Factors Influencing Consumer Purchasing Behavior of Natural Cosmetics
- A Qualitative Study in Uppsala, Sweden

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ABSTRACT

Although consumers’ need for a healthy and sustainable lifestyle drives natural cosmetics consumption, various claims of natural cosmetics make consumers confused and distrustful. This study aimed to explore factors that affect consumers' purchasing behavior of natural cosmetics under the theoretical framework of planned behavior (TPB). The study adopted the qualitative method of purposive sampling. Semi-structured interview technique and thematic analysis were used to collect and analyze data from 21 consumers of natural or traditional cosmetics living in Uppsala. The results showed: consumers had uncertain attitudes towards buying natural cosmetics, which had no obvious impact on the purchasing behavior; the perceived social pressures from family, relatives, groups, etc. had a clear positive impact on the purchasing behavior; online purchasing, recommendation from others, and sustainable lifestyle facilitated the purchasing behavior; high price, inconvenient purchasing location, lack of knowledge, non-harmonized certifications, etc. led to the inconsistency between consumers' purchasing intention and actual purchasing behavior. Product knowledge was explored as an important resource that consumers need. The above findings can be used to improve marketing strategies like harmonized certifications. This study also paves the way for future quantitative verification of these factors.

Keywords: Natural Cosmetics, Theory of Planned Behavior, Attitude, Subject Norms, Perceived Behavioral Control, Purchasing Behavioral Intention, Purchasing Behavior, Healthy and Sustainable Lifestyle, Product Knowledge, Green Trust
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Uppsala University, Department of Business Studies, June 2019

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Jiali Zhang          Meijuan Zhou
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1. Introduction

Almost all modern people use some cosmetic products every day such as toothpaste, shampoo, soap, etc. These products have become daily necessities (Sahota, 2014). However, the microplastics and chemicals contained in traditional cosmetics can have a negative impact both on the natural world and on people’s well-being (Seinfeld and Pandis, 2016; Andrady, 2011). Over the last few decades, consumers have been fonder of living a healthy and sustainable lifestyle. They have been increasingly worried about the negative impact of harmful cosmetics chemical ingredients (i.e. parabens) on their health (Chery and Wischhover, 2018). They have also been more aware of a direct or an indirect negative impact exerted on the natural environment and social welfare brought by their purchase decisions (Sahota, 2014).

The emergence of natural cosmetic products is considered not only to meet consumers’ need of healthy, environmentally friendly and ethical beliefs but also to promote the whole cosmetics industry to develop in a sustainable way (Matić and Puh, 2016; Sahota, 2014). Natural cosmetic products are mainly made of plant-based materials from agricultural-based production (Philippe et al., 2012). In response to consumers’ healthy and sustainable lifestyles, cosmetics companies in the whole industry have been actively developing natural ingredients to create better conditions for the development of the natural cosmetics market (Kerdudo et al., 2016; Philippe, 2012). Obviously, natural cosmetics have become an inevitable trend (Nielsen, 2018). A new investigation predicts that the global natural cosmetics market will grow 9.4% in the next five years (Future Market Insights, 2019). A large number of niche natural cosmetics brands (brands from small companies) that represent consumers’ health and sustainable lifestyles have emerged on the market (Sahota, 2014).

However, when more and more natural cosmetic offerings appear on the market, do they really bring sustainability to the whole industry? In fact, various kinds of claims of natural cosmetics on the market such as “natural”, “organic”, “sustainable”, “eco-friendly”,“herbal”, “green”, “vitamin”, etc. make consumers confused during the
purchasing process (Herich, 2018; Hsu et al., 2017). According to Nielsen (2018), the United States, one of the main countries of natural cosmetics consumption, sales in 2017 fell 1.2% from 2016 because more and more consumers have less trust in brands who simply claim they are natural. These brands claiming to be natural need to prove themselves authentically. Consumers may prefer brands to say which ingredient is not included in the products (Nielsen, 2018). More worryingly, these claims do not clearly convey to consumers the safety and effects of natural cosmetics sold on the market, exposing the loopholes of the current supervision from authorities (Klaschka, 2016).

Under such background, it is very meaningful to study consumers' purchasing behavior and understand why consumers buy and do not buy natural cosmetics, which can help marketers improve marketing strategies based on consumers' specific needs and requirements, then further to reduce consumers' confusion in the purchasing process and distrust of natural cosmetics.

Although many studies have focused on sustainable consumption behavior (Tanner, 2003; Vermeir, 2008; Carrete, 2012; Lorek, 2013; Gleim, 2013; Johnstone, 2015; Hsu, 2017; Hasan, 2018), still few studies have been conducted on individual consumer purchasing behavior in the natural cosmetics industry (Matić and Puh, 2016; Chin et al., 2018).

Therefore, the research purpose of this study is to explore factors affecting consumers’ purchasing behavior in the natural cosmetics industry. Our research question is: **What are the factors affecting the purchasing behavior of consumers for natural cosmetic products?**

To answer the research question, the theory of planned behavior (TPB) is applied to the analysis of the cosmetics market in Sweden, more specifically, Uppsala City. It was named the global climate city last year (Urban Futures, 2018), a model city for sustainable development, which has some referential significance for our study. The TPB model consists of three main constructs of consumers’ attitude, subjective norms,
and perceived behavioral control (PBC). Attitude towards the behavior refers to an individual's evaluation of how much he or she likes or dislikes to perform a certain behavior. Subjective norms reflect an individual's understanding of whether others think he or she should do something. PBC refers to an individual perception of the extent to which it is difficult or easy to complete a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Usually, when an individual feels it is easy to perform a behavior, if he or she has more favorable attitude and more support from others, he or she will have more behavioral intention, thus the more likely the behavior will be performed. Sometimes, PBC can directly influence the individual's behavior without being controlled by behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991). Many studies have used the theory of planned behavior (TPB) to predict or explain human behavior (Gopi and Ramayah, 2007; Lee, 2009; Hung and Chien, 2011; Tan, 2016; Liobikienė et al., 2016).

In addition, many previous consumer behavior literatures use quantitative research to explore the factors related to consumer purchasing behavior under the TPB theoretical framework (Liobikienė et al., 2016; Hsu et al., 2017), only few factors are hypothesized in advance, which limits the potential factors that are more suitable to explain consumer purchasing behavior. Thus, qualitative research is used in this study to explore potential factors that might be overlooked by quantitative research (Montano and Kasprzyk, 2015).

The remainder of the thesis is structured as follows: section 2 presents our theoretical framework based on natural cosmetics consumption. Then section 3 describes the method and research techniques of the study. Findings, analysis, and discussions show our interpretation of the results. Finally, conclusions, managerial implications, and limitations are provided based on our findings.
2. Theoretical Framework

In the introduction, we have an overview of the importance of studying consumer purchasing behavior in the natural cosmetics industry. But still more literature reviews are needed to convey the historical background and the current situation of the natural cosmetics industry, paving the way for understanding the specific context to which the theory of planned behavior (TPB) is applied. Then the TPB theoretical model in the context of natural cosmetics consumption is presented for the analysis of this study.

2.1 Natural Cosmetics Industry

History shows that cosmetics made of natural ingredients have been used by human beings to improve their appearance and cleanliness for a long time (Chaudhri and Jain, 2014; Draelos, 2000). While the emergence of synthetic cosmetics (called traditional cosmetics in this study) replaced the expensive natural cosmetics at the beginning of the last century due to the development of chemical synthesis technology. Tens of thousands of effective synthetic ingredients have been developed and can be easily standardized and mass produced at a lower cost (Dayan and Kromidas, 2011). However, traditional cosmetics bring great damage to the natural environment and people’s well-being. Cosmetics companies have to reconsider to find natural ingredients directly from agricultural-based production without synthetic chemicals (Andrady, 2011; Thompson et al., 2009; Philippe et al., 2012).

