which would generate biased insights. Questions (see Appendix 1) was formulated for different subjects within the overall topic of the energy market and was used as a way to initiate the dialogue between the participants and further get back on the right path when the discussion went off topic. Hence the questions did not work as a static form but was used to facilitate the insurance that the focus group discussed the desired subjects within the topic. An overview of the participants is found in *Table 2*.

Gender	Age	Accomodation	Energy provider
Man	28	Appartment	ÖresundsKraft
Woman	31	House	Vattenfall
Man	27	Appartment	Between providers
Man	35	Appartment	Öresundskraft
Man	32	House	Vattenfall

Table 2 Participants of conducted Focus Group

2.2.4 Coding of the Qualitative Data

The interviews and discussions in the focus groups generated valuable data that needed to be structured and analysed in different categories concerning branding, communication and consumer behaviour. As previously stated, the collected data were linked to relevant theories and models to make them understandable and possible to analyse and entailed an iterative process going back and forward between data and theory. All interviews and the focus group discussions were audio recorded for the purpose of not missing any important points or comments. Transcription refers to converting the recorded material into text, and during transcription of the own collected data, which can be seen as the first step in the analysis itself

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[10] Priming is referring to what Aronson (2011) presents as *"[…] a procedure based on the notion that ideas that have been recently encountered or frequently activated are more likely to come to mind and thus will be used in interpreting social events"* (Aronson, 2011, p. 123)

different points and comments were highlighted in a to distinct themes from each other (King & Horrocks, 2010). Raised points and comments that were similar and related to each other was seen as important and furthermore issues that was raised in one occasion or one case but in a powerful manner was also interpreted as something important that would contribute to the findings. This thematic analysis followed three steps to create these themes presented by King and Horrocks (2010). Step one was descriptive coding, highlighting relevant inputs and attach brief comments to the input. Step two was interpretive coding, were I interpreted the meaning to the clusters identified. The last step included the identification of a number of themes that characterise key concepts and insights from the collected data and how they related to branding and communication from green energy companies.

2.2.5 Self-administered questionnaire

The quantitative data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire. This method uses a quantitative survey where data is collected from respondents who answer a set of questions by completing a questionnaire (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The questions asked in the questionnaire emerged from the data generated from the qualitative methods of interviews and focus groups. During the highlighting of eminent points and comments in the first step in the coding process of the qualitative data, 9 multiple choice questions was developed. Multiple choice questions were chosen for this study, since these are appropriate when investigating gradations of preferences and interest or agreement (Blumeberg et al., 2011). The survey also included an additional option for respondents to provide additional information in order to capture any thoughts that the closed-ended questions might not have captured. The respondents represent different groups in regards to gender, age and accommodation situation. Questions were asking for the respondents' ranking of how well a statement was consistent with their beliefs. The survey consisted of 6 amount of scale questions ranging from 1 to 5 where 1 represented "Strongly agree" and 5 represented "Strongly disagree". The criteria for the respondents were set to exclude consumers that had not yet been exposed to actively choosing energy provider, such as tenants living with parents or in collective housing. It was assumed that the opinions of these respondents would not be relevant since their lack of experience in doing so would deliver less reliable results. A copy

of the survey is presented in Appendix 3. A total of 99 respondents participated in the survey, which included 9 respondents who did not complete the entire questionnaire and were therefore discarded. Hence, the sample used for this study included 39 men and 51 women.

The inclusion of the conducted quantitative research had the purpose to gather additional data that would improve the generalisability of the findings of this study. A snowball sampling was used which is not a random sample of the respondents as has previously been described. I acknowledged that this entail limitations in the ability to generalise the findings of a study for a population but the purpose for the survey was not to generate completely generalisable result but to use quantitative data to support the findings from the qualitative. The reason for choosing this sampling method was due to its advantages in receiving answers from respondents that might be difficult to reach in a time- and cost efficient manner (Blumberg et al., 2011). By choosing this type of sampling method, the researcher were able to collect answers in an efficient way from a variety of different respondents based on the attributes of age and accommodation types which would otherwise entail a very time consuming activity for the researcher. Hence, this sampling method was despite its limitations believed to be the most appropriate. The self-administered questionnaire was send to respondents acquainted to the researcher which also were asked to forward the survey. This might include an increased risk of receiving similar responses since the spreading of the survey entailed that people would forward the survey to other respondents that might share a similar mind-set and possess the same opinions and values.

2.3 Quality of Research

This study has an ontological stance towards relativism where it is believed that reality is only knowable through social construction where several truths exists and changes based on context (Killiam, 2013; Snape & Spencer, 2003). Further the study points to that the researcher and the world impact on each other and that the findings in research are influenced by the researcher's perspectives and values, making it not possible to conduct fully objective research, i.e. interpretivism (Snape & Spencer, 2003). This has consequences for the elaboration of the credibility of this research. The concepts of *validity* and *reliability* is common in research to elaborate on the credibility of a study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The validity of a

study refers to the issue if the indicators gathered for measuring a concept really measures that concept, i.e. to which extent a test measures what the researcher actually want to measure (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Blumberg et al., 2011). The reliability of a study refers to the consistency of the measure of the concept, i.e. will the research give the same results in other occasions if the study is replicated (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders el al., 2009). However, reliability is not of particular relevance for this study since replicating a qualitative study such as this, has the complication that the research is dynamic, which would implicate different contexts when striving for conducting similar research. In the perspective of relativism, different truths exists depending on the context and with an interpretive perspective the researcher would impact on the study. Focus has thus been to explain the execution of the carried out method, research design and the limitations of the study in the previous sections to facilitate an understanding of how the research was conducted. Validity is seen as a main concern for quantitative research in a more positivistic perspective, however it is recognised to be a significant issue also for qualitative research but relates more to the validity of representation, understanding and interpretation (Snape & Spencer, 2003). For this study there has been a main focus on the technique of triangulation, to ensure validation for the conducted research and data collection. Triangulation refers to the usage of more than one method or source of data in a study of social phenomena (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The concept of triangulation assumes to help with confirming and improving the clarity or precision of the of the research findings (Snape & Spencer, 2003). For this thesis, the four previously presented organisations participating in this study was chosen because of their different focus on green energy and their different business models. By participation of informants represented form several organisations and by identifying where similar results emerges, the findings could be seen to have greater credibility (Shenton, 2004). The energy companies can be seen to have different business models and attracts consumers in different ways where Fortum, GodEl and SNE represents different company sizes on the market and offers different kinds of solutions that are attractive in the eyes of consumers in different ways such as focus on charity, production methods or energy production as part of real estate. Further the inclusion of SSNC provides another angle of the NGO's outside perspective of the energy market, where this organisation's focus is put on the options that are most

environmental friendly. As acknowledged in previous section 2.2.2, insights from these organisations might contain biased answers in the sense of holding the own organisation in a favourable view and this is acknowledged and taken into consideration when analysing the data. It is argued that when results retrieved from these organisations are coherent with each other it is more likely to represent a credible finding. Another part of triangulation is using a variety of different methods for collecting data, which has also been the case in this thesis using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Despite the limitations of potential bias due to the applied sampling method, the focus group included consumers that provided another perspective since the insights were collected from customers and in the social context of a group. The quantitative method where the self-administered questionnaire was used, include another angle of consumers that could additionally support the findings. These different angles has been used for the purpose to triangulate the findings of this thesis. It is however recognised that even if this study could be considered to include several aspects of triangulation, in the sense of different sources and methods, there is always a possibility that other informants not included in this study would have a conflicting opinion from the gathered findings in this study.

Generalisability of the findings from a study can be seen as equally true to the entire parent population or being transferable to other settings (Snape & Spencer, 2003). It is acknowledged that this study has its limitations in relation to this matter due to previously discussed reasons. Despite these limitations, I argue that this thesis provides relevant findings for the branding of green energy, since the findings have derived from the analysis of insights which was collected from several relevant perspectives including energy providers/traders, NGO, and consumers. This has enabled a holistic view on the Swedish energy market and the findings of this thesis is thus of relevance for energy companies both on the Swedish energy market and other similar settings such as similar energy markets and homogeneous product categories. The findings also facilitates future studies within the topic of energy branding and consumer behaviour.

3. Theoretical approach

In this chapter I will present the different theories that has been used to understand and analyse the empirical data. First, the reader is introduced to branding and the concept of brand equity; how a brand creates value for a company by increasing customer loyalty and engagement. This is followed by an elaboration on different consumer approaches that would entail different marketing efforts for a brand. Finally, an elaboration on theory that explains how the product involvement and motivation affects the focus of marketing communication follows.

3.1 Branding

As cited in Heding et al. (2009), the American Marketing Association defined the brand as a:

> *"Name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service*
> *as distinct from those of other sellers and to differentiate them from those competitors"*
> (Heding et al., 2009, p. 9).

When using branding to increase the interest and demand for green energy it is of relevance to understand the value of a brand, in other terms: brand equity. This section will first explain brand equity in accordance with the customer-based brand equity approach (Kotler & Keller, 2012; Heding et al., 2009) and present the steps of the building of brands in accordance with the Customer-Based Brand Equity model, hereinafter CBBE-model. It is of relevance to firstly understand how brand equity creates value for a company in regards to consumers, since it previously has been argued that improved branding from green energy companies have the possibility to increase consumer demand for green energy. It is then necessary to demonstrate how brand equity is created on the basis of the CBBE-model to further be able to analyse where green energy brands are currently insufficient in their brand equity creation compared to competitors and how this can be improved.

3.1.1 Customer-Based Brand Equity

Brands are used by companies to differentiate their product or service from their competitors and are able to do so since brands creates mental structures that will aid the consumers' knowledge about the company's products or services which affects their decision making (Kotler & Keller, 2012). The creation of these mental structures aims to direct the consumer towards the company's specific product or service (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Depending on the brand, different outcomes can be expected because of executed marketing efforts for the company's product or service which are unique to that brand (Keller, 2009). This means that different brands that market their product in the same way, receives different outcomes in regards to affecting consumers. Further, a brand can create added value that is endowed to the products and services that a company is offering to the consumer (Kotler & Keller, 2012). This added value is referred to as *Brand equity* which defines the value of the brand and can be seen from two different perspectives; the consumer and the financial perspective (De Pelsmacker et al., 2013). The financial understanding of brand equity is concerned with the value of a brand as in the actual value a brand holds in a financial set for a company, such as estimated brand value in company's balance sheet for accounting purposes (Keller, 1993). This thesis is not focusing on how to estimate financial or other types of brand value, hence this perspective is not relevant for the purpose of this thesis. However, the consumer subjective understanding of brand equity, which refers to how a consumer perceives a brand and the value of that brand, is of interest due to the strategic value for brand management that can increase marketing efficiency (De Pelsmacker et al., 2013; Heding et al., 2009; Keller, 1993). The added value of a brand – brand equity – is thus often seen as the benefits in the marketplace, where the product or service receives an improved quality perception, greater customer loyalty and further increased marketing communication effectiveness such as consumer brand recall and processing of the company's marketing communication more favourably (Keller, 2009). This is an approach, that sees brand equity from the consumer perspective and recognises that the strength of a brand lies in the different experiences that customers might have with the brand, i.e. what customers have heard, seen, read, learned, thought and felt about the brand over time (Kotler & Keller, 2012). This approach to brand equity is referred to as **customer-based brand equity** (CBBE) and is considering the

differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to marketing communication for the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2012). This means that brand equity arises from the differences in consumer response because of the brand, where the aim for a marketer is to make consumers act favourably to the company's product/service and marketing communication when identifying the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Hence, if the consumer faces an absence of differences for the brand, the product/service can basically be seen as a commodity where differentiation between competitors most likely will be focused on price (Kotler & Keller, 2012). This brand equity approach is thus assuming that a brand exists in the minds of the consumers and by the use of marketing communication, a marketer is able to control the creation of brand equity (Heding et al., 2009). As previously mentioned, consumer response is dependent on the differential effect due to consumers' **brand knowledge** which is created in the minds of the consumers by marketing activities (Keller, 2009). It is thus important to understand what actually distinguishes brand knowledge and thus affect the consumer response. Brand knowledge is explained from the two dimensions of awareness and associations in consumer memory, which are referred to as brand awareness and brand image (Keller, 1993). Brand awareness considers the likelihood that a brand comes to consumer's mind and how easy it does so (Keller, 1993). It is divided in brand recall, the consumer's ability to remember a brand when given the product/service category, and brand recognition, the consumer's ability to confirm a previous exposure to the brand (Keller, 1993). Brand image on the other hand is linked to the consumer's perception and preferences that is based on the many different associations with that brand in the minds of the consumer (Keller, 2009). Thus, strong, favourable and unique associations drive the differential effects from other brands and thus serve as source of brand equity (Keller, 2009). These associations can be direct sources for brand knowledge or what Kotler & Keller (2012) refers to as *Secondary Associations*, where the brand is linked to other information in the consumer's memory that conveys meaning. These associations becomes secondary sources of brand knowledge and could be represented by other brands, places, people or things. See Appendix 4 for Kotler and Keller's (2012) map of Secondary brand associations for brand knowledge. Brand knowledge that creates brand equity is thus a consumer's:

> "*[…] thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, experiences and so on that become linked to the brand in the minds of the consumers*" (Keller, 2009, p. 143).

