Why do companies produce vegan and vegetarian products imitated with real meat products?

Exploring a virgin topic on the Swedish market.
Acknowledgements

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Abstract

With the support of four vegetarian and vegan companies established on the Swedish market, Astrid och Aporna, Ekko Gourmet, Tzay and Quorn, the objective of this study is to understand why companies produce vegan and vegetarian products imitated with real meat products as well as how these companies market these products.

The data was collected through interviews with suitable representatives from respective company. The empirical data collected from the interviews have further been analysed together with theories from past researches. The research approaches of this study has been a mixture of inductive and deductive when handling our data.

The results from this thesis enlightens that there are contrasting strategies behind the products’ visual appearance, chosen target group and marketing among the different vegetarian and vegan companies on the Swedish market. We have discovered patterns between the companies’ target audiences and how these companies have designed their products depending of target audience

Due to time limitations and companies’ unwillingness to participate in interviews, a broader perspective on the topic could not be given. Also, this study only looks at vegan and vegetarian companies operating in Sweden. A suggestion for future research is to investigate the consumer’s perspective and perceptions of vegan and vegetarian products by conducting a quantitative research to distinguish if the companies’ strategies are consistent with the perceptions of consumers on the Swedish market.
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1 Introduction

This section will explain the background of our topic regarding meat substitutes and consumer behaviour. It will also introduce the problem formulation, purpose, research questions, delimitations of the study as well as definitions that will be used frequently in this report.

1.1 Background

Recently, vegan and vegetarian products than can be seen as meat substitutes have been mentioned in the news more frequently. There are several opinions regarding this.

“I favour them being banned in the interest of clear consumer labelling. I do not want us to pretend that these pseudo-meat dishes are meat dishes”.

- Christian Schmidt, German agriculture minister

Christian Schmidt, has expressed his concerns regarding meat substitute products. Schmidt has for a long time expressed his criticism against meat substitute products and claims that these kinds of products are misleading in terms of consumer labelling since many of them are design to look like real meat products (Michail, 2017). Further, in France it was recently decided that food producers are from now on banned to name their vegetarian food products as “vegetarian sausage” or “vegan bacon” because such vocabulary can mislead consumers. Food descriptions such as “burger”, “steak”, “sausage” will thus only be permitted on food that actually contains real meat. The ban, that can lead to fines of up to € 300,000 for those companies who refuse to follow, has got shared opinions. Wendy Higgins of Humane Society International (2018) says: "It’s a shame that instead of embracing vegan and vegetarian food, France has adopted a position of defensive paranoia". Further, Mr. Moreau, a member of President Macron’s En Marche!, has expressed his consent to the ban and says “It is important to fight against false claims: our products must be designated correctly: the terms #cheese or #steak will be reserved for products of animal origin!” (Dalton, 2018).
Meat substitute products have started to appear to a greater extent on the market in recent years (Michail, 2015). These are food products that are vegetable based and contain proteins derived from pulses (like soya products, beans and peas), cereal protein and/or fungi (Sadler, 2004). These products can also be referred to as meat replacers, meat alternatives and meat analogues (Davies & Lightowler, 1998; McIlveen, Abraham & Armstrong, 1999). Compared to many other food products, meat substitute products are relatively new on the market (Hoek, Luning, Weijzen, Engels, Kok & de Graaf, 2011; Sadler, 2004). It was not until the 1960’s that soy products were introduced to the Western market and other substitute products like Quorn appeared even later (Sadler, 2004). Quorn is a product made by mycoprotein, fragmented mushroom, and in some products, egg.

Meat substitute products are aimed to replace meat products and are said to have potential to contribute to public health benefits (Sadler, 2004). In addition to the health perspective of eating less meat and instead replacing this to meat substitute products, many discussions have been made regarding the environmental benefits with plant-based diets. One of the major emitters of carbon is the food industry. A big reason for the climate change is because of the intensity of animal production which causes an increase of global environmental pressure (Stehfest, Bouwman, van Vuuren, den Elzen, Eickhout, & Kabat (2009). According to Tukker & Jansen (2006), our food production is responsible for approximately 20 - 30% of the total environmental impact. Hedenus, Wirsenius, Daniel, & Johansson (2014) also points out that the production of meat and animal-based products comes with a very high environmental impact which in turn contributes to our climate change. According to Stehfest et al., (2009), a change towards diets that contains less meat could actually reduce the cost of reducing carbon emission by 50% in 2050.

Consumer preferences change over time and it is important for companies to stay up in touch with those changes. Meat alternatives is one area of increasing change in the development of vegetarian and vegan products. As mentioned, it is of main importance for companies to be aware of these consumer preferences and changes in consumer behaviour. Consumer buyer behaviour has been defined as “The buying behaviour of final consumers- individuals and households that buy goods and services for personal consumption” (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, 2011). Consumers vary in income, education, age, tastes and in a lot of other ways. Therefore, it is of main importance for
companies to study what, where, how and the amount that consumers buy. Factors that influence consumer behaviour are cultural, social, personal and psychological (Kotler et al., 2011). Considering consumer behaviour, it is hard for companies to develop new and attractive food products for consumers (Costa & Jongen, 2006). Additionally, it is proven that it is even harder to try to make consumers attracted to products that are aimed for substitute something that is already attractive for the consumer (Wansink, Sonka, Goldsmith, Chiriboga, & Eren, 2005). Looking at meat and consumer buyer behaviour, meat is mainly attractive because of its unique texture and taste (Grunert, Bredahl, & Brunsø, 2004). Research within consumer behaviour and foods has stated that food neophobia can be a struggle for companies that are trying to sell new food product on the market and has been seen as a barrier when it comes to new user of a new product (Hock et al., 2011). Food neophobia is referred to as the unwillingness among consumers to try new foods (Pliner & Hobden, 1992).