Consumers’ healthy and sustainable lifestyles are the most important reason leading to the resurgence of natural cosmetics. Lifestyle is defined by Zablocki and Kanter (1976) as “a pattern of consumption that reflects a person’s choices of how to spend his or her time and money. These choices play a key role in defining consumer identity.” Consumers’ healthy and sustainable lifestyles are mainly mobilized by lifestyle movements that focus more on the unethical consequences of people’s
everyday lifestyle choices (Kilbourne et al., 1997; Wahlen and Laamanen, 2015; Haenfler et al., 2012; Dobernig and Stagl, 2015). More specific, consumers tend to buy products that have ethical values and reduce consumption or anti-consumption in those products which are produced in unethical behavior (Newholm and Shaw, 2007). For example, consumers refuse to buy natural cosmetic products from some companies who have unethical behavior of sourcing natural ingredients such as palm oil because they destroy the rain forests, threatening the survival of wildlife among them (Mahat, 2012). Ethical values embodied in natural cosmetic products include healthy, environmentally friendly (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001), cruelty-free, fair trade (Browne, 2000; Pelsmacker and Janssens, 2007; Andorfer, 2013), and so on. For vegan consumers, they reject all animal products and products tested on animals to protect animal rights (Cherry, 2015; Irving et al., 2002; Chu and Lin, 2013). It can be seen that natural cosmetic brands that appear on the market can also be called brands that represent consumers’ healthy and sustainable lifestyle and identity.

However, when marketers want to meet the consumers’ need for the values conveyed by natural cosmetics, they implement a green marketing strategy that confuses consumers when they buy natural cosmetics. Parguel et al. (2011) define this strategy as greenwashing, a bewildering act that does not conform to the facts claiming the green advantages of products or services. Furlow (2010) holds that many green claims are vague. Pomerling and Johnson (2009) point out that greenwashing makes consumers confused or uncertain about buying green products like natural cosmetics. Self et al. (2010) point out that greenwashing would lead to consumers’ suspicion of green claims.

In fact, consumers’ green trust in natural cosmetics is strongly related to product knowledge. Green trust means that consumers are willing to have a complete dependence on products or services that they believe or expect to have ethical values (Chen, 2010). The beliefs and expectations mentioned above are based on how much knowledge consumers believe they have about natural cosmetics, which can be called
subjective knowledge. Subjective knowledge is one of product knowledge and another one is objective knowledge which is related to facts (Brucks, 1985). Bian and Moutinho (2011) hold that consumers’ subjective product knowledge is based on their past experience, including the usage experience of products or product information they received before. For example, consumers do not know the potential safety risks of natural cosmetics sold on the market but based on their prior experience of pharmacies or stores, consumers take it for granted that pharmacies or stores have ensured the safety of natural cosmetics on sale (Dayan and Kromidas, 2011, p.51).

So far, consumers' subjective knowledge of natural cosmetics differs greatly from their objective knowledge based on facts. So consumers still feel difficult to identify which natural cosmetics on the market is really natural. Although most current definitions of “nature” refer to natural ingredients that must be directly derived from nature and do not contain synthetic additives in the processing process, it is still dim (Dayan and Kromidas, 2011, p.5), different third-party organizations and industry associations have different certification standards. The word “nature” is always accompanied by the word “organic”, which makes consumers more confused. In Europe, in addition to the efforts made by the cosmetic organic and natural standard (COSMOS) to harmonize European organic standards, little progress has been made in promoting the harmonization of natural or organic cosmetics (Fonseca-Santos, 2015).

The disunity of certification standards makes consumers have different interpretations and helps marketers create opportunistic behavior on product claims (Dayan and Kromidas, 2011, p.5). Morgan and Hunt (1994) hold that opportunistic behavior would lead to distrust, which in turn reduces commitment. They also emphasize that communication between the two sides can enhance trust. That is to say, more objective knowledge of natural cosmetics being exposed to consumers, the subjective knowledge that consumers have will be closer to facts so that they will have more trust, thus increasing commitment to buy natural cosmetics.
2.2 Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) is used to explain or predict a person’s behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In the TPB model, behavioral intention is controlled by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (PBC). The more positive an individual's attitude towards certain behavior, the stronger his or her behavioral intention is; the greater the subjective norm related to a certain behavior is (that is, the higher the perceived social pressure is), the stronger the behavioral intention is (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen (1991) further points out that since the perceived behavioral control reflects the actual control conditions, it can not only predict the behavioral intention but also directly predict the possibility of the actual behavior.

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) has been widely used by many studies to predict and explain human behavior such as online shopping behavior (Gopi and Ramayah, 2007; Hansen, 2008; Pavlou and Fygenson, 2006), online banking behavior (Tan and Teo, 2000; Lee, 2009; Sathye, 1999), medical research (Hung and Chien, 2011), healthy behavior (Basen-Engquist and Parcel, 1992), organic food consumption (Sparks and Shepherd, 1992), green purchasing behavior (Liobikiënë et al., 2016), etc.

It aims to predict and explain a person’s behavior in a given context (Ajzen, 1991). In this study, the TPB model will be used to explain consumer purchasing behavior in natural cosmetic consumption. Attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (PBC) are detailedly explained below, combined with examples and previous application studies of the TPB model in natural cosmetics consumption, green and ethical consumption.

**Attitude.** The attitude towards a certain behavior “refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question” (Ajzen, 1991). For example, if an environmentally friendly consumer believes that his or her purchase of natural cosmetics can reduce the negative impact
on the environment, the stronger the belief, the more likely he or she will buy. Arvola et al. (2008) find consumers' own moral responsibility can positively affect purchase intention in green products. Attitude usually best predict behavioral intention(Ajzen, 1991).

Fazio and Zanna (1978) find that attitude based on direct experience is more accessible. That is, it is easier for people to take the attitude derived from direct experience as a reference for purchase decisions. The higher the attitude accessibility is, the greater the influence on behavioral intention. And attitude stability affects the accuracy of a given behavior that can be performed (Conner and Sparks, 2002). For example, if consumers originally wanted to buy brand A before buying natural cosmetics, but actually bought brand B, this is the performance of attitude instability. Moreover, when a consumer receives new information that is not associated with previous experience, his or her attitude will become unstable and hesitant to make a purchase decision. Research shows that consumers have confusion when buying green products (Carrete et al., 2012). In natural cosmetics consumption literature, Pudaruth et al. (2015) find four variables that are related to females’ direct experience: “ethical claims in green messages; brand image and usage experience; visual appeal and physical cues in cosmetic stores; women lifestyles, self image and health considerations”, positively influence the intention of female consumers to purchase natural cosmetics. Matić and Puh (2016) find the direct experiences of organic food consumption positively affect consumers' intention to buy natural cosmetics.

In addition, consumers sometimes have an ambiguous attitude towards a particular product, which indirectly affects the consistent relationship between attitude and behavioral intention (Conner and Sparks, 2002). For example, some consumers have used a natural cosmetics brand, but they may still choose another brand because of their vague attitude towards the brand when making their next purchase.

**Subjective Norms.** Subjective norm “refers to the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior” (Ajzen, 1991). Subjective norms can be interpreted as perceived social norms (usually from important others or groups, such
as relatives, friends, classmates, or the public) that support or oppose a particular behavior. Several studies have shown that it encourages consumers to buy green products, which is one of the most important factors in sustainable consumption research (Lorek and Fuchs, 2013; Ritter et al., 2015; Vermeir and Verbeke, 2008).