3.1.2 Creation of Brand Equity – The Brand Resonance Pyramid

For a company to receive the previously presented benefits from brand equity it is dependent on creating brands with the right structures of brand knowledge in the minds of the consumers, i.e. creating strong, favourable and unique associations, and understanding consumers is thus central in a CBBE-approach (Keller, 2009; Heding et al., 2009). *The Brand Resonance Pyramid*, hereinafter the CBBE-model (*Figure 3*) has been used in this thesis (Keller, 2009). The model involves both the company and the consumer for brand equity creation which was considered suitable since this thesis includes perspectives from both energy companies and consumers. On the one side, stages of brand development is displayed which refers to the way in which a brand is developing within the customer. On the other side we see branding objectives which refers to the company's brand strategic objectives for each step in the pyramid. The final aim for a company is thus to reach the resonance top of the pyramid to create brand equity (Keller, 2009).
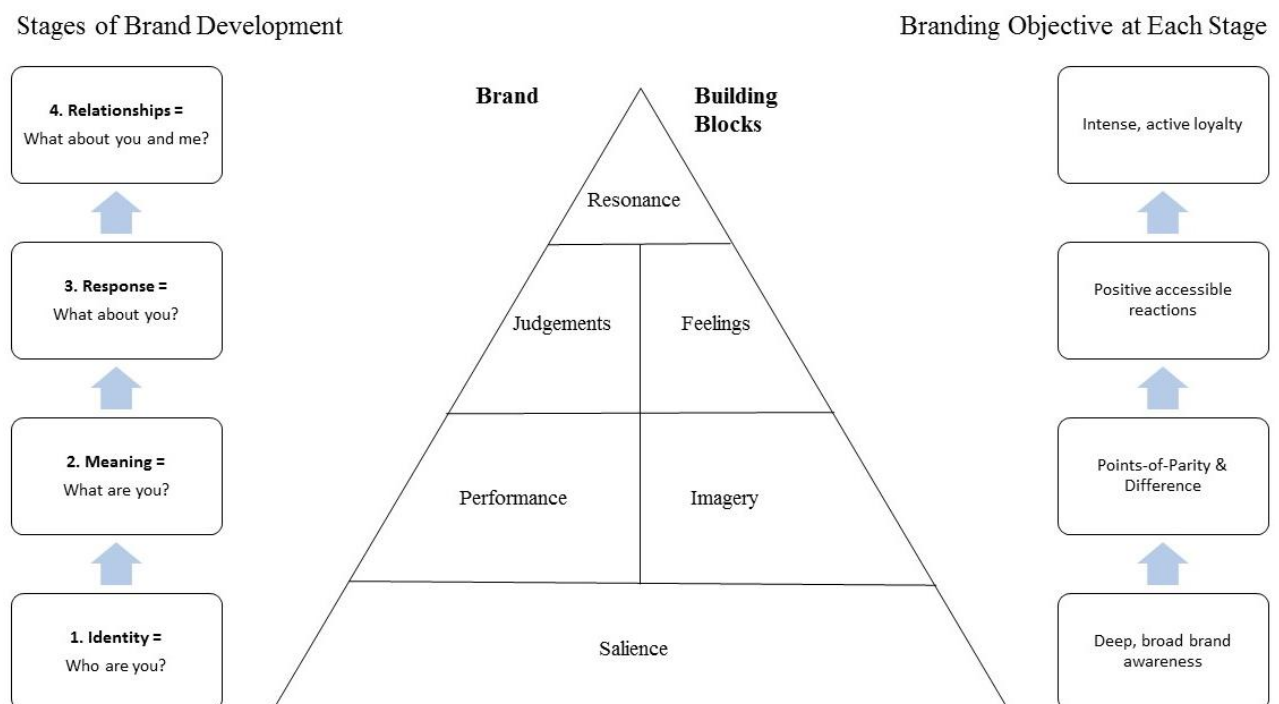

Figure 3 The Brand Resonance Pyramid, retrieved from Kotler and Keller (2012, p. 271)

3.1.2.1 First Step: Identity – Who are you?

The initial step of building brand equity is the building block that answers the assertion of who you are as a brand. This is essentially to ensure that customers are able to identify the brand and associate it with a specific product/service category or a customer need (Keller, 2009). This stage is referred to as *Salience* of the brand and has the objective of creating deep and broad brand awareness for the consumer. As previously presented, awareness is concerned with brand recall and recognition, hence brand salience refers to how often and how easily consumers think about the brand during different types of consumption situations (Kotler & Keller, 2012). This could for instance be that a customer is facing a purchase decision in a specific product category and are able to recall the specific brand within that category that guides the customer in the choice of purchase, or the customer gets presented with different options in that category and because of the recognition of a brand it is chosen instead of the competitors. In regards to the energy product, when a consumer is looking for an energy provider, the brands that the consumer remembers and that comes to mind is recalled awareness. Whilst if an energy provider is presented to the consumer and the consumer recognises and remembers the brand, then this demonstrates a recognition awareness.

3.1.2.2 Second Step: Meaning – What are you?

The second step is how a brand differentiates itself from competitors. When differentiate a brand from competitors it is necessary to understand on which aspects a brand should and should not differ on this is referred to as the points-of-parity (POP) and points-of-difference (POD) (Kotler & Keller, 2012). There are two types of POP which are category and competitive. Category POP is customer brand attributes that is shared with other brands, and represent the necessary conditions for a brand choice (Kotler & Keller, 2012). This means that specific attributes and benefits within a category must be fulfilled by the brand to be considered by the customer and is thus associations that are shared with competitor brands in the same category (Kotler & Keller, 2012). For an energy company this could for instance be that to be considered as an energy provider you need to have a customer support. Competitive POP on the other hand could be seen in two ways where it may be required by

a company to be able to negate a competitors POD, but it may also be required since it could reduce the own company's weakness because of its POD (Kotler & Keller, 2012). To clarify this in the context of the energy product, an energy company could include offers to consumers that is only generated from renewables despite having the majority of production from conventional sources, and thus be able to compete with pure green energy companies. It could also be to ensure increased safety regulations on nuclear waste to reduce the company's weakness from the strength that nuclear might be cheaper option but entails an environmental risk if an accident occur, something a green energy company would not need to bother with. PODs is thus the opposite of POP, which is attributes and benefits that are strongly associated with one brand and not believed be found in a competitor (Kotler & Keller, 2012). This links us back to the creation of brand knowledge where the creation of strong, favourable and unique associations builds the brand equity. To be considered as POD the brand attribute/association must be desirable to consumer, distinctive or superior to competitors and the company must be able to create these associations in the minds of the consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Creating and linking these associations, both tangible and intangible, is thus establishing the totality of brand meaning in the minds of the customers answering the question: *What are you?* (Keller, 2009). One example could be to be perceived as the cheapest option on the market that would differentiate the company from its competitors. As can be seen in Figure 3, these associations are build up by two different building blocks, *Performance* and *Imagery.* These two building blocks refers to the how well the customer needs are met, where performance is concerned with the functional needs and imagery with the psychological or social needs of the customer (Kotler & Keller, 2012). What is of concern for companies is thus the functional and psychological/social needs of the consumer that first of all are necessary to be met to be able to compete with competitors (POP), and further meet other desirable needs distinctive from the competitors to create a differentiation (POD) where marketers typically focus on brand/product benefits (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

3.1.2.3 Third Step: Response – What about you?

The next step in the brand resonance pyramid is concerned with how the consumer is responding to the interaction with a brand, i.e. eliciting the proper customer responses in relation to the brand (Keller, 2009). These customer responses is thus related to the two building blocks of *Judgement* and *Feelings*. The brand judgement focus on the customer's personal judgement of the brand, i.e. the opinions and evaluations of a brand, while the brand feelings rather focuses on customer's emotional response as well as reaction to the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In the perspective of the company, the brand objective is thus to create the desirable response from the customer, for example positive judgments such as high quality, credibility and superiority, and positive feelings such as fun, excitement and security.

3.1.2.4 Fourth Step: Relationships – What about you and me?

Reaching the final step of the brand resonance pyramid is the aim for marketers. This final building block for creating brand equity describes the relationship that the customer has with the brand and more specifically to what extent they feel that it corresponds with themselves (Keller, 2009). Brand resonance is hence the psychological bond that is created between the customer and the brand because of the previous conducted steps in the pyramid and in that sense the level of how much activity the relationship elicits (Kotler & Keller, 2012). When a brand reaches brand resonance it creates an intense, active loyalty relationship with the customer (Keller, 2009). The brand has thus become more than just a way to differentiate its products and services from competitors, but has also managed to create the relationship and engaging the customer who receives an added value that is more than just fulfilling the basic need for the category. More specifically, according to Keller (2009) brand resonance includes four different dimension that are all capturing the aspects of brand loyalty. (1) Behavioural loyalty, the customer's purchase of the brand is recurrent or is of greater share in volume for the category than others. (2) The customer has an attitudinal attachment to the brand, seeing it as something special in a broad context such as loving the brand or describe it as ones most favourite possession. (3) People associated with the brand, such as other users, are seen in the sense of a community where the customer feels a kinship or affiliation towards them. (4) Active engagement, where the customer is willing to invest more resources that goes beyond

those that are expended during purchase and consumption of the brand, which could be joining a club centred around the brand, receive updates, visit websites and chatrooms.

3.2 Consumer Behaviour

This section will provide an overview of different approaches in regards to research of consumer behaviour. Several different perspectives can be recognised in regards to consumers' behaviour and relevant for the consumption of energy. Previous conducted research in regards to consumer behaviour has transformed where it is possible to view the consumer from different perspectives. Østergaard and Jantzen (2000) presents four different views on consumer behaviour that will be used in this thesis. An overview can be found in *Table 3* and has been adopted from Østergaard and Jantzen (2000, p. 19). The four different approaches facilitate the categorisation of consumer and corresponding marketing focus. To clarify, the different consumer approaches presented below does not demonstrate how an energy company would divide the market into a variety of consumers segments where a target group can be chosen. The different approaches should instead be seen as ways for communicating and reaching consumers to create favourable associations to the brand with the aim to create brand equity. Different metaphors are used by Østergaard and Jantzen (2000) when discussing the different approaches since the behaviour shares similarities with these. The first two approaches, Buyer behaviour and Consumer behaviour, shares similarities with each other and will thus firstly be addressed, followed by Consumer Research and Consumption studies.

Perspectives	Buyer Behaviour	Consumer Behaviour	Consumer Research	Consumption Studies
Metaphor	Animal	Computer	Tourist	Tribe member
Consumption basis	Instinct	Rational	Narcissistic	Symbolic
Character of the subject matter	Needs	Wants	Desires	Recognition

Table 3 Four different consumer approaches. Adopted from Østergaard and Jantzen (2000, p. 19).

3.2.1 Buyer Behaviour and Consumer Behaviour

From a *buyer behaviour* perspective, consumption is based on an individual´s basic needs. The consumer is referred to as an instinct driven animal responding to different stimuli that affects the behaviour and focus is thus put on how buying takes place and how to create an automatic response from stimuli that the consumer is exposed to by the marketer (Østergaard & Jantzen, 2000). This is something that can be referred to as *conditioning,* and was firstly introduced by Russian physiologist Pavlov in his experiment with dogs. The concept of *respondent/classical conditioning* is to elicit a response from a previously neutral stimulus when being paired with an unconditioned stimulus (Nord & Peter, 1980). In a marketing perspective, this means that when a product or service that a given consumer has a neutral feeling towards, is paired with an unconditioned stimulus by advertising, such as a product promoted together with an exciting sport event, it is possible for the product to elicit the same feeling that is generated from that event (Nord & Peter, 1980). In this way, the product itself will create and elicit the positive feeling derived from the other experience and will hence drive the consumer to an automatic response e.g. buying a product. There is furthermore another type of conditioning known as *operant conditioning*, where consequences lead to changes in consumers' voluntary behaviour (Nord & Peter, 1980). The two main components in operant conditioning is reinforcement which aims to increase the likelihood of the consumer repeating a behaviour, and punishment which aims to decrease the likelihood of that behaviour (Nord & Peter, 1980). Operant conditioning is however not of particular relevance for this study since the main focus of this thesis is to change the behaviour of energy consumers to buy green instead of conventional, rather than reduce or increase their energy consumption. By the use of conditioning it is thus believed that it is possible to create automatic responses, where the consumer would act on different stimulus to fulfil basic needs (Østergaard & Jantzen, 2000; Nord & Peter, 1980).

The approach of the *consumer behaviour* differs from the buyer behaviour in the sense that this perspective is concerned of how responses are created after a consumer has been exposed to a stimuli and what the consumer actually wants (Østergaard & Jantzen, 2000). It is acknowledged that consumers do not always base decisions on pure instinct and the

consumer is in this approach seen as a rational organism, constantly processing information similar to a computer that forms specific attitudes based on information (Østergaard & Jantzen, 2000). The consumer forms different attitudes which refers to a person's overall evaluation of a brand or a company, where an attitude would work as a measure for how much a person likes or dislikes a brand/company and has a favourable or unfavourable view of it (De Pelsmacker et al., 2013). Attitudes are formed and can be explained by three components; the cognitive, the affective and the conative (behavioural) and together they form consumer attitudes towards brands (Schiffman et al., 2008). The cognitive consists of what the consumer's knows and perceives, the affective consists of the consumer's emotions or feelings, and the conative is the actual consumer behaviour of buying and consuming (Schiffman et al., 2008). The different attributes that are valued the highest in regards to an energy provider are thus of relevance for an energy brand. By investigating which attributes that are important for consumers when purchasing a particular product or service and perform well as a brand on these, it is possible to build favourable consumer attitudes towards a brand and increase the likelihood of a purchase of that brand to occur (De Pelsmacker et al., 2013).