We eat more meat than we have ever done before in Sweden (Jordbruksverket, 2017). An average Swede consumes around 80 kilos of meat every year. According to the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), that figure is close to twice the world average which is around 42 kilos. However, approximately 5 to 10% of all Swedes are vegetarians. A recent survey shows that one in three Swedes are flexitarians. The press officer of the grocery retailer Axfood, Claes Salomonsson, commented "We have noticed that vegetarian food is very trendy because our sales have gone up 160 percent since last year, but I was still surprised to find out that so many non-vegetarians are eating vegetarian food" (Sveriges Radio, 2015).

1.2 Problem Formulation

Meat has always had a strong position in Western food culture. Research has stated that meat is the food that has the highest status of all in the food hierarchy (Twigg, 1984). Since meat is so important for many consumers, vegetarian foods is often manufactured to look like real meat products. Vegetarian restaurants also serve dishes where they imitate actual meal dishes (Holm & Mohl, 2000).

According to Tuorila, Meiselman, Bell, Cardello, & Johnson (1994), if meat substitute products have the same attributes as real meat, they can be more attractive to consumers.
Thus, that meat substitute products will be looked at more positively if it resemblance to familiar food. However, another study suggests that consumers who wants to avoid meat do not like a vegetarian or vegan product to be similar to a meat product (Fessler, Arguello, Mekdara, & Macias, 2003; Rozin, Markwith, & Stoess, 1997).

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of our research is to study why vegetarian and vegan companies imitate their products with meat products. We also aim to investigate the approaches and strategies these companies use to sell and market their plant-based products as well as to whom the products are aimed for.

1.4 Research Question

The questions that have been used as a guidance and direction in this research is:

- *Why do companies produce vegetarian and vegan products imitated with real meat products?*

- *How do these companies market their products?*

1.5 Delimitation

The empirical findings in this report are based on four vegetarian and vegan companies operating in Sweden. The companies target different kinds of consumers and work with different marketing strategies. Therefore, the findings in this study may give a narrow view of how meat substitute companies operate, to whom meat substitute products is aimed for and how the products are marketed. This thesis is based on one model within consumer behaviour in the food domain which can give a narrow view of factors affecting consumer behaviour.

1.6 Definitions

By explaining the meaning of different definitions and glossary that will be frequently used in this thesis, it will facilitate for the reader as well as providing a deeper understanding of the subject.
1.6.1 Theoretical Definitions

**Meat substitute products:** Meat substitute products are processed plant-based foods that are aimed to easily replace meat products whilst still being a good source of protein as well as imitate the taste, look and texture of real meat products (Elzerman, Van Boekel & Luning, 2013).

**Consumer behaviour:** External influences that shape people’s consumption behaviour, such as emotional, cognitive, volitional and automatic actions. The role of these psychological factors impact purchase behaviour and how consumers select products (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014).

1.6.2 Glossary

**Flexitarian:** A person whose diet is mostly vegetarian but sometimes includes meat, fish, or poultry (Dictionary.com, 2018).

**Vegetarian:** A person who does not eat or does not believe in eating meat, fish, fowl, or, in some cases, any food derived from animals, as eggs or cheese, but subsists on vegetables, fruits, nuts, grain, etc. (Dictionary.com, 2018).

**Vegan:** A vegetarian who omits all animal products from the diet (Dictionary.com, 2018).

**Fillet:** A piece of meat or fish that does not contain any bones (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2018).

**Nugget:** A small roughly shaped piece that is often made of gold. It can also be a small piece of fried chicken or fish covered with breadcrumbs (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2018).

**Sausage:** A thin tube-like case that contains ground meat mixed with different spices (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2018)

**Burger:** Meat or other foods that have been pressed into flat round shapes (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2018).
**Mince**: Can be defined as two things; It can be meat, often beef that is cut up into small pieces using a special machine. Mince can also be general food that has been cut into fine small pieces, for example onion (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2018).

**Schnitzel**: A slice of meat, often veal, that is covered with egg and breadcrumbs then fried (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2018).
2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Literature Review

This section will explain the literature review of this thesis. This section will include existing research in the field of meat substitutes, the market of meat substitutes and marketing objectives for meat substitute products.

2.1.1 Meat Substitutes

Meat substitute products are processed plant-based foods that are aimed to easily replace meat products whilst still being a good source of protein as well as imitate the taste, look and texture of real meat products (Elzerman et al., 2013).

The market of meat substitute products

In recent years it has been stated that one of many environmental concerns is due to the meat production and its bad impact on the environment and the climate change (Hedenus, Wirsenius, Daniel, & Johansson, 2014; FAO 2010). In addition to this, to substitute meat products with plant-based products can contribute to public health benefits (Sadler, 2004). Lately, many studies have looked at meat substitute products, also called plant-based replacements, because of what these products can contribute with in the future. The considered health benefits, the heavy environmental impact of animal farming and the need for food that presumably will rise with the growing population are some of the main factors for why studies have been looking at these products that are relatively new on the market (Baumann, 2013).

As a result of these facts, the market of meat substitute products has grown larger recently and more companies have started to produce vegetarian and vegan alternatives to meat, including traditional meat companies (Michail, 2015). In recent years it has been noticeable that many companies have started to produce meat substitute products that look and taste like meat products (Elzerman et al., 2013; Hoek, Luning, Stafleu, & de Graaf, 2004).
Marketing objectives of meat substitutes

As it looks like today, meat substitutes are generally consumed to a greater extent among vegetarians and flexitarians than among other consumers. However, these products have become more popular and has therefore attracted a potential new consumer group, meat eaters (Hoek et al., 2004). The positive factors that have been said can emerge if people start to eat more plant-based food have made many meat substitute companies trying to reach a new segment of customers. In order to lower the consumption of meat, companies are now facing new challenges where they have started to focus on reaching out to more consumer groups, including the segment of consumers who are meat eaters. Thus, not only on the already identified vegan or vegetarian consumer (Hoek et al., 2011).