An important aspect of subject norms is group identity (Terry et al., 1999). The higher the group identity, the greater the influence of the pressure of the group members on the individual subjective norm, and the easier it is to follow the group norm to conduct a particular behavior (Sparks and Shepherd, 1992). For example, if a consumer is a vegan (a person who does not consume any animal related products), and other members of his or her vegan community are using natural cosmetics with the "vegan" logo, he or she will feel a pressure, especially when these friends visit his or her house, they will easily find whether the house owner is using vegan products in his or her daily life. Under this pressure, he or she will tend to follow the norms of the group in order to get the group identity. Pudaruth et al. (2015) find “ethical consumerism among females” positively influences female consumers to buy natural cosmetics. Arvola et al. (2008) find consumers' perceived social pressures can positively affect purchase intention in green products.

Another aspect of subjective norms is the social influence. For example, when consumers have no experience to decide which natural cosmetics brand to buy, the suggestions from sales representatives near them have a big impact on their purchase decision (Pudaruth et al., 2015). Also, political support (Pudaruth et al., 2015) and encouragement from social movements (Chin et al., 2018) can increase consumers' intention to buy natural cosmetics. In addition, collectivistic culture also influences consumer’s purchase behavior (Trafimow et al., 1991).

**Perceived Behavioral Control.** Perceived behavioral control “refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior, and it is assumed to reflect past experience as well as anticipated impediments and obstacles” (Ajzen, 1991). Whether the behavior is actually performed is determined by the resources and the abilities an individual owns or controls (Ajzen, 1991). It is often used to predict the
inconsistency between individual behavioral intention and actual behavior. For example, many literatures have focused on the exploration of factors influencing the intention-behavior gap in green or ethical consumption. In terms of consumer’s ability to perform the behavior, difficult to change habits (Carrington et al., 2014); inability to plan beforehand (Carrington et al., 2014); perceived product quality and effects (Bray et al., 2011; Gleim et al., 2013; Gupta and Ogden, 2009; Pickett-Baker and Ozaki, 2008; Borin et al., 2013; Zabkar and Hosta, 2013) lead to the intention-behavior gap. In terms of consumer’s resources he or she has, price of products (Gleim et al., 2013; Gupta and Ogden, 2009; Pickett-Baker and Ozaki, 2008; Lowe and Alpert, 2010; Shiv et al., 2005); lack of product knowledge and product availability (Carrington et al., 2014; Bray et al., 2011; Gleim et al., 2013; Tanner and Wölfing, 2003) lead to the intention-behavior gap.

However, other factors explored that lead to the intention-behavior gap need to be further tested because they are not related to the abilities and resources consumers own, but more related to consumers' willingness, perceptions, and attitudes. For example, consumers are unwilling to make promises or hesitate to buy green products (Carrington et al., 2014; Johnstone and Tan, 2015), unwilling to devote their energy to information search (Carrington et al., 2014; Bray et al., 2011), their perceptions of marketers' promotions (Lowe and Barnes, 2012) and their trust in green products (Gleim et al., 2013; Gupta and Ogden, 2009; Pickett-Baker and Ozaki, 2008; Borin et al., 2013; Zabkar and Hosta, 2013), their vulnerability to being attracted to buy non-green products (Carrington et al., 2010; Carrington et al., 2014), etc. The above factors are explored under the TPB model through quantitative research, from which the limitations are also seen. The variables explored are either too broad or inconsistent with Ajzen (1991)’s TPB model.

2.3 Theoretical Model

Figure 1 displays the adapted theoretical model based on Ajzen (1991)’s TPB model. It illustrates how the three factors of consumers’ attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control affect their purchasing
behavioral intention and then how it affects their purchasing behavior of natural cosmetics (see solid line in Figure 1). That is, more positive the consumers’ attitude is, more encouragement from others, more abilities and resources consumers have, the greater the purchasing behavioral intention will be, and thus more possible for consumers to purchase natural cosmetics, and vice versa.

Meanwhile, when the purchasing behavior is not completely controlled by consumers’ purchasing behavioral intention, it is also directly objectively restricted by perceived behavioral control (PBC) such as consumers’ abilities and resources (see dotted line in Figure 1). That is, the intention-behavior gap occurs. But when consumers have complete perceived behavioral control, their intention to purchase natural cosmetics directly positively affects their purchasing behavior.

The potential variables included in attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control could indirectly affect the purchasing behavioral intention and purchasing behavior. Exploring these potential variables is the most important step in the TPB model (Ajzen, 1991). They can not only explain why consumers have different behavioral attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control but also provide valuable information for the reasons why consumers perform or do not perform purchasing behavior. The purpose of this study is to explore these potential variables (potential factors) included in attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, which can ultimately affect the purchasing behavior.
3. Method

This study aims to explore potential variables that can explain consumers' purchasing behavior of natural cosmetics, which requires an in-depth insight into consumers' attitudes, beliefs, motivations, intentions, and so on. Therefore, it is appropriate to use qualitative research to answer our research question. It enables us to observe and communicate with the respondents face to face in order to understand their motivation, attitude, and purchasing intention from respondents’ point of view. In addition, the future application studies on consumer behavior towards natural cosmetics are aimed to discover additional potential variables and new insights (Matić and Puh, 2016; Chin et al., 2018), qualitative research can be used to bring new theoretical development (Yin, 2015). Third, in terms of the application studies of the theory of planned behavior, Montano and Kasprzyk (2015) hold that a necessary step before using quantitative studies to test hypotheses is to conduct interviews to qualitatively identify the potential variables included in attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. If researchers simply hypothesize the potential variables, the most suitable potential variables associated with the behavior studied may not possibly be identified (Fishbein and Cappella, 2006). Researchers must first collect potential variables from the respondents by interacting with them and then use quantitative methods to identify the variables that are best suited to explain a particular behavior.

3.1 Data Collection

Until now, no study shows consumers have clearly known the definition of cosmetic products that claim “natural” or “organic” and the hidden factors that affect consumers' behavior of buying natural cosmetics still need to be excavated. In this study, a semi-structured interview is used to collect data, which is suitable for exploratory study (Saunders, 2011, p.313) as our research focuses on exploring potential variables that affect consumer buying behavior in natural cosmetics consumption. The advantage of semi-structured interviews is, although we can
prepare a list of themes about our research and interview questions to be covered, the order of the interview questions still can be adjusted and new interview questions still can be added freely according to the content of the conversation with the respondents, which is highly flexible (Saunders, 2011, p.312). We also hope that when interviewees speak, they would not be limited by the researcher's understanding of the research topic during interviews, so interviews that are conducted with open-ended questions are appropriate (Yin, 2015, p. 142-143).

In addition, a face to face interview is used because we can get a lot of verbal and non-verbal information such as the respondents’ voice and body language by their spontaneous response to questions (Opdenakker, 2006). This kind of non-verbal information is helpful to add value on understanding the respondents’ attitude towards buying natural cosmetics.

An interview guide (Appendix 1) is formulated and based on the TPB theoretical model, we divide the interview questions as the following themes: i) general questions; ii) attitude; iii) subjective norms; iv) perceived behavioral control. This interview guide aims to help us cover all the theoretical aspects of the theory of planned behavior as well as to avoid leading the answers given by respondents in the way questions are formulated (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 408-409).

In this study, a total of 21 interviews were performed. The criteria for participants in the interviews included 1) adults above 18 years old; 2) fluent in English or Chinese; 3) live in Uppsala. Purposive sampling technique is used for recruitment. To target key informants who have rich experience in natural cosmetics consumption, a purposive sampling approach is applied to identify 3 respondents who have already made their own natural cosmetic products; 3 Swedish respondents who have used natural cosmetics and lived in Uppsala for more than three and a half years; three international students who have used natural cosmetics but live in Uppsala for less than 1 year are also purposely targeted to know whether their buying behaviors are influenced by the social context in which they currently live. In this study, cosmetic products have become one of the daily necessities, and the samples can be easily
found in the street. So another 12 respondents were purposively recruited either in the student apartments or in the street.