In regards to the creation of brand equity, when viewing the consumer as an instinct driven animal it is of importance for the marketer to find important stimuli that affects the consumer's purchase decision and thus pairing the brand with an unconditioned stimulus by advertising to create the same feeling around the brand (Nord & Peter, 1980). Furthermore, when viewing the consumer as a rational computer that bases consumption decisions on the overall brand attitude (De Pelsmacker et al., 2013), it is of relevance for the marketer to know what type of attributes that are more or less important to consumers when choosing energy provider.

3.2.2 Consumer Research and Consumption Studies

The two previous presented consumer approaches can be seen as more traditional in marketing, while the two following takes another perspective of the consumer. In the consumer research approach the consumer is not always viewed to be driven by rational decisions based on processed information that creates a favourable brand attitude, but rather

by its emotions and feelings that expresses what the consumer actually desires (Østergaard & Jantzen, 2000). The consumer is here seen as more narcissistically determined and referred to as a tourist where different experiences is the basis of consumption which will provide meaning to the consumer (Østergaard & Jantzen, 2000). In consumer research it is thus of relevance to understand what the consumer perceives as something that will construct meaning based on the individuals emotions and feelings and why it construct meaning for the individual. The consumer is seen as an individual looking to fulfil the heart's desire by consuming the right products and services. This study will not investigate what different experiences that provides the consumer with meaning, because to do this it is necessary to focus on different focus groups for green energy companies and these can be very different from each other. The purpose of this approach in this thesis is rather to demonstrate how a consumer can be viewed from this perspective and how energy as an intangible product can be seen as part of the consumer experience that creates meaning. Furthermore, consumers tend to desire products and services more when these are scarce and/or special which is based on psychological reasons where these products are perceived as more valuable (Cialdini, 2005). This since when an option becomes more scarce, consumers lose their freedom to act as they want, and this is something that individuals counteract. Consumers have a need to maintain their freedom and when something is threatening that freedom, consumers tends to react against this impact, wishing and trying to get whatever it might be even more than before (Cialdini, 2005). This psychological relation is important to energy since it can be seen in relation to changing consumers' consumption behaviour as will be elaborated on later.

In the approach of consumption studies, the consumer is no longer seen as an individual but rather viewed in the social context as a member of a group. It is thus acknowledged that the individual consumer do not take decisions regarding consumption shielded from other people, but is affected by others judgement and perception of them based on their consumption group (Østergaard & Jantzen, 2000). Compared to the approach in consumer research, where consumption is driven and explained by the consumer's desire to in a narcissistic sense gather experiences, this approach rather sees consumption as something that enables consumers to receive recognition from other members of the same group (Østergaard & Jantzen, 2000). Hence, the consumer searches for products and services to

consume what would be perceived as the right symbols that will be recognised by other members of that group (Østergaard & Jantzen, 2000). The social aspects will in this sense affect the individual to consume the products that have a symbolic meaning in a group context. There is thus a social symbolic meaning behind the products and services from the different brands for an individual consumes that goes beyond the material and functional aspects. Buying a product or a service, the individual receives a possession that is considered to be a part of themselves (Belk, 1988). This is often referred to as the *extended self* where possessions become an important part of the extension of the consumer's identity (Belk, 1988; Heding et al., 2009). The consumption is thus dependent on how consumers are able to express themselves by the consumption of the product/brand and concerning the marketer is thus how a consumer can include a brand or product as a part of themselves and demonstrate this in a social context. In regards to social consumption with the basis in human psychology, consumers tend to act and behave according to how others behave (Cialdini, 2005). A consumer sees a behaviour as correct when witnessing others behaving in the same way and Cialdini (2005) refers to this concept as *Social Proof*. This entails in relation to products and brands that the more people consuming the product/brand the more it will be perceived as the correct consumption behaviour. The consumer would thus reduce the social risk of behaving in an incorrect way by consuming the product/brand that others would.

What is relevant for the marketer from the consumer research perspective is the role a product plays in regards to consumer experiences and how it is possible for a brand to become part of these experiences and create strong, favourable and unique associations. It is also relevant for the marketer to further investigate how it is possible for the brand to become part of the consumers extended self and be consumed in a social context.

3.3 Marketing Communication

Companies communicate towards consumers in various ways, trying to affect them to notice their brand and their differentiated offers. Marketing communication can be seen as the voice of a company and its brand, with the purpose to inform, persuade and remind consumers of the products and brands the company sell (Kotler & Keller, 2012). It includes all the efforts that is made to establish a dialogue with the consumer that will create or develop the

relationship that the consumer has with a company (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Hence, understand how marketing communication works and how it is possible to in the best sense use it to have the greatest effect on consumers. There are several different aspects that needs to be taken into consideration when investigating how consumers will process and respond to marketing messages, such as social, psychological or cultural factors (De Pelsmacker et al., 2013). To communicate the benefit of the brand/product it is necessary to know how a product is perceived by the consumers and how it might differ from similar products. This is built on the consumers' level of involvement and underlying motivation for purchase which will now be presented.

3.3.1 Involvement & Motivation

It has previously been mentioned that a consumer's level of involvement in a product category affects the purchase behaviour. Two parameters are of great importance and needs to be taken into consideration when creating advertising and other marketing communications; *involvement* and *motivation*, which categorise the product from two dimensions integrated in a strategic grid presented in Appendix 5 (Percy and Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012). The consumers' involvement can be defined as:

> *"[…] the importance people attach to a product or a buying decision, the extent to which one has to think it over and the level of perceived risk associated with an inadequate brand choice"*
>
> (De Pelsmacker et al., 2013, p. 74).

The level of perceived risk is not limited to the actual financial risk of purchasing a product or service, i.e. a consumer is unsatisfied with a purchase and in that sense wasted money. It also includes the psychological risk for the consumer which for instance could be dependent on which culture the consumer can be found in (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012). This means that some products and brands might have a different meaning and importance to the consumer depending on the context their purchased in and the consumer's subjective values. The level of involvement can be very different from one consumer to another, and it is thus important for the marketer to understand the level of involvement for their specific target

group. This since depending on the level of involvement, consumers are processing[11] marketing messages differently. If a consumer's involvement is low, the consumer only needs to pay attention to the message and learn something that is positive about the brand in order to create a positive brand attitude, in opposite to high-involvement decisions, where the consumer would additionally also need to accept or believe what is communicated (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012). As previously mentioned, this study does not in particular look for different segments that could represent target groups for green energy brands. What is thus relevant is to understand the general perception of green energy as a product when it comes to the level of involvement.

Motivation is divided into transformational- and informational buying motives, and they are important to distinguish for a marketer since it explains *why* a consumer wants to buy a specific product or service (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012). Transformational basically refers to positive motivations for buying, such as sensory gratification or social approval (De Pelsmacker et al, 2013), i.e. when a person's personal or social desires are met. Furthermore, informational motivation refers to the opposite in the sense of negative motivation (not to be confused with something bad), which is consumer problems that needs to be solved or avoided (De Pelsmacker et al, 2013). Being aware of the consumers' motivation hence guides the marketer since it points towards what type of content a marketing message should include. The same product can thus have different motivations depending on the consumer, and the marketer then needs to be aware of the actual motivation for the consumer. How this might differ can be illustrated with the example of the motivation behind exercising. One person can have a positive motivation in the sense that he or she wants to look good and thus receive social recognition from others, while another person have a negative motivation for exercising because this person tries to avoid increasing the risk of heart decease.

The purpose of knowing the level of involvement and motivation is to guide the marketer to communicate and structure the right message to the consumers. The guidelines below are gathered and summarised from Percy and Rosenbaum-Elliott (2012) who

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[11] What is meant by processing is what goes into a consumer's mind when he or she is exposed to or has been exposed to any form of marketing communication and the consumer's response to that (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012).

elaborates on different aspects that are relevant to take into consideration for marketing communication to create a favourable brand attitude depending on the product. The different combinations is presented to facilitate an understanding for the reader how involvement and motivation are affecting the communication to have different focus. The bullet points in *Table 5* below have all been gathered and summarised from Percy and Elliott-Rosenbaum (2012) for the reader's convenience.

Low-involvement & Informational motivation
• Present information about the brand linked to the benefit in an understandable way or even in an extreme way.   • The benefit should here demonstrate that it will provide with relief and solve the existing problem.   • The target group do not need to like the message, just understand the benefit.
Low-involvement & Transformational motivation
• The message presenting the benefit needs to arouse a correct emotional response and not focus on providing information.   • The target audience must perceive the emotions communicated by the advertising and other marketing communication as genuine.
High-involvement & Informational motivation
• More information must be provided to persuade the target group.   • The marketer needs to further know what is important to the target group in the product and their attitude towards the brand and the product category.   • The target audience must believe the message but do not need to like the advertisement in itself.
High-involvement & Transformational motivation
• The message of benefit needs to be believed, feel genuine and additional information is sometimes needed.   • The brand that it portrayed in the communication needs to elicit a positive feeling for the target group who needs to personally identify themselves with the brand.   • The target group needs to like the communication based on the product and brand.

Table 4 Implementing Brand Attitude Strategy. Source: Percy and Elliott-Rosenbaum (2012, p. 187-194)

4. Analysis

I will in the following chapter analyse the empirical data that has been collected for this thesis and present relevant indicators and insights. Green energy brands will first be addressed in accordance with the CBBE-model (Kotler & Keller, 2012). The level of involvement and consumer motivation for the green energy product is analysed to determine how green energy should be communicated in relation to the main benefit of the product. Previous marketing communication from energy companies will then be analysed to investigate what messages the Swedish consumers has so far received and how this could be improved in accordance with the benefit of green energy. Energy is then analysed by viewing the consumer from different types of consumption behaviour based on the different consumer approaches presented by Østergaard and Jantzen (2000) with the purpose of identifying ways and angles for a green energy brand to create favourable associations in the minds of consumers that would facilitate the goal for brand equity.

4.1 Brand Equity for Green Energy Brands

The first concern for a brand is to create a deep and broad consumer brand awareness (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Brand awareness is a part of brand knowledge as previously presented, where brand awareness can be both in relation to recall and recognition (Keller, 2009). When discussing different energy brands during the focus group, participants were struggling to recall different brands and seemed to be limited to only recall their own energy providers, Vattenfall, Eon and ÖresundsKraft (FG, 2016, 24:44). One indicator was that no participants were able to recall Fortum, the third biggest actor on the market and an actor participating in this study. Furthermore, in relation to brand recognition when Fortum was mentioned, the brand was recognised where all the participants seemed to have been exposed to the brand in some way before. What is of particular interest, is the points that were made after trying to remember actors and when Fortum was mentioned by the moderator. Fortum were seen as a bit confusing in regards to the association of energy and the participants stated that it had been hard to assign the brand to the right product category.

"I think that Fortum sounds like a real estate company and that is why I do not think about them as an energy corporation or supplier" (FG, 2016, 26:40).

"[…] Fortum not at all. It also took me some time to realise what Fortum was […] I did not know what it was until I made some research" (FG, 2016, 27:46).

During the conducted focus group, the participants seemed to have difficulties with recalling energy companies in general, something that is supported by the quantitative data. On the statement *"I am well aware of the different actors that I can choose on the Swedish market"* 19 % (17) 'Strongly disagree' and 22 % (20) 'Disagree'.[12] This indicators suggest consumer limitation in brand awareness for different brands on the energy market. In comparison with other industries, such as the telecommunication industry, the focus group emphasised that it was much easier to recall different actors on the market (FG, 2016, 30:19). The indicators demonstrate the importance of brand awareness to the correct product/service category. This because, in this case the green energy brand Fortum, the participants of the focus group would not consider this brand since it would not be recalled or even linked to the right product category during a purchase decision.

The second step in the brand resonance pyramid is answering the question: *what are you?* (Kotler & Keller, 2012). This is the step where a company creates its own position on the market and in the minds of the consumers. The second step of the CBBE-model is where it starts to get problematic for the green energy actors in the Swedish market. This is because indicators show that energy companies in general seems to have problems with creating unique and favourable brand associations and are thus not able to create a clear position in the minds of the consumers. This is pointed out by some of the participants of the conducted focus group:

"I think that many [energy companies] are bad at making themselves remembered for what they are" (FG, 2016, 26:47)

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[12] Results from the survey is presented with the percentage followed by the specific number of respondents in parentheses.

"[…] so differences between different actors…you do not know that much about them it is a bit willy-nilly. They just have different names probably." (FG, 2016, 28:05).

Additional support for this was found in the conducted survey where 22 % (20) of the respondents answered 'Strongly disagree' and 27 % (24) answered 'Disagree' on the statement *"I am associating the Swedish energy companies with different characteristics"*. These findings could indicates that energy companies on the Swedish energy market might experience difficulties with creating a clear brand position and answering the question: *What are you?* The only example given for a clear association during the focus group was the brand Vattenfall which was associated with hydro power, which could be explained by the name of the brand; "Waterfall" (FG, 2016, 26:59). This second step in the CBBE-model is concerned with creating a Points-of-Difference (Kotler & Keller, 2012). From a green energy company's perspective, can a green energy production represent the POD?