By testing two different strategies concerning changing behaviour among consumers, Vainio, Irz and Hartikainen (2017) states that it is challenging to change food habits, especially among meat-eaters. This because consumers who eat meat regularly and eat vegetable based food more infrequently have a positive belief towards meat (Vainio, Irz & Hartikainen, 2017). Flexitarians, or the more ambivalent meat eater, have a less positive attitude towards meat. These believes are followed by morally unacceptable aspects like animal concerns, health and environmental concerns (Berndsen & Pligt, 2004). Moreover, according to Wansink (2006), meat substitutes have been said to have the benefit of “nudging the marketplace” since consumers have started to demand healthier but easy food choices. This can encourage marketers and food producers to improve and extend meat substitute products (Wansink, 2006).

A study made by Hoek et al., (2011) on the Dutch market, looking at the acceptance of meat replacements, brings up that the new movement of vegetarians and vegans often want to avoid processed food and instead want to cook their meals from scratch to make their food as “clean” as possible. Hoek et al., (2004) suggest that the focus of strategies that introduce and encourage non-vegetarians to meat substitutes should be on socio-demographic aspects, rather than health and ecological expressions.

The relationships to meat and meat substitutes

Research has been looking at differences between meat and meat substitute products. First of all, in the Western world, meat has been a big part of the consumption pattern for a
very long time (FAO, 2004). This indicates on a complex and strong relationship between consumers and meat which can be hard to change that easily. Meat has several factors that are perceived as important for consumers. These factors include nutrition and health benefits that are strongly associated with meat products. The peculiar flavour and its texture of meat are other factors of main importance. The complex relationship that people have to meat in the Western world, has been due to the cultural aspect of meat consumption (Elzerman et al., 2011).

Another difference that has been studied in terms of meat versus meat substitutes is the consumer’s perceived quality of the food. Some of the most important aspects for consumers’ buying behaviour of meat is convenience, freshness and sensory characteristics. Beyond this, the taste and texture of the food is also classified as very important aspects (Grunert, Bredahl, & Brunsø, 2004).

Lastly, several studies have been made on consumers’ evaluations of meat substitute products compared to meat products. These studies have shown that meat substitute products have had significantly lower results in the overall consumer evaluation than meat products. Meat products have scored higher on the sensory appreciation as well as the price and luxury (Aiking, de Boer & Vereijken, 2006; McIlveen, Abraham & Armstrong, 1999).

2.1.2 Consumer Behaviour

External influences shape consumers’ behaviour such as emotional, cognitive, volitional and automatic actions. Being rational is something that belongs to the nature of human beings so the role of these psychological factors impact our purchase behaviour and how we select products (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014).

Changing Consumer Behaviour within the Food Domain

Generally, consumers’ motives for changing a lifestyle and a shift in dietary choices are several. These motives often include health concerns, weight control, animal concerns and environmental aspects. However, vegetarians seem to care most about meat-free diets because of animal and environmental concerns (Hoek et al., 2011).
The difficulties of finding acceptance from consumers regarding meat substitute products have been a challenge since the very beginning of when these products were launched on the market. Companies struggle with consumer rejection in early stages of the decision making process. The concept ‘food neophobia’ acts as a barrier especially when it comes to new products (Hoek et al., 2011). ‘Food neophobia’ refers to the reluctance to try new food. It also refers to the consumer behaviour of even avoiding new food (Pliner & Hobden, 1992).

Furthermore, factors such as price and familiarity have been shown to affect the choice of consumers who eat meat to actually decide to change their preferences and instead try meat substitute products (Elzerman, Hoek, van Boekel & Luning, 2010). They also show that consumers find it important to be able to relate to a product in the sense that they already find it familiar. Hence, this research shows that customers want meat substitutes to imitate real meat products. It also emphasizes that consumers would like clear guidance on how to prepare these meat substitutes, for example that the package of the product includes a recipe which provides the customer with some extra help and ideas.

2.2 Frame of Reference

To be able to have a strong theoretical background for conducting this research, the multidisciplinary model of the main factors affecting consumer behaviour in the food domain will be used.

2.2.1 The Multidisciplinary Model of the Main Factors Affecting Consumer Behaviour in a Food Domain

The multidisciplinary model maps three different factors of consumer behaviour concerning food. These are; psychological factors, marketing factors and sensory factors. Extending from these three factors, the model illustrates several additional influences on consumer behavior concerning food (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014).
The Multidisciplinary Model of the Main Factors Affecting Consumer Behavior in a Food Domain.

Psychological factors
Stretching out from the psychological factors one can find the following aspects; attitude, risks, expectations, socio-cultural effects and lifestyles & values (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014).

Font-i-Furnols and Guerrero (2014) explain that components such as beliefs, meaning a person's information and perception about a product, in accompaniment with attitudes, which refers to consumers’ feelings towards and evaluation of a product, have a strong influence on buying behaviour. Risk can be defined as the subjective expectation of loss in the purchasing decision process (Mitchell, 1999). It has been argued that it is important for a company to be aware of the consumers’ perceived risks of buying a product. Also, how perceived uncertainty and risk can come to affect the consumer decision-making process (Mitchell, 1992). Expectations are based on attitudes and beliefs which implies that consumers have an inherent assumption that something will happen, and in this case, how a product will be and what characteristics it will have. Expectations play a significant
role in consumers’ buying behaviour, in terms of whether to reject or accept a product. This decision could be taken before the product is even tested, which indicates on the importance to be aware of consumer expectations (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014).