Table 1 displays the profile of the respondents, and we hide their names and exact age because of confidentiality. In this study, we focus on exploring the factors that affect consumer purchasing behavior without considering demographic factors. Demographic data of age, gender, educational level, and nationality are collected just for the convenience of identifying individual respondents. Years of living Uppsala and years of using natural cosmetics are collected for identifying the potential variables in subjective norms like the local social context in Uppsala.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Consumers of Natural Cosmetics/Consumers of Traditional Cosmetics</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Years of Living Uppsala</th>
<th>Years of using natural cosmetics</th>
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<td>20-25</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Bachelor</td>
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<td>Master</td>
<td>France</td>
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<td>NC</td>
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<td>Master</td>
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<td>NC</td>
<td>0.3</td>
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</table>

Table 1 Respondent Profile (Created by Authors)

All interviews were held at the locations convenient to the respondents. Before the interviews, we briefly informed our study purpose and expected length of interview time to the respondents. Interviews were audio recorded, complemented by brief field notes. The average interview time per person was 18 minutes, the shortest one was 8 minutes, and the longest one was 45 minutes. All respondents were required to speak English except one Chinese respondent case who speaks Chinese.

### 3.2 Data Analysis

In this study, a thematic analysis technique is used to extract data, which is “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79). Our study is based on the thematic framework of the theory
of planned behavior (i.e. attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control), aiming to find out the potential variables from the interview records. The thematic analysis is a useful and flexible tool to provide a rich data description (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79). The thematic analysis process is conducted by decomposing the text originated from reality into relatively small content units and then describing them (Vaismoradi et al., 2013, p.400).

Every recorded interview was transcribed verbatim, among them, one Chinese interview record was then translated into English by us. After the transcription, the inductive and deductive data coding and thematic analysis procedures were implemented. We read every interview text and deductively extract data according to the thematic framework and constructs of the TPB theoretical model. However, the data that emerged within each theme of TPB’s theoretical model still need to be inductively classified because the respondents’ answers in one theme sometimes belong to other themes. Besides, we also need to inductively categorize the data according to subthemes. Integrating deductive and inductive approaches in qualitative research has been recommended to improve the quality of research, especially for exploratory theoretical studies (Ali and Birley, 1999).

The data coding work was processed in Microsoft Excel, we put the extracted raw data into the corresponding themes and subthemes. We each created a thematic summary table, and then the disputed coding results were discussed and resolved, ended up with a common thematic summary table. The main difference between the two thematic summary tables derived from a different understanding of the subthemes, which led to the inconsistency of the raw data extraction. We reorganized, re-compared, and refined the coded data twice to ensure the quality of the work by moving back and forth between the original texts and the final summary table. New subthemes that we summarized from keywords had also been added into the original themes after continuous comparison and reduction of data to ensure each theme’s independence.
3.3 Reliability and Validity

After a comprehensive analysis of the interpretation of reliability and validity in qualitative research by different scholars, Golafshani (2003) holds that the reliability and validity in qualitative research are not explained separately as in quantitative research. Instead, they can be understood in terms such as "trustworthiness, rigor and quality", which is also supported by Morse (2002) and Morrow (2005). That is, how researchers do their best to eliminate their subjective prejudices in the real world in order to be able to truly describe the current phenomena in reality (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). Johnson (1997) believes that in order to eliminate bias, researchers need to use a variety of research methods to collect data to ensure the diversity of data sources.

In this study, we aimed to realize the realistic perception of consumers towards natural cosmetics consumption. In fact, the positive and negative description of natural cosmetics consumption both discussed on the relevant websites and literature before, which gave us a relatively neutral attitude towards the research topic before the interviews began. In addition, when we communicated face to face with interviewees through semi-structured interviews, we observed their nonverbal responses, audio recorded and made notes at the same time to ensure that real and credible data can be collected for subsequent data coding work.

In terms of sample selection, we purposefully selected some consumers with rich experience in the use of natural cosmetics to provide us rich data, and we purposefully looked for some traditional cosmetics consumers. From both side’s point of view, we can have a comparison, which made us not deviate from the neutral position. In order to ensure the diversity of samples, we consider that Uppsala is an international city, so we made a purposeful choice in the diversity of nationality and age range of the interviewees. We originally planned to conduct 20 interviews, but in the 21st interview, we found that some patterns were already clear, so we thought the samples had reached saturation.
The interviews were conducted by two researchers on different occasions and at different times. Throughout the study, we collected data according to the theoretical constructs such as attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control under the TPB model. We worked together to code data during the whole research process. Each researcher coded data twice, and multiply compared the excavated patterns with the original data to ensure the quality of the research work.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

There are grounds for thinking that researchers are easily susceptible to individuals' biases and the ascription problems of the material benefits (Bell and Bryman, 2007). The ethical principle of research is to protect the rights and welfare of those who positive to participate by setting up mechanisms to safeguard them and to prevent possible violations of their human rights (Munro et al., 2005; Sullivan and Cain, 2004). In the process of structure construct and data collection, it is worth to emphasize the basic ethical issues and avoid potential ethical problems. There are two important notices always accompanying whole research: First is the consideration of the invasion of privacy; second is the promise of truth and away from subjective judgment. To avoid the invasion of privacy existing in the designing survey, setting interview questions, and executing interviews according to the coordination with the theme of natural cosmetics consumption. The respondents had not been asked the marriage status, income, and family, and the questions are more about whether and why they had purchased natural cosmetics. The entire process was guided by the principles of truth, and the authors interacted with respondents without individual subjective biases and utopian. And make sure the dialogue is close to our topic.
4. Findings and Analysis

The results from empirical data are grouped into distinct subthemes and then put into three broad themes within the TPB theoretical framework: attitude, subject norms, perceived behavioral control. Excerpts from interviews with respondents who are consumers of natural cosmetics in Uppsala (NC) and respondents who are consumers of traditional cosmetics in Uppsala (TC) are provided as example quotes for illustrating the themes. The TPB theoretical model is used to analyze the influence of each theme on purchasing behavioral intention and purchasing behavior.

4.1 Attitude

Four subthemes were identified within the theme of attitude: attitude towards using natural cosmetics, attitude towards buying natural cosmetics, attitude towards using traditional cosmetics, and attitude towards a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

Attitude towards using natural cosmetics. All the respondents (NC) expressed positive feelings because natural cosmetics can not only bring them health but also meet their need for consciences. Some of them were loyal to one specific brand. Some of them also felt very happy to use self-made products. The following are three examples of respondents (NC).

“I use the Body Shop brand (a famous natural cosmetic brand). I think natural cosmetics have good quality, better for my skin and environment and sustainability.” (Respondent 6, NC)

“It has fewer chemical ingredients like microplastics, using natural cosmetics is better for the environment. It has no animal test and healthy for my skin.” (Respondent 8, NC)

“I feel very good when I use my own product. I like personalized products.” (Respondent 20, NC)

The most typical example is the vegan group, a group of unique personality, for them, using natural cosmetics can assert their uniqueness. Here is an example from Respondent 21 (NC):

“I am a vegan and I prefer to choose natural cosmetics. I always research and find suitable vegan brands, news, a lot of products there. A lot of my friends are also vegans and choose vegan brands.”
Attitude towards buying natural cosmetics. Some respondents (TC) expressed their eager attitude to buy natural cosmetics because they perceived the benefits of their own health and the environment. Although they knew little about natural cosmetics, simple words such as natural or organic in past experience (i.e. organic food consumption) made them have a natural affection for natural cosmetics.