Green energy has received great attention from Swedish the government and energy actors where more than half of its energy usage originates from renewable energy sources with a share of 52 % during 2013 (SEA, 2015). According to the informant from both GodEl and Fortum, energy companies' attention for green energy has grown over the last years in Sweden, shaping the green product to something that is now more perceived as a hygiene factor by consumers (Tollin, 2016, 19:14; Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 21:44). A hygiene factor refers to, as explained by the informants, that the purchase of the product does not lead to satisfaction but rather dissatisfaction in the absence of it. Every energy company on the Swedish market have the possibility to retail green energy to the consumers and all energy actors at the Swedish energy market are more or less including green energy in their offers to consumers. Hence, energy companies that are not exclusively selling green energy towards the Swedish consumers, have managed to use green energy as a competitive Point-of-Parity. A company can use a competitive POP as a way to negate a competitors perceived POD (Kotler & Keller, 2012). This because energy companies that are offering a mix of energy sources to consumers, are able to negate green energy companies POD since they are able to offer this green product as well. Green energy companies' POD has been based on

the fact that all production of its energy is generated from green sources, which competitors are able to match for customers and enable them to only pay for green energy since it is included in their mix of energy. As emphasised by the informant from GodEl, these companies have also created their own green labels that aims to substitute the only third party label for environmental certified energy by SSNC (Tollin, 2016, 14:23). This entails a problem for the branding of a green energy company since a brands POD needs to be attributes and benefits that are strongly associated with one brand and not believed be found in a competitor (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Hence, it is possible that this is one of the reasons for why green energy companies would experience difficulties with separating themselves from competitors with clear green associations based on production of green energy.

By looking at the two building blocks in the second step in the CBBE-model, *Performance* which is concerned with the functional aspect, is limited for green energy companies since it is mostly linked to the actual quality of the product. Much focus needs for this reason be put on the other building block, *Imagery,* which is concerned with the consumer's psychological/social needs. It is thus relevant to understand the consumers' social and psychological needs. The informants from Fortum elaborated on the issue for energy companies to differentiate themselves. It is emphasised that the energy industry in general have fallen behind, in comparison to other industries, in regards to the understanding of different types of customers, that consumes are behaving in different ways and where the planning phase for attracting these consumers is slow and needs to be more efficient (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 41:56). It takes too long for energy companies to adapt and react to consumers where the informants from Fortum compare the energy industry with the automotive industry. Bases on consumption for electric vehicles are different depending on the consumer according to the informants from Fortum, where energy actors have a lot to learn in how to reach different consumer types.

Based on the indicators for green energy in regards to the CBBE-model, the findings from conversations with Swedish energy providers and energy consumers indicate that there has been a certain unclarity in terms of the POD and as a consequence, an untouched potential in creating brand equity and thus obtain an increased brand loyalty and engagement (Kotler & Keller, 2012). As emphasised by informants from Fortum, it is relevant

to understand the different ways a consumer may perceive and consume energy to investigate how this can be adapted and used in marketing communication. In the next section I will analyse the insights regarding green energy as a product which is followed by previous misalignment within communication of green energy. This is followed by an analysis that views the energy consumer from the different perspectives presented by Østergaard and Jantzen (2000) and elaborate on the different meanings and needs that energy represents for a consumer.

4.2 The Green Energy Product

To determine what kind of message a green energy brand should focus on in their marketing communication it is relevant to understand what type of product that is promoted and how it differs from competitors. Insights in regards to the energy product will be analysed by determining consumers' product involvement and motivation for purchase of green energy in accordance with the level of involvement and motivation (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012), followed by the actual main benefit that green energy actually provides for the consumer. By understanding the benefit, level of involvement and consumer motivation for green energy the indicators regarding previous marketing communication for green energy can be analysed and additional suggestions for improvements can be suggested that are more likely to entail in favourable brand associations for a green energy brand.

4.2.1 Energy Involvement & Motivation

Coherently through the gathering of insights in this study, informants emphasised that energy is in general seen as a low involvement product and not particularly exciting (Vansvik, 2016, 10:44; Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 13:14, Tollin, 2016, 30:11). This notion is supported by the respondents of the questionnaire where 27 % (24) 'Strongly disagree' and 28 % (25) 'Disagree' with the statement: "*I spend a lot of time when I choose an energy contract*". Only 4 % (4 respondents) 'Strongly agree' and 16 % (14 respondents) 'Agree' with the statement. For this reason, I would argue that energy is generally perceived by both energy companies and consumers as a low involvement product. It must further be recognised that some consumers would put more time and effort into the purchase of energy and perhaps not categorise it as

a as low involvement product. As suggested by the informants from Fortum, consumers receiving a higher price tag on their energy consumption, such as consumers residing in houses, are more involved and puts more time on their energy agreements because the energy bill becomes a bigger part of the household expenses (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 15:24). Hence, the branding process must take this into consideration when targeting different consumer segments. Major differences could not be identified between consumers in houses and apartments in the result from the survey but got certain support during the conducted focus group where it was suggested by the participants that more time was spend if residing in a house (FG, 2016, 14:50). A greater share of the yearly expenses could thus increase the level of involvement when choosing energy contract. Since this thesis has a focus on green energy it is interesting if consumers' environmental concerns would entail a higher level of involvement. Informant from GodEl points out that consumers' concern for the environment could entail higher level of involvement (Tollin, 2016, 15:40). However, informant from SNE would emphasised that this is not the case but that the financial aspect is still the dominant concern which would increase the involvement and green energy is rather something that consumers sees as a positive attribute (Vansvik, 2016, 10:30). The results from the conducted survey further support the latter where respondents who were receiving environmental certified energy or rank this attribute as important did not report an increased level on time on their energy purchase than other respondents. Hence, these indicators points us towards that green energy, is also seen as a low involvement product for the majority of consumers and referred to as such by the energy companies and should therefore primarily be analysed accordingly. It must however also be acknowledged that depending on higher expenses because of energy consumption the level of involvement increases. The more energy a consumer use, the bigger part of the household expenses it becomes, and subsequently a higher level of involvement. This is no surprise since it follows the previous presented concept of involvement, where an increased financial risk would implicate a higher level of involvement (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012). Hence, green energy is not separated from conventional energy and predominantly categorised as a low involvement product.

Indicators for this thesis points towards that consumer motivation for the purchase of energy, whether it is green or conventional, can be seen as predominantly

informational (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012). This is suggested by the informant from SNE:

>*"I believe that in general, people think that choosing electricity supplier is something that is pretty tedious and just troublesome. They just want something that works"* (Vansvik, 2016, 07:04).

Other statements supported this notion, where the informant from GodEl suggested that it is not unusual that the consumer just wants something that works and do not actually care or are even aware of what they have chosen (Tollin, 2016, 15:55). One of the most important factors for the consumer when choosing energy supplier is '*A quick and easy process*' as will be elaborated on later and according to informants of Fortum, energy in general is seen as a hygiene factor by the majority of the consumers (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 12:35). The consumer motivation for purchasing energy is thus of more informational than transformational nature where it solves a problem so that the consumer's everyday life works (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012). In relation to the level of involvement and type of motivation, green energy does not differ from conventional energy and are most relevant to be seen as a low involvement product with an informational motivation.

4.2.2 The Main Benefit of Green energy

The empirical data in this thesis points towards that the dominant benefit for the green energy product compared to conventional, is that the customer can consume energy and avoid a bad conscience. This is coherently expressed by the informants, where reasons for choosing green energy is of a moral matter, with social- and environmental concerns (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 54:38; Vansvik, 2016 21:20; FG, 2016, 15:31; Tollin, 22:16). Supportive results is also that 18 % (16) answers 'Strongly agree' and 26 % (23) answers 'Agree' on the statement "*I get a bad conscience when consuming a lot of energy when I am able to save*". The majority of these respondents did not have green energy or were even aware if they had a certified energy supply. More than half of these respondents (56 %) did not know if their energy were green or had any environmental label. Bad conscience can be linked to the results from the survey

where 21 % (19) answers 'Strongly agree' and 33 % (30) answers 'Agree' with the statement *"I believe that it is an environmental problem that we use a lot of energy in Sweden"*. Because of these indicators I argue that the consumption of green energy is related to an informational motivation, where the consumer has a problem that needs to be avoided or solved (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012). This since when consumers' usage and consumption of energy increases it results in a bad conscience, where green energy enables the avoidance of this problem. The strength and benefit of green energy is thus being a product that enables consumers' everyday life to work, but doing so in a better way than conventional energy by solving a bad conscience that occurs subsequent to the consumption of the product.

4.3 Marketing Communication

Marketing communication, as previously mentioned, can be seen as the voice of a company's brand and establish a dialogue with the consumer that will create or develop the relationship that consumers will have with the company (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In this section I will analyse relevant insights related to previous marketing communication messages for green energy and how these efforts could be improved based on the benefit on green energy. As mentioned during the introduction of this thesis, the presence of environmental arguments in marketing communication is most common in the energy market when comparing 37 different industries in Sweden. It was found that the energy market is by far the market with the most frequency and usage of environmental arguments from energy companies' marketing communication (SCA, 2015a). Energy actors investigated in this report included 9 of the biggest companies in the Swedish market, including the participants of this study, Fortum and GodEl (SCA, 2015a). What is of relevance is the environmental arguments and communication messages that has been used. The most common environmental arguments used for consumer persuasion was versions of arguments related to the future, such as 'the energy of the future', 'future power' and 'future energy development' (SCA, 2015a). Highly recurrent has also been different arguments encouraging the consumer to be 'Smart', and this in relation to 'smart energy consumption' and 'consumers saving energy' (SCA, 2015a).

4.3.1 The Future Energy

According to the results from the conducted survey for this thesis, the attribute 'The company investing for future solutions' was not ranked particularly high as will later be presented. It could thus be relevant to question the effect of these types of messages. Green energy seems to be more relevant for consumers in regards to the future innovation in comparison to conventional energy which could be perceived as out dated and unmodern as suggested by informants from GodEl, Fortum and the focus group (Tollin, 2016, 22:33; FG, 2016, 15:17; Hedman & Lindevall, 2016 32:33). I argue that future innovation and technology are highly related to green energy and an important part to include in the communication message for green energy companies, because it has been emphasised as such by informants from both GodEl and Fortum (Tollin, 2016, 17:55; Hedvall & Lindevall, 2016, 56:24). Valuable insights connected to this is provided by informants from Fortum. The company previously had a lot of communication in regards to future energy innovation and technology, but there was a problem to engage the consumers and the reason for this was that the message was too focused on research and development (R&D) and did not involve the value for the customers (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 56:23). Insights from informants from Fortum further elaborates on future visions and research and development that points in the right direction for how this could be improved:

> *"[…] we had this "the future energy" where we looked for evidence, hydro power, olive cores for district heating and so on, where it was a challenge that it was very R & D focused and we had difficulties to involve the customer offer since they were not here. We felt that we needed to expand that concept a bit to get the customer involved"* (Hedvall & Lindevall, 2016, 56:24).

Indicators from the focus group show us that perhaps not a company's future innovation and biotechnology by itself is of the specific interest, but the future aspect is important to the consumers when it concerns to the perception of the energy company's future ambitions and visions:

"Also future visions, so that you can see a clear future vision and not just that it is here and now. Being able to see our [the energy provider] goal to lower prices, create solar power or what it might be that they are putting their research on. Just so that they tell us that they want to do something better and that they are putting money on research." (FG, 2016, 01:01:55).

"[...] so the environmental impact, I believe that there must be something there as well. So there must be real utopia [future vision] behind that will create an idea about something greater for one [consumer] to be driven to do something. So sure, money, but an idea behind so that you can really see that this will benefit everyone in the future" (FG, 2016, 38:37).

These indicators show that it is not relevant to only communicate that investments in future technology and research are made, but what is of interest for consumers is rather to express how this affects them and how they are involved in the positive development by including the future vision of the company. The indicators points towards that to strengthen a the brand of a green energy company in regards to messages regarding future innovation and investments, the communication needs to include how the future of green energy more specifically are contributing to social responsibility that makes it relevant for the consumer.

4.3.2 Saving Energy or Choosing Green Energy

The topics that are recurrent during the interview with the informants from Fortum, is that the entire energy industry for a long time has focused its environmental arguments on saving energy and additionally trying to explain how the energy market works:

"[…] we as an industry has for a long time been wanting to explain how complicated this is [the energy market] and then been very focused on saving [energy]" (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 16:15).

Saving energy refers to the reduction in consumers' energy usage. The focus on communications regarding consumers saving energy is supported by the results of the

conducted survey for this thesis where 16 % (14) answered 'Strongly agree' and 37 % (33) answered 'Agree' on the statement '*I have experienced communication from companies and organisations that urges me to reduce my energy consumption*'. Relevant in regards to this is what informants from Fortum highlights; energy companies have had a behaviour in actively promoting customers reduce the consumption of their product (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 22:36). Energy companies, including the green energy companies, has been focused on communicating the message that it is important from an environmental perspective that consumers reduce their energy consumption. The energy industry association Swedish Energy (Svensk Energi), developed a report in 2012 based on the results from a survey containing 3 013 Swedish consumer respondents. The results from the report supports the notion that Swedish consumers believe that saving energy is important for the environment. It was found that around 30 % believe that they can affect the climate footprint by reducing their energy consumption (Swedish Energy, 2012). It is suggested by the informants from Fortum that consumers, because of previous message that encourages energy saving, have a twisted distorted picture of what is actually the best way in regards to helping the environment.

> *"[…] if you have LED lights, it does not matter. Using a timer on it, then the timer will use more [energy] than the lamp. People have generally a really weird perception [on saving energy]"* (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 16:48).