When deciding whether to reject or accept a product, aspects with reference to socio-cultural effects have to be taken into account (Hoek et al., 2004). These include age, gender, education as well as traditions, beliefs and habits for that particular group of people (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018). Several studies show that females are more concerned about factors regarding animal welfare, health and weight control related to meat consumption than males. This makes them more valuable as customers for meat substitute companies (Phillips et al., 2010; Kubberød, Ueland, Tronstad, & Risvik 2002; Hoek et al, 2004). A consumer’s lifestyle and values towards food products depends on how consumers’ identifies themselves (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014). It is influenced by gender, background and geographic segmentation (Kubberød et al., 2002).

**Marketing factors**

Another factor that affect consumer behaviour according to the “The Multidisciplinary Model of the Main Factors Affecting Consumer Behavior in a Food Domain” is the marketing factor. Consumers are, both consciously and subconsciously, influenced by marketing factors such as price, label, brand and availability (Fort-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014).

Related to the expectation factors and quality aspects, marketing factors could be of great use because customers base their expectations on what they see and feel regarding a specific product. One of the most important factors influencing consumers’ buying behaviour, especially in terms of food, is the expected quality of the product. Expected quality could be obtained from both intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Fort-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014). The most recognisable factors regarding marketing can be reached through the extrinsic factors, including price, brand and labelling. One recognised barrier towards consumer relation to meat substitute is the relatively low price of meat compared to meat substitutes on the market (Hoek et al., 2011). Historically, price have been seen as the biggest factor influencing buying choice (Kotler, Armstrong & Parment, 2011). According to Hoek et al., (2004), the price-quality relationship is seen as more important
among meat substitute consumers than among meat-eating consumers. This indicates further on the consciousness of meat substitute consumers.

According the study made by Hoek et al., (2004), especially vegetarians find labelling of food products more important than meat eaters. Considering labels on food products, it has been noticeable that consumers in recent years have started to become more conscious of the information about food products which means that these kinds of standards could result in a competitive advantage (Gracia & de-Magistris, 2016). This also indicates on the importance of that products show a clear nutrition information, especially when it concerns products aimed for shifting to a healthier lifestyle (Guthrie, Mancino & Lin, 2015).

Closely related to the previously mentioned aspects of the marketing factors, it is important to make sure that the brand answers for the labelling and quality expected. These extrinsic factors are not a part of the product itself. However, attributes such as brand and labelling are easily recognised by the consumer (Luis Méndez, Oubiña & Rubio, 2011). With all these aspects in combination, consumers make their own appreciation of conclusions regarding purchasing decision, willingness to pay and whether or not to choose a particular product (Fort-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014). In addition to the aspects of marketing, it is important with available information provided for the customer. This can influence consumers’ behaviour. Connected with the product and marketing aspects, such as appearance and labels, informational cues available will create expectations that can generate an acceptance towards the product among customers (Fort-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014).

**Sensory factors**

The third factor in the multidisciplinary model of the main factors affecting consumer behaviour in a food domain is the sensory factor. The sensory factor includes the aspects visual appearance, in-mouth texture, flavour and odour.

Visual appearance are characteristics of the food such as shape, colour and ingredients. The colour is one of the main important aspects and helps consumers to see if the food is fresh. In-mouth texture is where the consumer acceptance of the food products will be affected by texture problems like excessive softness, pastiness or crust formationation at
the food’s surface. Both flavour and odour are very complex and are highly correlated with the consumer perception and acceptability of a food product (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014). In another study conducted by Elzerman et al., (2011), it was stated that factors such as flavour and texture did not seem to be the most important factors. Shape and appearance however, seemed to be a crucial part whether or not a non-vegetarian should accept the substitute product. It was also stated in the article that more emphasis should be given on evaluations on meal combinations rather than on sensory properties. The same authors have in further studies confirmed that meal context seems to be the most appropriate factor to consider when developing new meat substitutes (Elzerman, Hoek, van Boekel, & Luning, 2015).

2.2.2 Conceptual Framework

The multidisciplinary model of the main factors affecting consumer behaviour in a food domain will be used in this study. First and foremost, we will use this model in order to grasp the overall understanding of the factors affecting consumer behaviour regarding food. Secondly, the model has been applied when developing the questions for the interviews. Each question in the interviews has been developed for each factor under psychological, marketing and sensory factors that the model suggest. Lastly, the model will guide the development of this study as well as help us with conducting the analysis and interpret the empirical findings.
3 Methodology

This section lays ground for methodology and method. Methodology is the science and philosophy of the research while method refers to how researchers implement and conduct the research. This section will cover the choice of research philosophy, research approach, research strategy, data collection, data analysis, credibility & quality of the research.

3.1 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy is based on assumptions about how researchers view the world (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). During the different stages of a research process, researchers can make assumptions about the perceived reality. These assumptions can influence how people answer and interpret the questions asked. To be able to choose an adequate research philosophy, researchers study assumptions. Saunders et al., (2009) argue that there are three different assumptions that can be used in the field of research philosophies; ontology, epistemology and axiology. Ontology has the center of interest in the nature of reality. The researcher chooses a topic to study from their own personal view and interest and then presents a study from that perspective. Epistemology is the study of knowledge and what is considered acceptable knowledge in the field of study. In practice, when a researcher presents the results of the study they have to take into consideration if the knowledge is reliable and valid. Axiology studies the judgement about values and is a extension of philosophy. Axiology seeks to emphasize the importance of values and ethics. The role that a person’s own values plays in the stages of the research is of great value (Saunders et al., 2009).