“I will look for it more. Because it is good for me, and for nature. I will do it my best.” (Respondent 10, TC)

“I prefer using natural and organic cosmetics. I try to buy organic cosmetics. I should be glad that everything is organic. I only eat organic food. For me, it is healthy; for nature, it is also good.” (Respondent 12, TC)

However, different from some respondents (TC), most respondents (NC) recognized greenwashing in the natural cosmetics industry, so they had a strong dissatisfaction during the purchasing process, complaining about the non-authenticity and non-transparency of product labels, and they generally boycotted big cosmetics companies. They also wanted clear and authoritative certifications that can simplify the purchase decision-making process.

“Some products say they are 100% natural, but they are not natural. I boycott some companies like L’Oréal (the world’s largest cosmetics company). I try to avoid the big brands. They just lie. I think those products like ‘natural’ or ‘organic’ claims, are just marketing stuff. I do not trust these words. I trust the levels of ingredients, the certifications.” (Respondent 15, NC)

“For example, this soap made in France, you can look at the ingredients, I do not know why they write aqua, it is weird, it means water, and it is the Spanish word, they try to make these ingredients complex, it is so unnecessary. I like companies they write ‘water’, then you understand.” (Respondent 17, NC)

Attitude towards using traditional cosmetics. Almost all the respondents (NC) recognized the harmful chemical ingredients in traditional cosmetics although chemicals can make products more effective. When they used products with chemical ingredients, they felt very bad because they saw the more profound consequences, such as harm to their health and the environment.

“I think the traditional cosmetics have some stuff that is not good for nature. They put them (chemicals) in cosmetics because it keeps the cosmetics effective. But it is not good for the nature, the sea, and health.” (Respondent 14, NC)
“I feel really bad. I feel so unnatural. It feels like I have chemicals on my body, so disgusting. I do not want to support the cosmetics industry because they cause so much pollution, they waste so much water. When they produce cosmetics, it is just so unnecessary when you can use other things.” (Respondent 17, NC)

“Some bad ingredients such as microplastics, they are everywhere. Even in clothes, when you wash your clothes, they will go to the sea. If I use traditional ones, even those natural cosmetics which claim natural or organic (fake claims), I feel very bad.” (Respondent 20, NC)

**Attitude towards a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.** All the respondents showed a healthy and sustainable lifestyle in different aspects of their daily life, which showed their positive attitude. Although some respondents did not use natural cosmetics, some of them often ate organic food, some of them bought second-hand clothes, recycling, biking and so on. For the respondents (NC), they seemed to have a stronger pursuit of healthy and sustainable lifestyles and desired to communicate their personality and identity to others because they need to spend time and money on choosing natural cosmetics.

“The trash used where I place them into different baskets. And I buy second hands.” (Respondent 7, TC)

“I only eat organic bananas, I buy second-hand stuff, recycling. When I travel, my first choice is train.” (Respondent 13, TC)

“Using this Swedish natural cosmetics brand is a kind of expression in life, it is like my personality, it is like my life, on behalf of the feelings I want to express, a feeling of ‘low extravagance’.” (Respondent 16, NC)

“Though we could not avoid 100% chemicals, I try to do my best to do something supernatural. So I make my own products with simple ingredients like water, vinegar, and essential oil.” (Respondent 20, NC)

The four subthemes interact each other in the following ways: respondents generally agreed that traditional cosmetics were harmful to health and the environment because of the bad ingredients made of chemicals, which was translated into a preference for natural cosmetics. However, they did not always feel good in the purchasing process. Some respondents even started to make their own natural cosmetic products without buying natural cosmetic products on the market. When respondents used natural cosmetics, they generally felt good because they felt a healthy and sustainable lifestyle was fulfilled.
From the above excerpts in all the four subthemes, the image from natural cosmetic brands not only symbolizes health, environmentally friendly and ethical responsibility for consumers but also symbolizes their unique personality and self image. While the image from traditional cosmetic brands symbolizes non-health and pollution, which are also closely linked to the brand image from big cosmetic companies. Brand image refers to the brand cognition extracted from consumers’ memory (Keller, 1993), which is closely related to consumers’ own personality and identity (Aaker, 1997). Since the brand image of big cosmetics companies providing traditional cosmetics in the past has been deeply rooted in consumers' minds for a long time, making consumers suspicious of the natural cosmetic offerings from big cosmetic companies. Unlike the bad image of traditional cosmetics, natural cosmetics have become meaningful products that can represent consumers' healthy and sustainable lifestyles and their own identity. In previous studies, “lifestyle, brand image, self image, health, ethical claims in green messages” (Pudaruth et al., 2015) and “moral responsibility” (Arvola, 2008) have been supported to positively affect purchasing intentions and further affect purchasing behavior of natural cosmetics.

However, in the process of purchasing natural cosmetics, respondents’ distrust of the claims on the labels of natural cosmetics leads to a negative attitude, which is supported by Chen and Chai (2010). Horne (2009) and Thøgersen et al. (2010) confirm that consumers fear being deceived by the claims of natural cosmetics on the market due to their lack of knowledge of natural cosmetics, they like the eco-labels and certifications that can convey authentic information without excessive promises. The reason is that it helps them reduce the cost of searching for information during the purchasing process (Horne, 2009).

The TPB model shows that a positive attitude has a positive impact on the behavioral intention, which in turn is more likely to perform the behavior, and vice versa (Ajzen, 1991). Fazio and Zanna (1978) argue that attitude based on past experience is more accessible and thus has a greater impact on behavior through behavioral intention as a mediate variable. On the contrary, the absence of past
experience leads to an ambiguous attitude and a lack of impact on behavioral intention and the behavior. When it comes to the impact of the four subthemes on purchasing intention and purchasing behavior, respondents (NC) have clearly positive feelings towards using natural cosmetics and healthy lifestyles based on their past usage experience, while they have clearly negative feelings towards buying natural cosmetics and using traditional cosmetics, which makes them uncertain about performing the purchasing behavior. For example, they can also make their own natural cosmetic products. For the respondents (TC), although they have positive attitude toward buying natural cosmetics, they have no past usage experience, so their attitude is likely to be ambiguous, and may have little impact on purchasing behavioral intention.

### 4.2 Subject Norms

Five subthemes within the theme of subjective norms emerged: family and relatives, friends, professionals, social groups, and the local social context.

**Family and relatives.** Some respondents (NC) were affected by family members and relatives to use natural cosmetics. They were very glad that they can change their lifestyle to a healthy way.

“My mother gave me, she promoted the Body Shop brand (a famous natural cosmetic brand) to me. Then I bought it from the shop and sometimes it is a gift that my Mom gave it to me.” (Respondent 6, NC)

“I have a cousin, she told me about all the chemicals that put in the cosmetics we use every day, how do they affect us. Then she said you can use natural cosmetics. Then after that, I start to Google.” (Respondent 17, NC)

“My wife and I use natural cosmetics like organic soap and shampoo every day. She affected me. So it is up to my wife what she chooses. I trust her. And I feel very good when I start to use natural cosmetics, it is very good stuff. I really want to do something good for the environment. That is really good for me and my wife.” (Respondent 18, NC)

**Friends.** The impact of friends was relatively small here. Some respondents (TC) reported they had friends around them who were using natural cosmetics but did not actively promote to them. The respondents (NC) also did not seem to be significantly
affected by friends, but a typical example emerged that Respondent 20 was affected by her friend's dissatisfaction with the natural cosmetic products on the market, and began to change her purchasing behavior and made her own natural cosmetic products.