Encouraging consumers to save energy can also be seen as a counterproductive behaviour for green energy companies, because instead of presenting the main benefit of the product that the company is selling, the consumer is actually encouraged to reduce the consumption of it. Furthermore, I argue that the communication message focusing on encouraging consumers' to reduce energy consumption could have limited affect. Firstly, because informants from Fortum states that they themselves and competitors have been focused on communicating this message without success (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 22:36). Secondly, because it could be seen as a restriction in consumers' freedom to consume how they want. Consumers have a psychological need to maintain their freedom and when something is threatening that freedom, consumers tends to react against this impact, wishing and trying to get whatever it

might be even more than before (Cialdini, 2005). This could thus rather lead to a negative attitude and associations towards the brand. Indicators points instead towards that focus should be put on the benefit of the green product and an energy consumption that would not entail a bad conscience. Instead of saving energy it is better to choose the "right" energy:

"[...] we have been there for several years and talked about renewable energy but we want to take this a step further as we have discussed, if you have renewable energy production, then you do not need to save [energy]. Then you can use your product with a clean conscience" (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016 15:29).

Additionally, I would argue that the efforts to explain how the energy market works has not been successful or necessary. Firstly, because previous research has found that still only limited amount of consumers understands the energy market, this despite efforts from different actors to explain it (SCA, 2009). The results from the conducted survey for this thesis supports this notion where only 9 % (8) answers 'Strongly agree' and 11% (10) answers 'Agree' with the statement "*I understand well how the energy market works*". Secondly because, as emphasised by Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott (2012), in a low involvement product category, focus should not be put on informative messages but on the benefit of the product in a clear understandable way. This is elaborated on by informants from Fortum who states that few consumers actually understands the energy market, and emphasises that this is not something that is actually necessary (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 14:47). It is suggested by the informants that consumers do not fully understand other industries with other low involvement products e.g. the food industry.

4.4 Consumption of Energy

Using the different consumer approaches presented by Østergaard and Jantzen (2000) it is possible to view the consumption of energy from different perspectives. These perspectives can explain how the consumer actually buys and consumes energy, which is relevant to understand from a branding and communication perspective since the different angles entails different actions and reasoning for how and what brand associations could be created for

green energy companies. During the conducted interviews and focus groups for this study, different types of situations and reasons for consumption of energy has appeared. This section will elaborate on consumers by observing them through the different approaches presented by Østergaard and Jantzen (2000) to demonstrate how the consumption of energy can be understood. This will be related to indicators in regards green energy where insights regarding different methods for reaching the consumers will be presented.

4.4.1 Basic Energy Need

Viewing the consumer from a buyer behaviour perspective where the consumer is viewed as an instinct driven animal, the consumer is reacting to different stimuli that creates a buying behaviour fulfilling basic individual needs (Østergaard & Jantzen, 2000). The purchase of energy is in most cases seen as something that is just necessary for the consumer's everyday life, where the consumer just wants the energy supply to work without any complications. Choosing energy supplier is something that many Swedish consumers sees as a very dull and uninteresting activity. Informant from SNE expresses that even if there are exceptions, the energy product is mostly seen as a necessary evil, and an issue that just needs to be solved (Vansvik, 2016, 10:45). Furthermore, the informant from SSNC elaborates that energy could be seen as a minor detail in consumers' everyday life, and not something that perhaps is put a lot of effort and attention towards (Jonsson, 2016a, 29:45). It is also well described by informant from Fortum:

> " […] both electricity and heating products, most people see these as hygiene factors, you do not think about it, it just needs to work. Otherwise you will get very irritated when it does not" (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 12:35).

Presented below, the notion of a quick and easy process of dealing with the energy provider is of importance for every energy actor where the consumer problem just needs to be solved. What is of particular interest in relation to the instinct driven consumer is that it seems to be a necessity for an energy company to elicit a feeling of being reliable so that the consumer's everyday life will proceed without any complications. The participants of the focus group are

pointing out trust issues and the importance of trust in relation to energy companies on the Swedish market, where there is a perception that energy providers/traders are trying to deceive consumers (FG, 2016, 03:28). This notion is supported by a conducted report by Swedish Consumer Agency where the Swedish energy market was ranked as one of the five most problematic in the eyes of the consumer and perceived as very untrustworthy compared to 45 other markets (SCA, 2015b). Additional support for the necessity of trust and reliability for an energy consumer is found in the conducted survey. The attribute *'The company is perceived as reliable'* received the highest score of all attributes, where 60 % (54) of the respondents ranked the attribute as 'Very Important'. Hence, I argue that an energy company that feels safe and reliable could have a great impact on the consumers' choice because this notion seems to be a recurrent and emphasised by informants and expressed several times during the focus group:

"[…] if I know about their name. If an energy company contacts me and I do not know their name or anything, of course you can look it up, but that is something I consider. Such as ÖresundsKraft for example, I know their name so it is a bigger chance that I will pick them." (FG, 2016, 10:45).

"[…] when it comes to their name, then I just got an interesting thought, in regards to energy companies I want a company with a name that sounds safe and established." (FG, 2016, 11:33).

When viewing the consumer's basic need as an instinct driven animal in relation to Østergaard and Jantzen (2000), the findings suggests that the stimuli that a consumer reacts on in relation to energy companies is the feeling of trust and the perception as a reliable actor on the market due to the overall perception of an untrustworthy industry. The consumer perception of a reliable company is not something that is driven by a rational thinking from the consumer, but can be seen as a feeling that derives from different aspects from a company such as the given examples in the focus group, name and brand recognition.

The concept of classical conditioning becomes relevant for energy companies in their marketing towards consumers. When energy, that consumers in this case would have a

neutral feeling towards, is paired with an unconditioned stimulus that is associated with trust, it is possible for the brand of the product to elicit the same feeling that is generated from that stimulus (Nord & Peter, 1980). In regards to green energy, the aim would be to pair the brand with an unconditioned stimuli of trust that could also be related to the benefit of the product creating a feeling within the consumer that contributes to the perception of the company brand as reliable and the safe choice. This is also in accordance with secondary associations where other information in memory of the consumer will be associated with the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Hence, I argue that it is relevant for energy companies to include classical conditioning to improve their perception as reliable since the findings suggests that this has previously been done successfully. In solving the necessity of consumer perception of being trustworthy and reliable, GodEl has successfully used a person/brand endorser that plays a vital part in their marketing:

> *"[…] many [people] think about Lasse [Lars] Åberg when they are thinking about GodEl. It has been an important part of our strategy since we are [were] small, unknown and had a strange business model were we are saying that we will give away all our money. Do people believe that? [...] it is not obvious that you would trust this type of actor [GodEl] and then we thought that a super trustworthy person, if he is on board then that will help us. It has really been super successful"* (Tollin, 2016, 20:23).

Lars Åberg is a famous actor and artist in Sweden who repeatedly has represented GodEl, and because of his participation the brand has become more trustworthy and reliable according to the GodEl informant. This celebrity elicits a feeling and perception within the consumer that can be related to classical conditioning. The brand that consumers might have a neutral feeling towards is paired with an unconditioned stimulus, in this case Lars Åberg, the brand will elicit the same feeling that is generated from that stimulus (Nord & Peter, 1980). This brand endorser has nothing to do with the energy market from the beginning, but is still able to improve the brand's trustworthiness. Fortum has another example of this who includes previous children's program host Jonas Leksell in their former marketing campaign for communicating hydro power and thus pairing unconditioned stimulus with green energy

(Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 17:55). Furthermore in regards to green energy, I argue that there is advantages with collaborating with SSNC and the environmental certification BM which could represents an unconditioned stimulus that elicits a feeling of trust. Firstly because SSNC is the biggest environmental non-governmental organisation in Sweden and well known according to the informant, and secondly since the purpose of the label is supposed to work as a guarantee for the consumers, who will be able to put less time and effort on their energy purchase since the third party label will secure payment for environmental friendly energy (Jonsson, 2016, 43:48). According to administrator of BM energy certification, Magnus Jonsson, the label BM have a high awareness similar to other environmental third party certifications and currently purchased by 5 % of the Swedish consumers (Jonsson, 2016b). The label is a combination of SSNC's logo and the text *"Bra Miljöval"* (good environmental choice). During the conducted focus group, the participants were exposed to the logo and stated that they all recognised it and had been exposed to it before and 13 % of the respondents of the conducted survey for this thesis stated that their energy was labelled BM. In the case of energy, the inclusion of the BM certification could be a great contributor that elicits positive brand associations, improving the feeling of trust and consumer perception that energy companies tries to deceive the consumer as expressed during the focus group (FG, 2016, 01:10) while separating the brand from other energy competitors that uses their own green labels as a substitute.

4.4.2 Rational Energy Consumption

When viewing the consumer from a consumer behaviour perspective, consumption is based on the rational reasoning where the best option is chosen based on the most valuable attributes (Østergaard & Jantzen, 2000). Hence, what is relevant is the different attributes that are valued as important to the consumer, which will be the main driver when choosing energy provider. During the conducted survey, the respondents were asked to rank the importance of different attributes for energy providers that derived from the qualitative data. These are displayed in *Figure 4* and represents the average score for each attribute, where 5 is the highest possible score. The ranking of the attributes indicates that consumer concerns for the environment is important based on *"Production method"* and *"Environmental labelled energy"*. The two attributes that can be seen as related to each other since respondents ranking
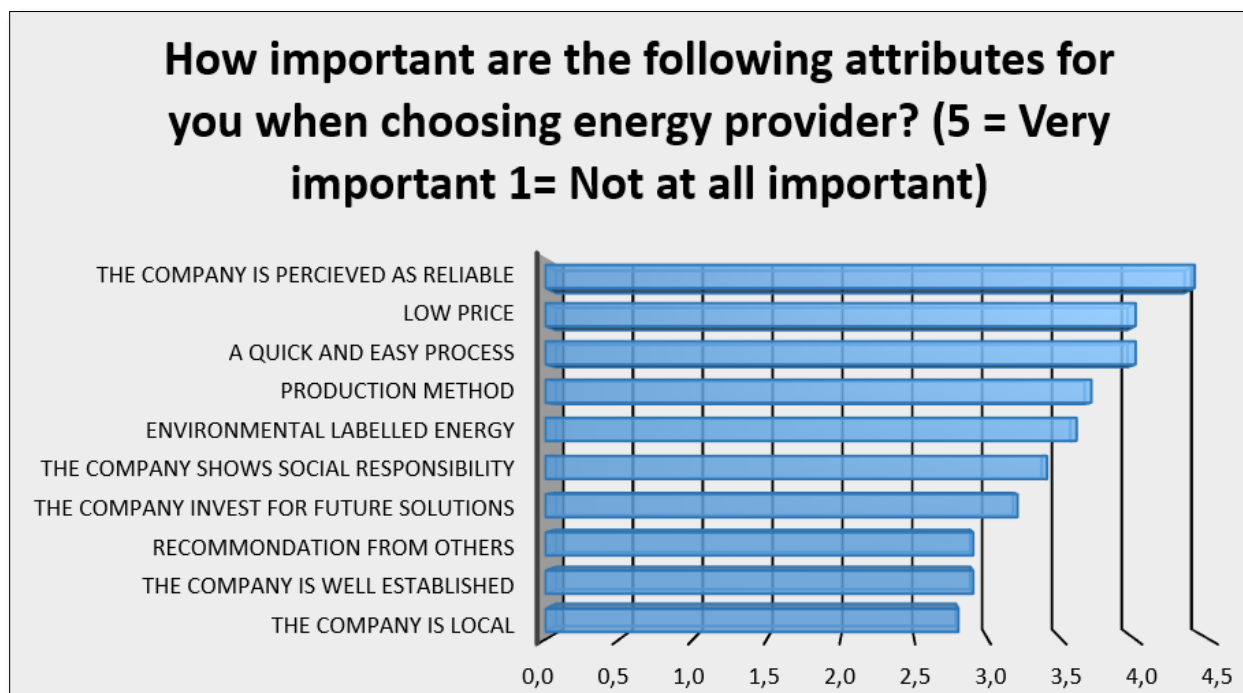
Figure 4 Average score for attributes regarding choice of energy provider. 5 is the highest score

"Production method" as 'Very important' or 'Important' also ranked "Environmental labelled energy similar". This indicates that the rational consumer would see the environmental aspects as something important in regards to energy purchase. For a green energy company, this is relevant since it demonstrates that Swedish consumers consider green energy to differ from conventional which can be linked to the benefit previously presented.