After considering the three different types of assumptions, Saunders et., (2009) suggest that a research philosophy should be adopted. They suggest four different research philosophies; positivism, realism, interpretivism and pragmatism. Positivism refers to when the research reflects the philosophical stance of the natural scientist. This means that the researcher will work with observable social reality and the end product could often be seen as law-like generalizations. Realism refers to the philosophical stance that
relates to scientific enquiry. This philosophical stance is about our senses and what they perceive as reality is the truth. Interpretivism underlines the differences between humans in the role as social actors. The last research philosophy is pragmatism. Pragmatism argues that the most important determinant of the assumptions one can adopt is the research question. This means that the researcher adapts the philosophy to the research question (Saunders et al., 2009).

Our aim with this thesis is to understand why vegan and vegetarian companies imitate their products with real meat and also how their products are marketed. The research has been conducted through interviews with four different vegan and vegetarian companies. Therefore, the assumption and research philosophy for this research have been ontology and pragmatism. There are both strengths and weaknesses with using ontology in combination with pragmatism. Since we have used multiple views to get a grasp of the companies, it has not allowed us to go into depth into a specific company and a specific product. However, by using ontology and pragmatism, it has allowed us to use multiple companies to easier find differences and similarities between the companies and their strategies as well as getting a broader perspective of the topic. This has been a crucial part to answer our research question and understand meat substitutes, the reason for their visual appearance and how it is marketed.

### 3.2 Research Approach

The three main methods of collecting information are qualitative method, quantitative method or a combination of both. The methods that is used should be in consideration with the research question and how much information the researchers have on the case. Qualitative methods have its focus on understanding the case on a deeper level and are non-numeric ways of collecting information. For example, researchers can collect information by conducting in-depth interviews. A quantitative method is the opposite to qualitative method and focuses solely on collecting numeric data. This data can be used to analyse statistics and in order to collect this information, researchers can use methods like questionnaires (Saunders et al., 2009).

The deductive approach could easily be explained as a testing theory. This is the most common approach for the natural scientist and builds upon trying to explain the different relationships between variables. To test the hypothesis of a deductive approach,
researchers often use a quantitative method of collecting data even though it does not exclude the use of qualitative data. The process of a deductive approach can be brought down into three easy steps. The first one is to create a hypothesis that needs to be tested. The second step involves studying the existing literature to see if the research can fill a gap and create a wider knowledge of the area and also developing a method for testing the hypothesis. As explained before, the most common approach is quantitative method. The third step is to test the theory by collecting data and by doing empirical tests. After the third test is done the researchers can either accept or reject the test depending on the outcome (Saunders et al., 2009).

The inductive approach could easily be explained as building theory. The purpose of an inductive theory is to understand the situation and upcoming of the problem. The most common way of doing an inductive method and to better understand the situation is by collecting data through interviews, namely a qualitative method. While a deductive approach uses big number of samples for collecting data, the inductive approach focuses more on smaller samplings (Saunders et al., 2009).

The aim of this report is to understand why vegan and vegetarian companies imitate their products with meat products as well as how these companies market their products. To better understand this, our main source of information has been through interviews with companies within the meat substitute industry. This research has therefore used a combination of both deductive and inductive approaches.

Since our main source of information has been collected through semi-structured interviews, our main approach has been induction. The positive aspects of using induction as the main approach is that it helps to build theory and go into depth to understanding the situation. The negative aspect of using induction as the main approach is that smaller samples have been used due to the limited time and amount of vegetarian and vegan companies on the Swedish market. However, the companies interviewed have provided us with useful information to be able to answer our research questions. With this said, it is very rare that a research only uses induction or deduction. The deduction part of this research has allowed us to study earlier theories. These have been used as support for the interviews and analysis to give us a good understanding of meat substitute products and how companies market these products.
3.3 Research Strategy

To be able to conduct a well-developed research, a clear research strategy must be set. There are several types of studies that can be used for a research; exploratory studies, descriptive studies and explanatory studies. Exploratory studies can be defined as trying to figure out what is happening in order to be able to find new insights. This is very useful when researchers want to understand a particular problem. Descriptive studies will try to describe, as accurate as possible, a specific event, person of profile or a situation. The last study is explanatory studies which explains the relationship between different variables (Robson, 2002; Saunders et al., 2009). For this research, exploratory studies will be used.

The different research strategies that can be adapted can all be used for exploratory, descriptive and explanatory studies (Yin, 2003). Some of the research studies clearly belong to the deductive approach, while some fits better with the inductive approach. Choosing a research strategy can be seen as very simple, however one should keep in mind that no research strategy is better or worse than another. The most important thing to have in mind when choosing the strategy is that it will have to give a significant answer to the research question. The research strategy will not only be guided by the research question, but there are other things that should be considered during the process when deciding upon a research question, such as time and the extent of existing knowledge (Saunders et al., 2009).

For this research, a case study was adopted. According to Robson (2002, p.178) a case study can be defined as; “a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence”. The case study research is a broad research strategy that enables researchers to answer the question ‘why?’ as well as ‘what?’ and ‘how?’. This is why exploratory studies fits very well with case studies. Since case studies are quite a broad research strategy it enables researchers to collect information in several ways such as interviews, questionnaires observations and documentary analysis (Saunders et al., 2009). Since the aim of this research is to understand how meat substitute products are marketed and what the reasons for their visual appearance are, a multiple case study will be adopted. This research was based on four different companies. The companies used were; Ekko Gourmet, Astrid och Aporna, Quorn and Tzay. These companies are not necessarily Swedish, however it is important that they operate on the Swedish market.
The strengths of using four different companies is that we got a broader view within the field of subject than we would have gotten by using one single case study. However, the weakness of using a multiple case study instead of one single case study is that it does not allow us to go into depth in a specific company. Since the aim of this research was to understand how meat substitute products are marketed and the reason for their visual appearance, we believed that a multiple case study was better in order to understand the similarities and differences between the companies. The selection of participants and interview process of these companies will be explained under the section ‘Interview Process’.