“I was lucky enough to have a friend that introduce me to this word of natural and organic. Then she was talking about the bad ingredient in the products that I use, then I start to do my own research about hand-made cosmetics products. I start to talk to some people who have already made home-made things, like which one really works and which one needs to be avoided. So I just like start to buy raw materials like vinegar, essential oil. I try not to buy things that are not good.” (Respondent 20, NC)

Professionals. Doctors' advice can usually make a big change in a person's behavior. Respondent 5 started to use natural cosmetics after being told by her doctor that she cannot be exposed to chemicals.

“My doctor told me I should use natural cosmetics.” (Respondent 5, NC)

Social groups. The impact of social groups was also great. Respondent 17 reported that she was affected by the online virtual community that many of her peers were working together to promote healthy consumption, which had a great impact on changing her lifestyle. In addition, among the vegan groups, the influence of groups was also very strong. Members tend to use natural cosmetics because they wanted to be in line with the identity of the group.

“When I Google, I know there is a no-poo movement. There are people who do not want to use traditional cosmetics. They share their ideas such as people can use bake powder instead of shampoo. Yeah, so many different tips, ideas, advice, create your own stuff that not comes from chemicals. Also, I am a vegan. I like this kind of lifestyle.” (Respondent 17, NC)

Local social context. Most respondents did not appear to be affected by the local social context. But a Chinese respondent reported that she was influenced by the sustainable lifestyle of her current city after she lived in Uppsala, showing a high loyalty of using natural cosmetics and a huge change in buying behavior from traditional cosmetics to natural cosmetics.

“I buy this Swedish natural cosmetic brand because I study in Sweden. I think Sweden is a very environmentally friendly country, especially in my current city Uppsala. I have a very respectful attitude that it is a global climate city. Almost all people have environmental
awareness, this really affects me. I will do everything I can to adjust my behavior habits according to the way the country requires. For example, garbage sorting, recycling used plastic bottles, buying fewer things you do not need (reducing waste), cycling (reducing fuel emissions), buying used daily necessities, etc.” (Respondent 16, NC)

From the subthemes mentioned above, most respondents were happy to change their lifestyles by consuming natural cosmetics under the influence of these subthemes. The reason is that they want to get self identity through group identity and also express self identity to others. Some scholars conclude the purpose of lifestyle is not only to actively build self identity, but also to actively show or communicate this identity to the outside world so that others can see their self identity (Chua, 2002; Burgess et al., 2003; Solomon, 2012, p.259). Solomon (2012, p.260) points out that group identity refers to self identity in a homogeneous group. Some examples are consanguineous groups like families and relatives, groups with similar interests like friends, “brand community” (Muniz and O’guinn, 2001) like online natural cosmetics fan community, etc. Pudaruth et al. (2015) hold that the common interest in ethical consumption among female groups positively affects the group members’ intention to buy natural cosmetics.

Consumers’ lifestyles could be shaped culturally, historically and contextually through products which have symbolic meaning (Lutzenhiser and Gossard, 2000). For example, the green movement launched by social groups plays a key role in promoting consumers from original lifestyles to healthy and sustainable lifestyles (Kilbourne et al., 1997). Chin et al. (2018) hold that social movements positively influence consumers’ purchasing intentions in natural cosmetics consumption. In terms of the relationship between lifestyle and consumption, lifestyle gradually blurs the boundary between producers and consumers. Consumers can become producers. An example is in the sector of natural cosmetics, consumers also make their own natural cosmetic products to satisfy their needs (Morais et al., 2018).

Different cultures can also explain such behavioral changes. Consumers who have lived for a long time in a collectivism culture tend to follow the identity of others and buy products with values advocated by the society in which they live. Thus they are
easy to be influenced by the local social context, which is also supported by Trafimow et al. (1991).

However, influence from professionals like doctors to change some respondents’ lifestyle to use natural cosmetics shows that lifestyle changes can be involuntary (Giddens, 1991).

The TPB model shows that consumers’ perceived social pressures positively influence their intention to buy natural cosmetics, and further positively influence their purchasing behavior (Arvola et al., 2008). That is, the greater group identity a consumer in such groups as family, relatives, friends, social groups, the more likely he or she is to make the same purchasing behavior as the group members do. Besides, consumers who are deeply influenced by collectivistic culture tend to regard a country as a homogenous group and comply with the expectations of the local social context. Professionals as authorities are also a kind of social pressure, affecting the purchasing behavior of others.

4.3 Perceived Behavioral Control

When exploring the theme of perceived behavioral control, subthemes emerged across the areas of facilitators and barriers.

Facilitators

The subtheme of facilitators includes online purchasing, recommendation from others, sustainable lifestyle.

**Online purchasing.** When buying natural cosmetics, some respondents (NC) who were eager to get more information and had the ability to surf the Internet tend to buy online because online resources can help them choose reliable natural cosmetic products more quickly. With the development of e-commerce, most of them can be easily bought online, which was a facilitator for consumers.

“Most of them are from online, the specific Swedish company, they have only organic things. And it is convenient to buy. In town (downtown in Uppsala), I would like to say that I trust
20% (trust natural cosmetic products offline). Online, then I can Google (to search for information about the products and the company), so it is easier that I can buy. I have 90% (trust natural cosmetic products online).” (Respondent 17, NC)

**Recommendation from others.** For those respondents who had no willingness to search for information about natural cosmetics that can help them to make the purchase decisions, the recommendation from others was an important facilitator to promote their purchasing behavioral intention for natural cosmetic products.

“I think if someone could recommend natural cosmetics to me, I will buy.” (Respondent 3, TC)

“I just do not know much about it. The traditional that I know about them and how they work. I usually buy the brands that I know. I need feedback from others.” (Respondent 11, TC)

**Sustainable lifestyle.** All the respondents reported their healthy and sustainable daily lifestyles. For some respondents (TC), they usually bought second-hand stuff, cycling, and garbage sorting, etc., which facilitated their willingness to buy natural cosmetics.

“I sort my trash and riding, second hands. And I also try to be vegan.” (Respondent 9, NC)

“I also support sustainability. I vote for the green party. The party promotes the concept of sustainability. I also buy second-hand clothes, and I do recycling. I nearly never buy plastic bags.” (Respondent 12, TC)

“I only eat organic bananas. I buy second-hand stuff, recycling. When I travel, my first choice is train.” (Respondent 13, TC)

The above subthemes (online purchasing, recommendation from others, and sustainable lifestyle) facilitate the respondents’ purchasing intention and then affect the purchase behavior of natural cosmetics from different aspects. The influence of perceived behavioral control on the intention to buy natural cosmetics and purchasing behavior is determined by the abilities and resources that consumers own (Ajzen, 1991). The more abilities and resources consumers have, the stronger their intention to buy, and the easier for them to buy natural cosmetics. For the respondents (NC) who have the ability to surf the Internet, online purchasing can reduce their purchasing time and get more comprehensive decision-making information, that is, more resources. For the respondents (TC) who lack product knowledge, recommendation from others can provide them with the resources to perform the
purchasing behavior in a short period, and reduce the time and cost of their information search. For the respondents with healthy and sustainable lifestyles, past experience enables them to gain more abilities and resources. All the above potential factors could facilitate a consumer’s purchasing intention, and further to buy natural cosmetics.

**Barriers**

The subtheme of barriers includes high price, inconvenient purchasing location, perceived efficacy or quality, lack of knowledge and no awareness, no plan beforehand, and no harmonized certification.

**High price.** Some respondents (TC) who had intention to buy natural cosmetics expressed that the price was an obstacle in the decision-making process. Usually, they had the desire for a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, but the high price of natural cosmetics made them give up the purchasing of natural cosmetics.