The attribute of being reliable as a company was previously argued to be a basic need for the consumer. On the other hand, it can also be seen as an attribute based on rational reasoning where the consumer would consider different factors that would make an energy company more reliable. Several factors might contribute to creating a brand which is perceived as more reliable for a rational consumer. Factors that has been suggested was well established actors, local presence and track record (FG, 2016 12:06). The attribute 'A Quick and easy process' can be linked to the performance of the brand and functional aspects in the CBBE-model where the energy company's customer service is an important attribute for the rational consumer. The functional aspect for a green energy brand is hard to separate from conventional, where the attribute 'A quick and easy process' referring to customer service, rather becomes a category POP which is something that all actors on the market needs to possess to be able to compete (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

During the conducted focus group, the most recurrent attribute discussed by the participants was the price of energy. It was firstly stated that there is a lot of competition regarding price between the different energy companies on the Swedish market to convince the consumers that their contract has the lowest price, which was seen as something annoying and tiresome (FG, 2016, 01:50). Nevertheless, it was clearly suggested that a low price is a very important attribute, because when discussing the time that was spend to find the most suitable energy provider, the attribute was stated to receive the greatest focus (FG, 2016, 02:29). The quantitative data supports that a low price is very important for the consumers since it received the second highest rank by the respondents. It is perhaps not a surprising result that price is an important factor for energy since, as previously mentioned, it is an intangible product where there is an absence in different qualities between the products from the different companies. Furthermore if the consumer faces an absence of differences between brands, the product/service can basically be seen as a commodity where differentiation between competitors most likely will be focused on price (Kotler & Keller, 2012). What is interesting in regards to price from a green energy company's perspective, is that consumer attitude towards green energy in relation to price seems to be negative. During the focus group it is recurrently expressed that green energy has the characteristic of being more expensive than conventional energy, however, when asked if this is actually a fact the

informants were more hesitant. (FG, 2016, 49:59). Consumer perception that green energy is more expensive than conventional energy is supported by the result from the survey where 11 % (10) answered 'Strongly agree' and 30 % (26) answered 'Agree' with the statement *"I perceive energy produced from renewable sources to be more expensive compared to conventional sources"*. This is suggested to be one of the most important reasons for not choosing green energy during the focus group where the price level needs to be equal or lower to be considered (FG, 2016, 54:18). To state that green energy is more expensive than conventional is however not correct which is stated by several informants from the conducted interviews. The informant from GodEl explains that they exclusively sell SSNC certified energy but still have a price guarantee (Tollin, 2016, 35:29). Report from Swedish Consumer Agency confirms that SSNC certified electricity is in one third of the cases not more expensive (SCA, 2010). When investigating the different important attributes for energy, 'Production method' and 'Environmental labelled energy' was highly ranked by the respondents. Hence, SSNC and the BM-label becomes important also when viewing the consumer from a rational perspective. The consumer perception of a higher price will entail an obstacle for the green energy brand where the POD entails a weakness in for the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2012). The BM label will facilitate a rationalisation of a higher price since the certification entails that the consumer would be a part of future green energy investments and contribute to protecting ecosystems (Jonsson, 2016, 15,09, 19:59). BM thus becomes a competitive POP to meet competitors POD in regards to a lower price (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Another way of using a competitive POP is to focus on changing the perception that the price for green energy is higher than the price for conventional. GodEl is currently using a competitive POP by including a 'price guarantee' to meet consumer perception of being more expensive (Tollin, 2016, 35:30).

Previously presented indicators show that it is not relevant to only communicate that investments in future technology and research are made, but in a clear way express how this affects the consumers and how they are involved in the positive development by including the future vision of the company. This can be related to the respondents also valued an energy company's 'Social responsibility' as a more important attribute than 'Investments for future solutions'. Future investments has been emphasised by several informants of industry actors

in conducted interviews to be an important attribute to the consumer. Informant from GodEl elaborates:

> *"I think many [consumers] believes that it is important that my [their] energy provider is working forward with development, if you know what I mean. Not be too out-dated but that innovation and biotechnology should play a part. I think that is important for many as well, that you perceive it [the energy provider] as something modern."* (Tollin, 2016, 17:55).

Because of its unusual business model, GodEl becomes a good example since it is one of those energy companies that consciously or unconsciously has managed to combine these two attributes. According to the informant from GodEl, the consumers' associations for the brand is charity/social responsibility and an environmental friendly energy which clearly presents what positive difference the customer gets and the benefit of choosing GodEl as their energy provider (Tollin, 2016, 29:21). Associations for GodEl has not been focused on a production method but rather what the company wants to achieve and their future vision creating a clear POD in relation to their competitors. Because of this I argue that environmental arguments regarding the future innovation of green energy could be successful if communicated combined with the vision of the green energy brand and why it relates to the consumer. Several informants emphasises the importance of present these investments in green energy in a more visible way by demonstrating the benefit of the product through clear examples (Tollin, 2016, 29:50; Jonsson, 2016, 36:40; Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 31:26).

4.4.3 Energy as Experience

In consumer research when the consumer is seen similar to a tourist, the consumer's experience and search for meaning by consumption is of relevance (Østergaard & Jantzen, 2000). Since energy is not a product that is bought by consumers for the experience of the product, it is challenging to argue that the purchase of energy or entering energy contracts, in itself is done for experiential reasons. As previously been stated, energy consumption is seen as a hygiene factor and a problem that needs to be solved to make consumers' everyday life

work and thus not purchased for providing a great experience. However, when seeing energy from a perspective where the reason for consumption is experiential, I argue that energy has a very unique and valuable position as a product. The reason for this is because energy to a great extent is the foundation for many different experiences which are not possible to carry out in its absence. Traditional experiences such as dining at restaurants, amusement parks and movie theatres, together with newer types of entertainment such as online computer gaming and digital festivals, are all dependent on an energy supply that enables the consumer's experience. The informants from Fortum emphasises the importance of energy because it improves consumers lives and enables many different experiences (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 01:45:31):

> *"[…] what is it that you really care about, is it that it [energy] is produced by hydro? Perhaps not, but perhaps you care about what it actually enables. You can Skype, drive electrical cars, execute operations from a distance, everything that has to do with modern technology is enabled by electricity"* (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 01:46:25).

Depending on the target group for the energy company, different experiences would create favourable associations to the brand by linking the brand to this other information in memory which conveys meaning to consumers and facilitates the creation for brand equity (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Indicators has pointed to that energy companies would be able to in a better way use the unique position as an enabler for different experiences, which is actually what the consumer is affected by (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 01:46:15). Depending on the target group for the energy company, the experience that energy actually enables for the consumer would create associations where the brand gets linked to the other information in memory which is meaningful to consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Consumers looking for experiences via consumption would through secondary associations to relevant events, causes and happenings create mental structures of positive associations with the brand. The lack of this step further is expressed during the focus group:

"They need to be more present among us (consumers), show it and be on our level. Not just do TV commercials or charging the city's electrical cars." (FG, 2016, 64:05).

Successful examples of these type of activities in the sense of great interaction with the consumers are given by informants where the benefit of green energy entails an experience that could be seen as guilt free. Fortum presents several public relation events in relation to green energy and the brand that has been very successful of reaching out to consumers located in Stockholm, getting them involved and engaged in the company (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 01:10:21), and different collaboration is suggested by SNF who together with the cinema Swedish Film and the Science Centre Universeum who promotes their green energy and SNF becomes the enabler of the experience (Vansvik, 2016, 04:59; 19:49). These efforts are examples of how green energy companies can promote their product which links other information in memory that conveys meaning to consumers.

4.4.4 Social Energy Consumption

By viewing the energy consumer as part of a group, consumption takes part in a social context where products and services becomes a part of the consumer's identity (Østergaard & Jantzen, 2000; Belk, 1988). Again, the intangible nature of energy as a product becomes an issue where the social consumption aspect for green energy is not possible to visibly display for other consumers that would entail social recognition. Nevertheless, I argue that social aspects for energy consumption affects the consumer choice of energy provider despite the intangible nature of the product. Indicators show that consumers' energy consumption can be seen in a social context. Informants form several sources suggests that a peer pressure would increase the consumer interest for green energy (Tollin, 2016, 22:25; Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 43.34; FG, 2016, 15:17). Peer pressure refers to that consumers' experience an urge for consuming green energy if others would. It is suggested in the focus group that the risk of being seen as an irresponsible person because of consumption of conventional energy would create a motivation for changing to a green energy provider (FG, 2016, 55:13). The social aspect is recurrent from different sources and can clearly be related to what Cialdini (2005) refers to as social proof, where a consumer sees a behaviour as correct when witnessing others behaving

in the same way. The more consumers that thus would consume green energy, the more this behaviour is perceived as correct. What is of particular interest is thus how it is possible to increase the social proof for green energy and also how consumers are able to express themselves for social recognition in regards to the product.

There are several indicators that demonstrates that green energy brands are able to increase the possibilities for social energy consumption. Examples given by informants in Fortum could be loyalty programs for brand enthusiasts who would enter a brand community for receive credits and offers in relation to their energy consumption. The informant from GodEl emphasises the importance of the increasing social media usage in relation to energy, where consumers now have the possibility to socially present ones involvement particularly in relation to green energy solutions:

> *"What I or we can see clearly is the enormous pressure in social media when we are talking about energy and environment on the webpage and on Facebook which is a channel that is important to us. We have noticed the great interest for these types of subjects where people is getting involved, share and becomes a part of the topic in different ways [...] it becomes image creation and [we are] trying to have content that is news oriented and related to energy and biotechnology"* (Tollin, 2016, 25:22).

The growth and expansion of social media seems to have enabled energy to become a product that now could be expressed and presented to other consumers in a clearer way than before. The consumer is in different ways able to show personal support for green energy towards other consumers and in relation to the green energy brand which then becomes a part of the consumer's identity (Belk, 1988). Furthermore, what previously has been touched upon, but not specifically addressed, is the possibility to physically make green energy visible and tangible, i.e. consumers' own production of energy. This topic has been highly recurrent in the empirical data and thus considered relevant since it provides another dimension of green energy which increase the differentiation from conventional. In the report from Swedish Energy (2012) the consumer interest for energy production is clear. When answering the question '*Would you consider producing your own electricity in the future?*' 42 % of the respondent

answered 'Yes, definitely' and 32 % answered 'Yes, probably'. Further the interest for solar has increased and according to a smaller survey of Swedish consumers conducted by SSNC, solar was seen as the most popular source of energy if the consumers would choose one (Jonsson, 2016a, 27:14). I acknowledge that consumers might be optimistic about the future aspects of home production of energy and express a clear interest for this in a survey, but act differently when the decision actually is being made. Solar, as suggested by informants from Fortum, is not an efficient solution for energy production in Sweden, since during the winter season when demand is high there is low sunlight (Hedman & Lindevall, 2016, 34:15). Regardless of the limitations of solar Fortum is still offering solar installations for their customers. A brand combining green energy and consumers' own production, could provide a consumer with a product that becomes a symbol, actually possible to display to other consumers which enables social recognition where the consumer would be able consume in a social context.

5. Discussion

The world's energy supply is currently standing in front of a major transition from conventional to green energy. Sweden have been one of the most eminent countries in regards to this transition. However, consumer interest and demand for the green energy product has still been low and thus providing limited financial incentives for energy companies to increase their green energy production and offers. Branding and communication efforts for green energy has seen limited impact so far. Hence, the objective for this thesis was to investigate how Swedish green energy companies can improve their branding and communication efforts, increasing the consumer demand and thus accelerating the transition from conventional to green energy.

Previous research has found that green products can be perceived, depending on category, to have comparable or superior quality to non-green products (Manget et al., 2009). Previous findings from Manget et al. (2009) suggests that 'Energy provider' is not a category where the green product is perceived with higher quality. Differentiate green from conventional energy must thus not be made from quality differences but from what other benefit the product actually provides the customer with. The main benefit that has been emphasised by informants in this thesis is more in line with the findings of Thøgersen (2011) regarding green products, where these are purchased for unselfish reasons in sense of universalism and benevolence. During the analysis of the data for this thesis, the difference between green and conventional energy was found to be related to consumer motivation for the product. Support for the notion that environmental concerns or the purchase of green energy would increase the level of involvement could not be found and thus does not support previous findings by Paladino and Pandit (2012). A reason for this could be explained by the greater supply of green energy in Sweden compared to the previous research conducted by Paladino and Pandit (2012) in Australia. Both green and conventional energy was found to have an informational motivation and seen as a hygiene factor in the consumer's life and only noticed in its absence. Additionally, green energy was found to differ from conventional energy since it does not only solve a problem for making the consumer's everyday life work, but was found to also hold an additional benefit since it helps the consumer with avoiding a bad conscience that is subsequent to consumption of energy.

The concept of brand equity was used to understand how green energy companies could improve their branding efforts, since when brand equity is created this entails increased loyal customers and increased engagement in the brand and product (Keller, 2009). CBBE-model was used to analyse in which aspects green energy companies could be facing difficulties for reaching brand equity. The findings revealed that already in the initial step of creating brand equity consumers might struggle with brand awareness and recall different brands on the Swedish energy market. It must be recognised that the collected qualitative and quantitative data regarding brand awareness is not enough to conclude that Swedish consumers' awareness to energy brands in general is low. Nevertheless, the findings indicates that some energy actors might already be failing in the initial step of creating brand equity. The findings suggested a main obstacle for brand equity creation for green energy companies in the second step of the CBBE-model. First of all, energy actors in general seem to be struggling with creating clear associations for what they are. Creating a Point-of-Difference that is based on *Performance* i.e. functional advantages, is difficult due to the intangible nature of the product, where the only functional aspect of customer service becomes a category POP, a necessary condition for all energy brands (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Hence, there is a greater importance to differentiate a brand based on the consumer's psychological or social needs; *Imagery* (Kotler & Keller, 2012). What was of particular interest was that green energy brands has encountered an obstacle in differentiate themselves from their competitors and create a clear POD that is based on renewable energy production. I argue that that energy companies with a mixed energy production have been able to use a competitive Point-of-Parity since the findings revealed that most of these brands are able to include green energy in their offers and further use their own green energy labels which are accepted by the consumers. To create brand equity a brand needs to ascend the four series of steps from the bottom to the top of the CBBE-model (Keller 2009; Kotler & Keller, 2012). However, green energy brands seems to struggle with creating a POD that explains to the consumer what they are which would enable them to ascend in the pyramid. The findings regarding the previous marketing communication suggest an explanation for this stagnation.