3.4 Data Collection

For this research, only primary data was collected. The primary data is data that is collected from the interviews conducted (Saunders et al., 2009). This was the main information needed in order to answer our research questions.

3.4.1 Primary Data

According to Saunders et al., (2009), an interview can be seen as a purposeful conversation between two or more individuals. The primary data that was collected for this thesis were done through semi-structured interviews with suitable representatives from companies within the meat substitute industry in Sweden. Even though there are a few consequences with semi-structured interviews, such as the amount of participants are fewer and that interviews can been seen as harder to conduct, we believed that this was the most suitable method for our research questions. The collection of primary data helped us to answer the questions ‘why’ and ‘how’ meat substitute products are being marketed and the reason for them being imitated with meat. This would be hard to answer by using a quantitative method.

Meat substitutes are a relatively new product on the market which limited the amount of companies that could be used for interviews. Therefore, the amount of companies and interviews were not as many which can limit the study. Furthermore, the majority of the companies within the industry are start-ups with few employees. This means that the range of people that were suitable for interviews within the companies were not so many. However, another method of collecting data would not give as much insight within this field as the method chosen and would not allow us to answer the research questions.
Besides interviews, this thesis has also used company and organizational websites and online newspaper articles to collect information.

3.4.2 Interviews

As mentioned, interviews were used for the primary collection of data for the thesis. Interviews allow researchers to understand ‘why’ and ‘how’ as well as provide a deeper understanding of the situation. There are three different types of interviews that can be used; structured interviews, semi-structured interviews or unstructured interviews, also called in-depth interviews (Saunders et al., 2009; Wilson, 2014).

A structured interview is an interview format that have predetermined questions. When conducting a structured interview, it is important that the researcher does not deviate or change the questions during the interviews (Saunders, 2009; Wilson, 2014). It is important for the researchers to be consistent in both tone of voice and other types of expressions. When conducting a structured interview, it is important to not be biased and to be consistent in the tone of voice and other expressions. Compared to semi-structured and unstructured interviews, which can be seen as collection of qualitative data, structured interviews are often used when the researcher wants to collect quantitative data (King, 2004).

Unstructured interviews are the opposite to structured interviews. Unstructured interviews are used when the researcher wants to gather general information about a specific area. This format of conducting interviews are informal and compared to structured interviews, unstructured interviews have no predetermined questions. This allows both the researcher and the person getting interviewed to talk freely about a specific area. This type of interaction between the researcher and the interviewee can be called ‘non-directive’ and it is the interviewee’s perception that guides the interview (Saunders et al., 2009).

Semi-structured interviews are a combination between unstructured and structured interviews. For example, in this interview technique there are some predetermined questions which the researchers use as references points and the interviewee are allowed to talk freely around this questions. To get as good flow as possible in the interview, the order of questions may vary. Also, additional questions may be needed during the
interview to get a clear picture of what the participants talk about. During a semi-structured interview researchers are required to take notes and audio record the interviews (Saunders et al., 2009).

For this thesis the interview technique that was adopted was semi-structured interviews. There are strengths and weaknesses with this interview technique. Semi-structured interviews can be hard for an unexperienced researcher to carry out and some training may be required so that the researcher does not put words into the participants’ mouth. Also so that the interviewers can give cues to the participants leading them into answering something that the participants do not want no answer (Wilson, 2014). However, there are also some important strengths with a semi-structured interview. For instance, semi-structured interviews can address very complex topics and provide flexibility among the interviewers. Semi-structured interviews also allow, in some extents, broad comparisons between the different interviews. Also the predetermined questions help the interview to not move too far away from the subject which can be the case in an unstructured interview (Wilson, 2014).

3.4.3 Interview Process

The choice of participants for our interviews were easy. As mentioned before, there are only a handful of companies that work with meat substitute products in Sweden. Therefore, we were in contact with almost all of them asking if they wanted to participate in our research. The companies that were contacted were the following; Tzay, Astrid och Aporna, Vegme, Quorn, Anamma, Goodstore, Hälsans Kök, Ekko Gourmet and Oumph!.

These are the main companies providing meat alternatives that operate on the Swedish market as of today. Four out of these nine companies agreed to participate. These companies were Ekko Gourmet, Astrid och Aporna, Tzay and Quorn.

It was of main importance to ensure that the interview was conducted with the right person who has great insight both within the company and the product. The ideal candidate for the interviews should have clear knowledge about the products as well as marketing activities. For Tzay, who is owned by the food giant Atria, we got in contact with the marketing manager for their vegetarian products. For Astrid och Aporna, who both distribute their products to supermarkets but also have their own store, the interviewee was the store manager. For Ekko Gourmet, which is a quite small company that operated
in Malmö, the represent person was the owner of the company. Lastly, for Quorn the participant was their international brand manager, located in the United Kingdom.

Since these were semi-structured interviews, some predetermined questions were set so that we would guarantee that we would get the answers needed to answer our research questions. The interviews were divided into three parts; introduction about the company, the brand and their target customer. The second part of the interview covered questions about psychological factors, sensory factors and marketing factors of consumer behaviour. Further, the last part of the interview covered questions about meat substitutes visual appearance. The interviews with Ekko Gourmet and Tzay were conducted over telephone while the interview with Astrid och Aporna where conducted face to face. Quorn however, was not able to do an interview over telephone and therefore the interview took place over email. Our aim with the interviews was not only to get our questions answered but also to allow the participants to speak freely around the topic and their products.

Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Type of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Astrid och Aporna</td>
<td>Bezz Mortazavi</td>
<td>Store Manager</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekko Gourmet</td>
<td>Jared Christensen</td>
<td>Founder and Owner</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tzay</td>
<td>Linda Johansson</td>
<td>Marketing Manager Vegetarian - Atria</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quorn</td>
<td>Ami Blackburn</td>
<td>International Brand Manager</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Email</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5 Data Analysis

To not miss out on any information, all the data collected were recorded on audio files to later be transcribed. Transcription can be hard to carry out since it is both time consuming and difficult. Since written language and spoken language can vary a lot, it is important to include both what is said and by whom and also to provide indications of what tone the interviewee has (Saunders et al., 2009).
According to Saunders et al., (2009), there are no standardized processes of analysing data and therefore different researchers use different methods. However, researchers can still divide data into three main types of processes; summarizing of meanings, categorization of meanings and structuring of meanings using narratives (Saunders et al., 2009). These three can be used both on their own or in combination when trying to analyse and interpret the data collected.

For analysing the data in this research, we have used categorization of data. Categorisation of data is further explained by Spiggle (1994) and is the process of labelling units of data. Since the interviews followed clear questions about different factors affecting consumer behavior such as physiological factors, marketing factors and sensory factors, our labelling of categorization followed this structure as well. However, another categorization was added as products appearance to easier grasp the difference between the companies’ strategies behind the products’ visual appearance. This process of analysing has allowed us to get a clear understanding on how the companies work within the different categorizations as well as to spot differences and similarities between the companies to easier answer the research questions and connect to earlier theories.

3.6 Credibility and Quality of the Research

According to Shenton (2004) it is necessary to consider both the credibility as well as the trustworthiness of the conducted research. It is very hard for a researcher to guarantee that the findings will be completely accurate. Researchers can on the other hand minimize the risk of getting the wrong answers. To do this, researchers should focus on two things: reliability and validity (Saunders et al., 2009). “Reliability refers to the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings” (Saunders et al., 2009, p.156). Further, Saunders et al., also states: “Validity is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about. Is the relationship between two variables a causal relationship?” (2009, p.157).

3.6.1 Data reliability

There may be four different threats to reliability; subject or participant error, subject or participant bias, observer error or observer bias (Saunders et al., 2009; Robson, 2002).
Subject or participant error refers to that observers can get different answers and responses depending on different factors such as conducting the interviews at different moments, misunderstanding of the questions or depending on the mood. For instance, if a researcher wants to find out how employees feel about their colleagues, the questions can vary a lot for an interview that is done on a Monday morning when they have an entire week of work in front of them versus if the interview takes place on a Friday afternoon when employees are in a good mood because of the weekend that is coming up. The second threat of reliability is subject or participant bias. This occurs when the participants are saying what they believe that someone else wants to hear them say. For example, instead of telling the researchers the way they have experienced, they give an answer that they believe that their superiors want to hear. To reduce the risk of subject and participants’ error, we ensured that the participants who were interviewed had a great knowledge within the subject. We also made sure that they understood and interpreted the questions correctly and we also made sure that they did not have any time pressure and felt stressed under the interview. To reduce the risk of subject or participant bias before the interviews we let the participants know what the information collected from the interviews was going to be used for as well as made sure that they felt comfortable with this. If they would not feel comfortable, the alternative of being anonymous were presented.

The last two risks of data reliability are observer error and observer bias. Observer error can occur when different researchers conduct the interviews. For example, if three different researchers conduct interviews, three different ways of asking questions can occur which will lead to elicit answers. The same goes for observer bias, which refers to three different ways of interpreting the replies. To reduce the risk of this we made sure that our research questions had a high structure and also that the same researcher conducted all interviews.

3.6.2 Data Validity

Robson (2002) has also identified the main threats of validity. There are six guidelines to have in mind in order to ensure that the data is valid. These are;

- *History*: When conducting the research, it is important to have the history in mind. For instance, if the research aims to investigate the quality of a certain product from a certain
company and this company just had a major recall of this product, this may give misleading result. To be able to minimize the threats of history we made sure that the companies did not have any historical events that would affect the research.

- **Testing:** If the participant believe that the result of the research will disadvantage them in any certain way, then it is likely to have an impact of the result. This is one of the biggest threats that researchers can face and it is important that the participant answers are truthful. To reduce the risk of testing, we made sure that the participants knew how the information was handled and also gave them the suggestion of being anonymous.

- **Instrumentation:** This is when the research clashes with something else that may affect the research. For example, if a research is conducted in order to explore how long a telesales phone call lasts, the first testing is a normal sales call and before the other test the operator has received instructions of selling something new or extra that will make the call last longer. Instrumentation is not something that affects this research to a great extent. However, it is important to make sure that the research does not clash with something else that the companies work with which can lead to misleading answers. To reduce this risk, the purpose of the research was communicated before the interviews and also how the information was going to be handled.

- **Mortality:** This refers to when a subject or participant choose to drop out of the research. A researcher can never be sure that a participant will not drop out of the research. To minimize this risk, we had the participants choosing the dates of the interviews that fits them the best by making sure that they would not drop out due to of lack of time or other factors.

- **Maturation:** Other events that have happened in recent time can affect the results when observing someone. Maturation is also something that is hard to control for a researcher but it is also very important to be prepared for this. To minimize the risk of maturation we asked the participants before if any events had occurred in recent time that would affect the interview. If answered yes, we made an evaluation of what and on how it would affect the interview.