“I generally do not buy natural cosmetics because they are expensive, if the price is the same as traditional cosmetics, I would like to buy natural cosmetics.” (Respondent 2, TC)

“If you want me to think about it, I will say the factor of price. The price of natural cosmetics is more expensive, I will try to purchase if have 50% discount.” (Respondent 4, TC)

**Inconvenient purchasing location.** Some respondents reported the inconvenience of purchasing location was one barrier of acquiring natural cosmetics. Actually, there were few options for natural cosmetics in the supermarket in Uppsala. If they wanted to buy natural cosmetics, it cannot avoid going to special shops or buying online. For the respondents who did not usually go to the special stores or were not able to purchase online, it was difficult to acquire natural cosmetics.

“When I go to the store to buy cosmetics, I just think the location where I buy and how I can get them conveniently. In ordinary stores, there are not too many special cosmetics, depends on the gender’s differences that men seldom go to health shops and beauty shops.” (Respondent 1, TC)

“This is why now I go to Germany. Because it is really cheaper. You do not need to go to the pharmacy shops, you just go to buy normal products in the supermarket.” (Respondent 19, NC)
**Perceived efficacy or quality.** Most respondents (TC) reported that the efficacy or quality of natural cosmetics was very important. The traditional cosmetics had been tested and used for a long term and worked well. However, it was hard to get information about the efficacy of natural cosmetics.

“I am not using natural cosmetics because I do not know much about it. The traditional that I know about them and how they work. The natural cosmetics still need to be tested the effectiveness. If I choose natural cosmetics, it should be not allergic to my skin.” (Respondent 11, TC)

**Lack of knowledge and no awareness.** Some respondents (TC) reported they lack knowledge, so they had no awareness of natural cosmetics. But they generally expressed their intention to use natural cosmetics.

“I do not know whether I use natural cosmetics.” (Respondent 3, TC)

“What is natural? Is it organic? Is it normal? I do not know the difference (between traditional cosmetics and natural cosmetics).” (Respondent 4, TC)

“I never thought about it, maybe I had used, but I do not know.” (Respondent 10, TC)

“I am not sure what I am buying.” (Respondent 12, TC)

**No plan beforehand.** One old respondent (TC) reported although he really wanted to use natural cosmetics, but no plan beforehand made him get the product which was most convenient for him.

“Sometimes I have to buy one product, I do not care about whether organic or not because I need it at that moment. I have no plan.” (Respondent 12, TC)

**No harmonized certification.** For the respondents (NC), lack of harmonized certifications made it difficult for them to acquire a reputable natural cosmetics.

“It is complex, you do not know which product is good, which is not good. Like these certifications: ECOCERT, Natural. They are all about organic, but they have different levels of how much is non-organic is allowed inside. This is very ok, but here 90% need to be organic compared with the other one. Food has rules to control from the European Union. But for the cosmetics, they have own things but they do not have a harmonized certificate, which makes it difficult for different things to control. They do not have control. That is why I find it difficult. I just need to make my own stuff.” (Respondent 19, NC)

Some respondents said they had intention to buy natural cosmetics, but the above six subthemes hindered them to perform the purchasing behavior. Some respondents
(NC) even did not buy natural cosmetics on the market but made their own products. Thus, the intention-behavior gap within the TPB model occurred. In previous studies, scholars affirmed that high price (Gleim et al., 2013; Gupta and Ogden, 2009; Pickett-Baker and Ozaki, 2008; Lowe and Alpert, 2010; Shiv et al., 2005), purchasing location and lack of knowledge (Carrington et al., 2014; Bray et al., 2011; Gleim et al., 2013; Tanner and Wölfing, 2003), perceived efficacy or quality (Bray et al., 2011; Gleim et al., 2013; Gupta and Ogden, 2009; Pickett-Baker and Ozaki, 2008; Borin et al., 2013; Zabkar and Hosta, 2013) would lead to the consequences that although the respondents had intention to buy, but they did not have enough resources or the abilities to buy green or ethical products.

For the subtheme “no plan beforehand”, when respondents are in urgent need of cosmetics but do not take the time and effort to gather information about natural cosmetics in advance, they tend to buy the brand they used most often or one they do not even know in the most convenient way, even they are willing to buy natural cosmetics. This factor is also supported by Carrington et al. (2014).

For the subtheme “no harmonized certification”, when respondents who originally buy natural cosmetics on the market find that self-made natural cosmetics cost less such as less money or less effort to identify true and false labels than natural cosmetics they buy on the market. They can be rewarded with a healthier and more sustainable lifestyle, so they will stop buying natural cosmetics on the market. That is, if a consumer perceives more value from one product than another, he or she will choose to buy that product (Zeithaml, 1988).
5. Discussions

Previous many consumer behavior researches have applied the TPB model for quantitative research (Sparks and Shepherd, 1992; Yeon and Chung, 2011; Johnstone and Tan, 2015; Liobikienė, 2016; Hsu et al., 2017; Paul et al., 2016; Ghazali et al., 2017), but few literature for qualitative research. The reason may be that when the theory was put forward, Ajzen (1991) used mathematical formulas to define attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control so as to accurately predict behavioral intention and thus predict the likelihood of the performance of a behavior. However, Ajzen did not deny that the potential variables included in attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control need to be dug out so as to further do hypothesis test. The contribution of this study is to explore the potential variables (potential factors) affecting consumers' purchasing behavior in the natural cosmetics industry within the framework of the TPB model. Exploring potential variables has been valued in other fields of research such as healthy behavior (Robertson et al., 2014; Tan et al., 2016; Weir et al., 2010).

Although this study cannot quantitatively prove the influence of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control on purchasing intention and purchasing behavior according to Azjen's method, the results can be explained from a theoretical point of view in this study. In addition, as has been pointed out previously, under the control of the purchasing intention as an intermediate variable, some previous studies in green or ethical consumption have confirmed that consumers’ attitude towards buying green products has no obvious influence on their purchasing behavior (Carrete et al. 2012); consumers’ purchasing behavior of green products is positively affected by subjective norms (Lorek and Fuchs, 2013; Ritter et al., 2015; Vermeir and Verbeke, 2008). Some potential variables explored by this study which lead to intention-behavior gap such as price, perceived efficacy or quality, lack of knowledge, inconvenient purchasing location, etc. have been empirically supported by past studies in green or ethical consumption (Gleim et al., 2013; Carrington et al., 2014; Bray et al., 2011).
In the TPB model, perceived behavioral control which is determined by consumers’ resources and abilities plays a vital role. It is an important factor in determining whether attitude and subjective norms can affect purchasing behavior through purchasing behavioral intention. From the results, we found that the key resource consumers need to own when buying natural cosmetics is product knowledge. Product knowledge affects consumers' perception of brand image (Keller, 1993) which associates with their personality, lifestyle and identity (Aaker, 1997). Product knowledge is also closely related to the advantages or disadvantages perceived by consumers from brands (Keller, 1993), resulting in trust or distrust of brands. For example, consumers trust green products when they perceive these products’ environmental benefits (Chen, 2010).

From the potential factors discovered in the theme of attitude, although the image of natural cosmetics in the minds of consumers represents their healthy and sustainable lifestyle, but the different claims and certifications of natural cosmetics sold on the market make it difficult for consumers to clearly identify the brand image of these products (Carrete et al., 2012; Furlow, 2010; Chen and Chang, 2013), because no harmonized authoritative certifications can help them quickly identify the brand image (Horne, 2009). They need to spend time and effort to study various ingredients and certifications. The above reflects consumers' vague knowledge of natural cosmetics and the need for rapid access to information. From the potential factors discovered in the theme of perceived behavioral control, some potential factors like recommendation from others, lack of knowledge and no awareness, no harmonized certifications are related to product knowledge.