The marketing communication message from green energy brands' has been found to be insufficient in regards to communicating the benefit of the green product. The

findings of this thesis suggests that environmental aspects are important in regards to the purchase of energy but the communicated message has been focused on how the energy is produced instead of why the renewable production is relevant and what type of problem it solves for the consumer. Green energy brands has further had similar environmental arguments as energy companies offering conventional energy, focusing on the future in regards to production methods, encouragement to reduce consumers' energy consumption and educating the consumer about the energy market. Based on the findings, I am arguing that these messages have seen a limited impact on the consumer interest for the green energy product and further the creation of unique and favourable associations for green energy brands creating POD. Firstly, because arguments related to future investment have been too R&D focused in regards to different green production methods of green energy, something every energy company are able to offer and communicate. Secondly, the findings shows that encouraging consumer to reduce energy consumption has not managed to created favourable associations, counteracts the benefit of the green product and can further be seen as a restriction of the consumers' freedom which would entail an opposite reaction for consumption (Cialdini, 2005). Thirdly, for a low-involvement product with an informational motivation, focus should not be put on informative messages, in this case explaining to the consumer how the energy market works (Percy & Elliott-Rosenbaum, 2012). It has been found that green energy communication regarding the future is important but innovation and investments in production methods needs to be clearer linked to the benefit of green energy in regards to what it actually enables for consumers and include the future vision of the brand. Furthermore the findings revealed that green energy enables consumers to avoid a bad conscience subsequent to consumption, which should thus be focused on to differ from conventional energy. However, I argue that it is not enough for green energy companies to create brand equity from a POD solely based on green energy production methods. Because, companies with a mixed energy production have been able to successfully use a competitive Point-of-Parity by including green energy in their offers. Hence, to create brand equity it is necessary for green energy companies to understand the consumer from different approaches to create brand associations and further include the benefit of the green energy product and the future vision of the brand. GodEl becomes one example where the brand has managed

to combine the benefit of green energy with clear associations to their future vision, which could be one of the reasons for this young energy trader's growth.

During the analysis of the empirical data I viewed the consumers in accordance with the perspective of consumption studies (Østergaard & Jantzen, 2000). Depending on the approach relevant insights was found to improve green energy brands' efforts to create mental structures of favourable associations in the mind of the consumer and thus create brand equity (Kotler & Keller, 2012). The findings for the different consumer approaches suggests that specific aspects are important for energy companies to address in order to create favourable and unique associations that further can create POD and brand equity. The focus for a green energy brand for creating brand equity through different consumer approaches has been revealed from the findings and included in *Table 5*.

Perspectives	Buyer Behaviour	Consumer Behaviour	Consumer Research	Consumption Studies
Metaphor	Animal	Computer	Tourist	Tribe member
Consumption basis	Instinct	Rational	Narcissistic	Symbolic
Character of the subject matter	Needs	Wants	Desires	Recognition
Focus Green Energy Company	Be Perceived as Reliable	Rationalise the Price	Become the Enabler	Increase the Social Proof

Table 5. Four different consumer approaches modified to include "Focus for Green Energy Companies" Adopted from Østergaard and Jantzen (2000, p. 19).

When viewing consumers from the buyer behaviour who needs to fulfil a basic need of making the everyday life work, the energy market was revealed to be very untrustworthy and thus the aspect of reliability is vital for an energy company. It is thus relevant for all energy actors to improve their consumer perception as a reliable actor. Several examples of classical conditioning presented by Nord and Peter (1980) was found and specifically relevant in regards to green energy brands was the BM certification. This because the label aims to work as a guarantee from a trustworthy NGO and represent correct

environmental procedures which could work as an unconditioned stimuli that would elicit a feeling of trust and thus improve the perception of a green brands reliability. The findings further suggested that conventional actors had created their own green labels and consumers seems to be unaware of that *Bra Miljöval* is the only third party certification for environmental friendly energy on the market. It might for this reason be necessary to improve the consumer perception of the certification from SSNC to really benefit from using it. Different attributes become relevant when viewing the consumer as a rational individual that creates a favourable attitude towards a brand based on the performance on these attributes.

The findings suggest that green energy is often perceived as more expensive than conventional energy and since a low price was an attribute that was found to be very important to the consumer, it is necessary for a green energy brand to facilitate consumer rationalisation of buying green that is perceived as more expensive. A higher price could be rationalised by a consumer if the brand's future visions and social responsibility can be presented in an understandable way through clear examples which communicates how green energy is superior to conventional because of its benefit and thus becomes a clearer POD. Additionally, the findings revealed that a green energy brand could also compete with low prices similar to the use of a competitive POP where green energy is presented as a low price option.

Energy as a product possesses a unique position when the consumer is searching for meaning through different experiences from consumption. This because consumers tend to not care about what energy is but rather what it enables. Hence, importance of energy as an enabler is of great relevance for an energy company since it can create clear positive secondary associations to the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Depending on a green energy company's target group, relevant experiences could be paired with the green energy brand. The brand becomes the enabler while also including the benefit of avoiding a bad conscience, creating a guilt free consumer experience and strong, favourable and unique associations with the brand.

The findings further revealed that green energy has become more relevant in relation to consumption in a social context for social recognition. Despite the intangible nature of the product, social proof for green energy would affect the consumer, where seeing others consume and being involved in the product would increase interest and demand for

the green energy. To increase the social proof for green energy, the contributors according to the findings was the consumer possibility to express their consumption through social media channels and furthermore home production of energy, which has seen an increased consumer interest. For a green energy company, increasing the possibility for individuals to express and demonstrate their green energy consumption in relation to the brand could thus be of importance since it would lead to more consumers perceiving the consumption of this product and brand as correct.

6. Implications, Conclusion and Further Research

This thesis aimed to investigate how Swedish green energy companies, which exclusively offers green energy to consumers, can improve their branding and communication efforts which would increase the consumer demand and accelerating the market transition from conventional to green energy. To create brand equity a company needs to create strong, favourable and unique associations (Keller, 2009). Swedish consumers have been found to have environmental concerns in relation to energy and thus offering and being associated with green energy could be seen as something favourable. The green energy product differs from the conventional of course in the production method, but also since it solves the problem for the consumer by releasing them from a bad conscience subsequent to consumption and this benefit should be communicated to the consumer. However, this benefit was found to be poorly communicated and being able to offer green energy to Swedish consumers is not a characteristic limited to a few, but rather includes all energy companies on the Swedish energy market. Hence, to create brand equity, a green energy company's Point-of-Difference cannot solely be based on the fact that it offers green energy since a consumer association in relation to this would not entail something unique for a brand. The conclusion is thus that for green energy brands to be able to create brand equity, leading to an increased demand and interest for their product by increased customer loyalty, attitudinal attachment and active engagement (Keller, 2009), it is necessary that the Point-of-Difference is combined with the benefit of the green energy product and a future vision of the brand that is relevant for the consumer. A green energy brand needs to combine the production method of green energy with what it wants to accomplish in relation to the consumer and doing so by creating brand associations that makes it unique. Brand associations can be communicated in different ways depending on how the marketer views the energy consumer, where different aspects becomes important. A green energy brand needs to (1) be perceived as reliable by the consumer, (2) be perceived as equally/lower priced as conventional energy or be able to rationalise a higher price through the brand's future vision, (3) become the enabler of relevant consumer experiences that creates meaning for the customer and (4) increase the social proof and possibilities for social recognition in relation to the green energy brand and its product.

To conclude this thesis, I will shortly give my suggestions for further research within the branding of green energy. This study has been focused on viewing the energy consumer from different perspectives that entails different communication efforts. Nevertheless, this thesis has not addressed the different consumer segments on the Swedish market. Hence, I suggest that future research should further map different consumer segments where it could be possible to investigate how these would react to different marketing communications regarding energy providers. This thesis has emphasised the importance of creating strong, unique and favourable associations for an energy brand, but has been limited to investigate more specific what types of associations an energy brand should seek to obtain. Therefore, I suggest that further research investigate which associations an energy company would gain from obtaining and what associations the consumer currently have for different energy brands. Finally, I would suggest further research regarding additional reasons and benefits for consumption of green energy. Finding other benefits for green energy that would further differentiate it from conventional and different segments might have different motivation for green energy consumption which could implicate different marketing efforts. I would recommended a collection of a greater data sample to create a study with an increased generalisability since this has been a limitation for this thesis. Further research regarding these areas could expand the understanding for how green energy should be communicated and branded which could further increase the consumer interest and demand for the green product.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Question Base

<u>SSNC – NGO – Bra Miljöval</u>

Background information
- What does SSNC's overall work and what vision does the organisation have for future Sweden? What parts are included in the organisation?
- What is your position within SSNC and what are your tasks in this role? Please give a short explanation of the BM certification and who is allowed to use it?

The work behind the certification
- Describe the everyday work with the certification? Company contact, customers, communication?
- The label has been around for 25 years, what can you tell me about companies and consumers quality perception of this label?
- How have you been working with this perception to improve it?
- What can you tell me about SSNC's communication today?

Energy companies work with green energy
- What do you think has driven the transition from conventional sources to renewable?
- How do Swedish energy companies use the certification today?
- What can you tell me about energy companies' communication today?

Consumers
  Perception of Swedish consumers:
- How is the demand for green energy?
- What is important for the consumer during the energy contract and how is the general involvement for energy consumption?
- What is a problem for consumers when choosing energy provider?
- What part does the BM certification play?
- What is the reason for that consumers choose green energy?
- Why would not a consumer choose green energy?
- How should an energy company/SSNC communicate and use its brand towards the consumer to increase the demand for their green product? What do you think needs to improve?
- There are some energy providers in Sweden with a strong approach to exclusively offer green energy. What aspects do you think make these companies successful?
- How has the SSNC been using communication to affect consumers to change to a green energy supply? What has been successful?

<u>Svensk NaturEnergi – (SNE) – Wind Power</u>
Background information
- Can you tell me about SNE and its organisation? The role in Wallenstam, energy supply from wind, organisation structure and so on.
- What is SNE's vision and why did you chose to only have a supply of wind? Who would you see as direct competitors?
- Tell me about your position at SNE?

Consumers' preferences and perception of energy consumption.

- What is your perception of consumers' preferences in regards to energy contracts/providers? What is important/ not important?
- Can you describe the involvement regarding consumers choosing energy provider?
- SNE is only offering Wind power, what are your thoughts about consumers' general opinion regarding wind?
- How is consumers' demand for green energy today? Why are they interested?
- What would make consumer change from conventional to green energy?

SNE's brand and communication
- How is SNE currently communicating towards Swedish consumers?
- What type of position is SNE aiming for in regards to its competitors?
- What brand associations do SNE strive to obtain? What kind of message do you want to communicate?
- What is it in the end that affects the consumers to pick SNE?
- What kind of collaborations with other organisations does SNE have?
- How do you think one should affect consumers by communication and branding to make them choose green energy?
- What roles does labels play for renewable energy?

GodEl – Energy trading company – BM certified energy
Background information
- Describe the organisation GodEl?
- How does your inclusion of charity work and why do you include it?
- Why do you only have BM certified energy?
- Describe your position at GodEl?

Consumer preferences and involvement for energy
- What is your perception of consumer preferences for energy providers/contracts? Important/less important?
- Describe the consumer involvement regarding choosing energy provider?
- GodEl only has green energy, specifically from BM certified, what is your perception of consumers' general opinion regarding green energy supply?
- What do you think make consumers change from conventional energy to green energy?

GodEl's brand and communication
- How did you communicate towards your customers since the start?
- What aspects has previously been affecting the consumer to choose GodEl?
- What type of position on the market does GodEl currently possess? What are you aiming for?
- What symbolises GodEl's brand and how do you think this affects the consumer?
- Why do you think GodEl so far has been a success?
- An important aspect of GodEl might be Lasse Åberg, why did you choose him and how do you think consumers have been affected by his participation?
- Describe GodEl's communication and branding today.
- Green energy is part of your communication on your webpage, how do you think that companies in a better way will affect consumers to change to green energy? Why are they not doing it?
- What role does symbols play in relation to energy, such as brand and labels?
- How does the collaboration with SSNC work and do you have other collaborators that strengthen your position against competitors?

Fortum – Energy producer and trader
Background information
- Describe the company Fortum, Energy sources, organisation and so on.
- What is the vision for Fortum? Competitors? Focus?

- Describe your role at Fortum?

Consumer preferences and involvement for energy providers
- What is your perception of consumer preferences in relation to energy agreements? What is important/ less important?
- Describe the involvement?
- Fortum is only providing hydropower for its customers, describe consumer attitude towards hydro?
- How do you work so that consumers would change to green energy? What can you tell me about the consumer demand for green energy? Why are consumer interested?
- What makes consumer change from conventional to renewable energy?

Fortum's brand and communication
- Describe Fortum's marketing efforts.
- Energy is intangible which entails no quality difference, how do you involve your customers to actually care about this product?
- What position is Fortum striving to obtain in relation to its competitors? How is it possible to differentiate oneself from competitors?
- What assocations does Fortum strive to obtain? What has been communicated? Welcome to the future of energy?
- How do you work with communication and branding today so that consumers will chose Fortum and your green energy?
- How would an energy company change consumer perception to look favourable on green energy?
- What role does symbols and labels play in regards to energy?

Focus group

Energy contracts and market
- If I say energy contracts, what is your spontaneous thoughts?
- How do you choose energy provider?
- How much time do you spend when choosing energy supplier?
- What attributes do you look for when choosing energy provider? Why did you choose your current provider?
- Describe the feeling of choosing energy provider?
- Are you satisfied with your energy provider or would you like to change?

Aktörer på marknaden
- How do you perceive the energy market? Do you know how it works?
- What actors do you know from the Swedish market? Have you heard of?
- What are your thoughts about these providers? What do you know about them?
- How do separate one provider from another?

NGO
- Do you know this label? From where do you remember it? Have you seen it with energy?
- What do you think it represents? SSNC is behind it, have you heard of this NGO?

Green energy
- What is sustainable and/or green energy for you?
- Except for production, does it differ from conventional?
- Have you actively chosen green energy? Why?
- How do you think one should make more consumers choose green energy?
- What would you say is important for an energy provider to communicate? What attracts you?
- What are your thoughts about nuclear?
- Tror ni att man kan ersätta kärnkraften?
- What energy source would you prefer if you could choose?

Appendix 2. Mail Correspondence

E-mail conversation Magnus Jonsson SSNC:

<Magnus.Jonsson@naturskyddsforeningen.se> Wed, Apr 27, 2016 at 10:12 AM
Kul att det rullar på för dig! Ser fram emot att läsa den sen
Jag har tyvärr inga siffror att ge dig angående kännedomen. Vi håller på att titta på det just nu faktiskt men det kommer dröja innan vi får något resultat som vi kan gå ut med offentligt.
Mvh,
Magnus

Great to hear that everything is working out! Looking forward to read it
Unfortunately I do not have any specific numbers that I can provide you with regarding awareness. We are actually looking into this right now but it will take a while before we have a result that we can publish.

<eam.lagerstedt@gmail.com> Thu, Apr 28, 2016 at 11:49 AM
Alright Magnus, ingen fara, jag tror jag kan argumentera för hög kännedom utan exakta siffror.
Mvh,
Mattias

Alright Magnus, no worries, I think I can argue for a high awareness without specific numbers.

<Magnus.Jonsson@naturskyddsforeningen.se> Thu, Apr 28, 2016 at 2:52 PM
Ja alltså generellt ligger vi på samma nivå som andra miljömärkningar så det kan du gott göra. Vad gäller el specifikt så är ju 5% av elen som säljs på svenska marknden märkt med Bra Miljöval så kännedom finns där.
Lycka till!
/ Magnus

Well, we are in general on the same level as other environmental labels so you can definitely do that. In regards to energy then specifically 5% of what is sold on the Swedish market is labelled Bra Miljöval so there is awareness.

Appendix 3. Self-administered Questioinaire

Survey Energy consumers

90 Respondents

Q1: Gender?

Man	43,33%	39
Kvinna	56,67%	51
Totalt		**90**

Q2: Age?

18-25	20,00%	18
26-35	41,11%	37
36-45	2,22%	2
46-55	13,33%	12
55-65	18,89%	17
65+	4,44%	4
Totalt		**90**

Q3: Type of residence?

Hus/Villa	40,00%	36
Radhus	7,78%	7
Lägenhet (bostadsrätt)	31,11%	28
Lägenhet (hyresrätt)	21,11%	19
Annat (vänligen specificera)	0,00%	0
Totalt		**90**

House, Townhouse, Apartment, Other

Q4: Estimate how well you agree with the following statements where 1 represents 'Strongly agree' and 5 represents 'Strongly disagree'

	Stämmer helt 1	2	3	4	Stämmer inte alls 5	Vet ej	Totalt	Viktat genomsnitt
"Jag lägger ner mycket tid när jag ska välja elavtal"	4,44% 4	15,56% 14	25,56% 23	27,78% 25	26,67% 24	0,00% 0	90	3,57
"Jag upplever det som enkelt att byta elleverantör"	15,56% 14	22,22% 20	24,44% 22	14,44% 13	7,78% 7	15,56% 14	90	2,30
"Jag har bra koll på vilka aktörer jag kan välja mellan på den svenska marknaden"	8,89% 8	22,22% 20	26,67% 24	22,22% 20	18,89% 17	1,11% 1	90	3,17
"Jag förstår bra hur elmarknaden fungerar"	8,89% 8	11,11% 10	21,11% 19	28,89% 26	28,89% 26	1,11% 1	90	3,54
"Jag upplever processen av att välja ett bra elavtal som bekymmersfri"	10,00% 9	18,89% 17	18,89% 17	27,78% 25	18,89% 17	5,56% 5	90	3,10
"Jag använder eller har använt olika hemsidor för att jämföra olika elavtal" (Compricer, Elskling etc)	27,78% 25	16,67% 15	5,56% 5	15,56% 14	31,11% 28	3,33% 3	90	2,96

Q5: How important are the following attributes to you when choosing energy provider? 1 represents 'Very important' and 5 represents 'Not important at all'

	Mycket viktigt1	2	3	4	Inte alls viktigt5	Vet ej	Totalt	Viktat genomsnitt
Företaget känns pålitligt	60,00% 54	27,78% 25	8,89% 8	0,00% 0	3,33% 3	0,00% 0	90	1,56
Lågt pris	40,45% 36	35,96% 32	16,85% 15	1,12% 1	3,37% 3	2,25% 2	89	1,81
Att det går snabbt och enkelt	44,94% 40	30,34% 27	17,98% 16	2,25% 2	3,37% 3	1,12% 1	89	1,82
Elen är miljömärkt	34,44% 31	24,44% 22	22,22% 20	6,67% 6	10,00% 9	2,22% 2	90	2,17
Produktionsmetod (vind, kärnkraft, sol, vatten etc)	36,67% 33	26,67% 24	16,67% 15	11,11% 10	8,89% 8	0,00% 0	90	2,20
Företaget är socialt ansvarstagande	23,33% 21	33,33% 30	20,00% 18	12,22% 11	10,00% 9	1,11% 1	90	2,39
Företaget investerar i tekniska lösningar för framtiden	21,35% 19	26,97% 24	19,10% 17	16,85% 15	13,48% 12	2,25% 2	89	2,54
Andras rekommendationer	5,56% 5	30,00% 27	34,44% 31	12,22% 11	16,67% 15	1,11% 1	90	2,84
Företaget är väletablerat (större aktör och/eller varit med länge)	6,67% 6	26,67% 24	35,56% 32	13,33% 12	16,67% 15	1,11% 1	90	2,87
Företaget har lokal förankring	7,78% 7	27,78% 25	25,56% 23	13,33% 12	24,44% 22	1,11% 1	90	2,91

Q6: Estimate how well you agree with the following statements where represents 1 'Strongly agree' and 5 represents 'Strongly disagree'

	Stämmer helt1	2	3	4	Stämmer inte alls5	Vej ej	Totalt	Viktat genomsnitt
Jag kan tydligt skilja på vad de olika elhandelsbolagen erbjuder	4,44% 4	13,33% 12	26,67% 24	32,22% 29	18,89% 17	4,44% 4	90	3,34
Jag associerar de svenska elhandelsbolagen med olika speciella egenskaper	2,25% 2	17,98% 16	21,35% 19	26,97% 24	22,47% 20	8,99% 8	89	3,22
Jag känner att jag kan lita på elhandelsbolag på den svenska marknaden	3,33% 3	36,67% 33	33,33% 30	17,78% 16	6,67% 6	2,22% 2	90	2,81
Jag kan tänka mig att byta elleverantör om jag får ett billigare avtal	40,45% 36	30,34% 27	12,36% 11	5,62% 5	6,74% 6	4,49% 4	89	1,94
Jag tycker att min elleverantör ger mig tillräckligt med anledningar för att stanna med dem	18,89% 17	26,67% 24	28,89% 26	12,22% 11	7,78% 7	5,56% 5	90	2,47

Q7: Estimate how well you agree with the following statements where represents 1 'Strongly agree' and 5 represents 'Strongly disagree'

|	Stämmer helt1	2	3	4	Stämmer inte alls5	Vej ej	Totalt	Viktat genomsnitt
Jag upplever att el producerad från förnyelsebara källor (sol, vind, vatten) är dyrare än el som är producerad från konventionella källor (fossil, kärnkraft)	11,36% 10	29,55% 26	20,45% 18	10,23% 9	9,09% 8	19,32% 17	88	2,18
Jag försöker aktivt minska min energiförbrukning genom att köpa produkter som är energisnåla	34,44% 31	35,56% 32	14,44% 13	11,11% 10	4,44% 4	0,00% 0	90	2,16
Jag har upplevt kommunikation från företag och organisationer som uppmanar mig till att tänka på att minska min energiförbrukning	15,56% 14	36,67% 33	12,22% 11	16,67% 15	16,67% 15	2,22% 2	90	2,76
Jag får dåligt samvete när jag förbrukar mycket energi där jag skulle kunna spara (t.ex. långa duschar, användning av vanliga glödlampor, låta kranen rinna vid tandborstning eller liknande)	17,78% 16	25,56% 23	23,33% 21	18,89% 17	13,33% 12	1,11% 1	90	2,81
Jag upplever det som ett miljömässigt problem att vi använder mycket energi i Sverige	21,11% 19	33,33% 30	27,78% 25	10,00% 9	5,56% 5	2,22% 2	90	2,39
Jag har medvetet valt i mitt elavtal att endast få el producerad från förnyelsebara källor (sol,vind, vatten etc)	22,22% 20	7,78% 7	16,67% 15	18,89% 17	24,44% 22	10,00% 9	90	2,86
Jag skulle kunna tänka mig att investera i förnyelsebar el utomlands, för att hjälpa till att få bort fossila bränslen. (T.ex. köpa en solpanel på ett tak i ett mindre välutvecklat land)	23,60% 21	28,09% 25	20,22% 18	12,36% 11	13,48% 12	2,25% 2	89	2,57

Q8: Which energy sources would you classify as environmental friendly? (It is possible to choose several options).

Svarsval	Svar	
Vind	94,44%	85
Vatten	85,56%	77
Sol	96,67%	87
Biobränsle	41,11%	37
Kärnkraft	20,00%	18
Kol	0,00%	0
Olja	0,00%	0
Gas	3,33%	3
Annat (vänligen specificera)	0,00%	0
Totalt antal svarande: 90		

Q9: Which statement matches your energy contract?

Svarsval	Svar	
Min el har någon form av miljömärkning	28,89%	26
Min el är märkt med Naturskyddsföreningens certifiering "Bra Miljöval"	13,33%	12
Min el är inte miljömärkt	6,67%	6
Jag vet inte om min el har någon miljömärkning	47,78%	43
Övrig kommentar	3,33%	3
Totalt		90

Appendix 4. Secondary Associations
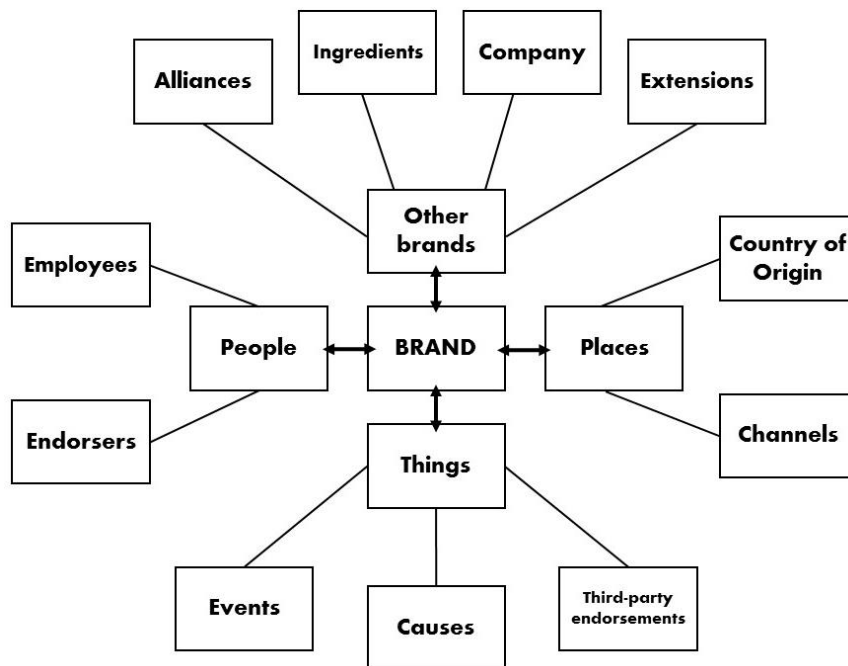
Secondary Sources of Brand Knowledge. Retrieved from Kotler & Keller (2012) p.274

Appendix 5. Rossiter-Percy Grid
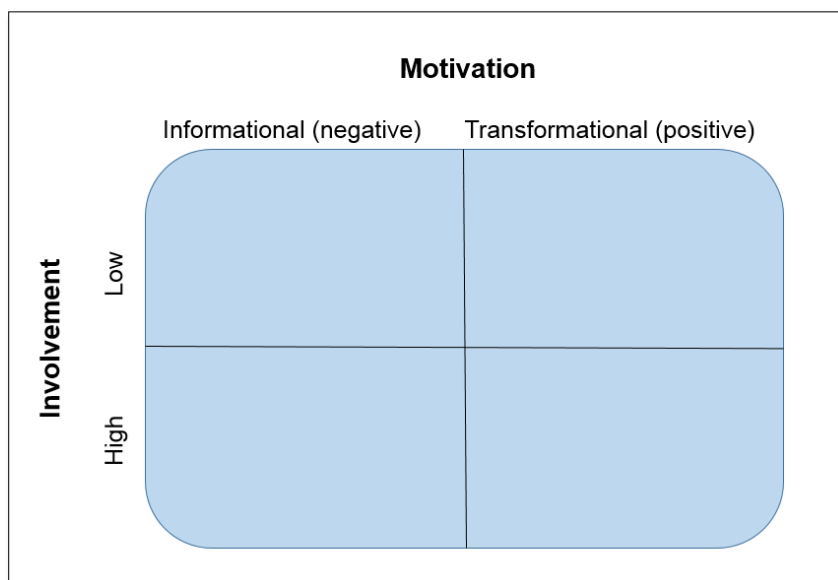
Rossiter-Percy Grid. Retrieved from Percy & Elliott-Rosenbaum (2012) p.187