Consumers' fuzzy cognition of natural cosmetics originates from the lack of objective product knowledge which is related to facts (Brucks, 1985), which may be due to the fact that consumers' knowledge of natural cosmetics almost comes from others first and then some consumers start their own independent learning through the Internet. As has been found in the theme of subjective norms, the changes in consumers' original lifestyles are greatly affected by perceived social pressures. While
they do not have a popular science education from cosmetics companies or authorities.

Harmonized authoritative certifications can clean up a variety of claims and certifications on the market, reduce opportunistic behavior like greenwashing, help consumers easily access objective product knowledge, reduce the cost of searching information, and thus increase trust in brands, finally increase commitment to buy natural cosmetics (Newerli-Guz, 2012; Morgen and Hunt, 1994). If this condition is realized, the influence of the potential barriers that emerge in the theme of perceived behavioral control, such as lack of product knowledge, recommendation from others, lack of harmonized certification, no prior plan and so on, will be weakened, then the influence of consumers' purchasing intention will be stronger on the purchasing behavior. The influence of potential factors emerging in the theme of attitude will be enhanced, because clear certifications can decrease consumers' dissatisfaction in the purchasing process, thus enhancing the positive attitude. In the theme of subjective norms, the negative evaluation of others on the purchase of natural cosmetics will be weakened. The TPB model points out that when consumers have a clearer positive attitude towards buying natural cosmetics, the higher the degree of support from others, the stronger the perceived behavior control, the stronger the consumers' intention to buy natural cosmetics, as a result, the more likely the purchasing behavior occurs.

Among the barriers within the theme of perceived behavior control that directly affects purchasing behavior, it is worth noting that the quality and effect of natural cosmetics perceived by consumers are not as good as those of traditional cosmetics. It also proves that the current efforts of many companies to develop new and effective natural ingredients are necessary (Kerdudo et al., 2016; Philippe, 2012).
6. Conclusions

In this study, the potential factors affecting consumers' purchasing behavior of natural cosmetics are qualitatively explored by using the theory of planned behavior.

First, four factors within the theme of attitude are: attitude towards using natural cosmetics; attitude towards buying natural cosmetics; attitude towards using traditional cosmetics; attitude towards a healthy and sustainable lifestyle. Five factors within the theme of subjective norms are: family and relatives; friends; professionals; social groups; local social context. The study shows, under the control of the purchasing intention as an intermediate variable, consumers’ attitude towards buying natural cosmetics has no obvious influence on their purchasing behavior; the subjective norms have a positive impact on consumers’ purchasing behavior of natural cosmetics.

Second, in the theme of perceived behavior control, potential factors such as online purchasing, recommendation from others and sustainable lifestyle facilitate consumers' intention to buy natural cosmetics and then on their purchasing behavior. The barriers within the theme of perceived behavior control are: high price; inconvenient purchasing location; perceived efficacy or quality; lack of knowledge and no awareness; no plan beforehand; no harmonized certification. These barriers directly hinder consumers' purchasing behavior of natural cosmetics without being controlled by the purchasing intention. The intention-behavior gap thus occurs.

In the theme of perceived behavioral control, product knowledge is an important resource for consumers when buying natural cosmetics. It can adjust the intensity of perceived behavioral control, attitude and subjective norms, further adjusting the influence of purchasing intention on purchasing behavior. Harmonized certifications can help consumers’ easily access objective product knowledge, increase perceived behavioral control’s intensity, thus increasing the influence of consumers’ purchasing intention on their purchasing behavior of natural cosmetics.
7. Managerial Implications

The potential factors explored in this study that affect consumers' purchasing behavior of natural cosmetics show that although consumers desire to live a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, but they are basically under the influence of other social pressures except marketers to use natural cosmetics, and the important resource that consumers need to buy natural cosmetics is product knowledge, which is also basically acquired by others or self-learning. Marketers have a weak influence on them; in addition, consumers' ambiguity and mistrust of product claims in the process of buying natural cosmetics make them yearn for clear and reliable claims and certification standards; third, the convenience of purchase, price, product quality, and effect are also important factors that affect consumers' purchasing behavior of natural cosmetics.

The management implications of the above findings for marketers are:

First, marketers need to exert their influence on consumers and actively promote healthy and sustainable lifestyles to consumers. For example, marketers need to increase communication with consumers, expose more objective product knowledge of natural cosmetics to them, including the production process, the source of ingredients, and the positive and negative effects of various natural ingredients.

Second, marketers should actively cooperate with NGOs, governments to improve industry standards and drive harmonized certifications.

Third, marketers need to consider how to make consumers perceive the natural cosmetics on the market are cost-effective with the consideration of price, product quality, and effect, thus it is necessary to pay attention to the operation of entire supply chain in the natural cosmetics industry.
8. Limitations and Future Research

Although this study has explored some potential factors, there are still some limitations. First, the scope of the samples was limited by the single method of data collection, that was, semi-structured interview, resulting in a single source of samples. Second, due to the limitations of our academic abilities, we may still have subjective bias and unproficiency in research methods during the data collection and analysis process, thus some other potential factors may not be excavated from the empirical data. Third, cultural differences are still inevitable, we may misunderstand the respondents’ words. Fourth, some literatures show that there are some demographic factors influencing customers’ attitude and behavioral intention about natural cosmetics, such as gender (Pudaruth et al., 2015). However, we failed to collect enough samples to identify factors related to demographic characteristics.

For the future research, first, the rigour of the research methods need to be paid attention, such as collecting data from multiple channels to increase the number and width of samples, increasing the rigour of data transcription, and forming a more systematic and more rigorous abstract pattern from the empirical data. Second, the scope of the study can be extended to other cities in Sweden. Whether the potential factors explored in Uppsala are universal in those cities can be further verified. Third, although the potential factors influencing consumers’ purchasing behavior explored in this study were theoretically explained in a qualitative research, the future study need to quantitatively test each potential variable to explore the most suitable variables influencing consumers’ purchasing behavior, which is also in line with the method proposed by Ajzen when he put forward the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991).
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Appendix 1 Interview Questions

Demographic: Name, age, gender, nationality, education, years lived in Uppsala

General questions:
- Are you using natural cosmetics with natural or organic label? Such as toothpaste, soap, shampoo, body or skin care products, etc.
- What kind of product is it? Where did you buy it? Is it easy to buy it? How long do you use natural cosmetics?
- Uppsala was named the global climate city in 2018. What do you think of it? How does it affect your daily life? What do you do to support sustainability?

Attitude:
- How did you get information about natural cosmetics? What motivated you to get them?
- How do you understand the meaning of “natural”, “organic” and those certifications?
- Do you know the difference between natural cosmetics and traditional cosmetics? What are they?(If yes)
- How do you feel about using natural cosmetics compared to traditional cosmetics? Why do you have this feeling?
- What criteria / what’s important for you to select / purchase natural cosmetics/cosmetics?
- Do you trust natural cosmetics brands in the market? Why?
- If your friends or your family want you to recommend cosmetics that you are often using to them, what kind of natural cosmetics/cosmetics would you recommend?
- Why are you using / not using natural cosmetics?

Subjective Norms:
- Do you know that are some of your friends / family / co-workers / classmates using natural cosmetics? Have they ever promoted the natural cosmetics they use?(If yes). How do you feel when they promote to you?

Perceived Behavioral Control:
- What make it hard for you to buy the natural cosmetics?
- Under what circumstances would help you feel it easy to buy the natural cosmetics?

Purchasing Intention:
- After you run out of cosmetics now, are you going to buy natural cosmetics? Why?

Purchasing Behavior:
- Why did you buy the conventional cosmetic/ natural cosmetic product you are using now?