- **Ambiguity about casual direction:** This can occur when the interviewee is not clear about different events or subject interferes with each other. Since this research was done
through semi-structured interviews, if something was unclear about different event, further questions were asked until we got a clear understanding about the situation and what the participant meant.
4 Empirical Findings

This section will cover the findings of our study that is based on the companies Astrid och Aporna, Tzay, Ekko Gourmet and Quorn. The findings presented in this section are collected from interviews with suitable employees.

4.1 Astrid och Aporna

Astrid och Aporna is a Swedish company that produces vegetarian and vegan products. Astrid och Aporna was founded in 2007 with its aim to make vegetarian and vegan food tastier and fun. The company still aims to provide tasty and exiting food that should be available for everyone and is made for the everyday meal. Their product range has grown larger and today the company provides over 55 vegetarian and vegan products. Examples of products are “Fejkcon”, “Hot Chörizo” and “Pepperōni”. Astrid och Aporna sets high standards on their products and do not have any added synthetic colourants, hydrogenate fat, cholesterol or GMO in their products. In Malmö, Sweden, Astrid och Aporna has opened a store which adds to the grocery stores they distributes to throughout Sweden and Denmark (astridochaporna.se, 2018). Astrid och Aporna offers alternatives to meat products for those who want to eat more vegetarian and vegan food. The products have a unique visual appearance, similar to familiar foods, like meat, for the bigger audience. The products offered are mostly based on soya (protein from soybeans) and seitan (gluten based foods) or a mixture of those two. The target customer are as meat-eaters. Mortazavi explains that it is more pointed towards new vegetarians and not the more experienced vegans and vegetarians which is a change from the original target group.

4.1.1 Psychological Factors

There are several psychological factors that affect consumers when they buy and eat a product. According to Mortazavi, a company that produces and sells food can never guarantee that they eliminate the psychological risks that a consumer experiences when trying a new product. Meaning they can never fully assure that consumers will like the product before they have tried it. Astrid och Aporna tries to minimize this risk as much as possible by putting a lot of effort into the taste of their products. This is one way to
ensure that expectations are met. Mortazavi explains that Astrid och Aporna prioritize the
taste of the products more than on how healthy they are.

“It is more important for us to put extra salt into the food if we believe that that will
make it more tasty and then the food might be less healthy”  – Mortazavi, 2018

According to Mortazavi, in the last couple of years, Astrid och Aporna has noticed a
change in the attitude towards vegan and vegetarian products. She explains that when the
company started vegan products were seen as strange and was not very popular among
many consumers. Now, 11 years later, consumers believe that it is weird, even wrong, if
restaurants or supermarkets do not offer vegan or vegetarian alternatives. She believes
that consumers today want to make a difference and therefore it is important for
companies to keep up with these trends and listen to consumers’ preferences. A
consumer’s attitude and their lifestyle and values impact the decision of choosing vegan
and vegetarian products. There is not only the choice in changing into vegan or vegetarian
food, but also an active movement towards sustainable diet and a deviation of lifestyle.

Even though Astrid och Aporna has been on the market for a long time, not all consumers
appreciate the brand. According to Mortazavi, the old generation of vegans do in general
not like the brand very much because they believe that the products are too similar to
meat products. She also explains that Astrid och Aporna is a brand with products that are
aimed to be alternatives to meat. Many people do not want to stop eat meat because they
like it so much and because it has always been a big part of a meal. Companies that target
customers that want to change diets have to apply a different approach to reach the
customers. Products like this, where the visual appearance has been imitated with meat,
are aimed to guide meat-eaters towards eating more vegetarian and vegan food and is
seen as a first step for the company who believes that their products can facilitate the
switch from meat diets to vegetarian and vegan diets.

“You can’t just say ‘eat a carrot instead’”  – Mortazavi 2018

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4.1.2 Marketing Factors

According to Mortazavi, consumers need to be able to access products they want in as many places as possible. Therefore, the company’s products can be found in Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark. Astrid och Aporna distributes their products to grocery stores such as Ica, Coop and Hemköp as well as sells their products in their own store that is located in Malmö, Sweden. Consumers can also find Astrid och Aporna’s products in independent vegetarian and vegan stores throughout Scandinavia.

According to Mortazavi, there are mainly two things that differ Astrid och Aporna from its competitors. The first thing is the labelling, where the focus lies on having childish and humoristic motives. The reason for this is not to attract children as consumers but mainly to make consumers associate and perceive the brand and products as fun and happy. When Astrid och Aporna was launched 11 years ago, vegan and vegetarian products had a very boring visual appearance and the main aim with these kinds of products was that they should be very healthy. To differentiate its products, the packaging and labelling have been designed to be fun, happy and welcoming. Mortazavi also explains that besides the packaging and labelling of the products, the company also puts a lot of effort into the products’ taste. The main reason for this is that the company thinks that their target group believes that taste is more important than how healthy the products are.

Astrid och Aporna wants people to associate their brand with it being a brand for the people. This is something that the company has taken into account when setting their prices. Mortazavi explains that the price should not be the reason for why consumers would need to choose meat instead of vegetarian or vegan food. Therefore, when setting their prices, the company tries to keep it as low as possible whilst having both the consumer, competitors and market in mind. Mortazavi explains that price should not be the rejecting factor for new consumers. As of the scepticism towards the products from customers that would belong to the original customer group, price would not be seen as a further barrier of buying the product.
4.1.3 Sensory Factors

Astrid och Aporna puts a lot of effort on the visual appearance of their products and believes that this factor is very important to reach their target customer. The strategy of imitating meat by its visual appearance and giving the products names that reminds of meat products is to guide the consumer into trying the vegetarian and vegan products. This guidance will help the consumer to understand how to use the product and its context. For example, the reason for naming a vegetarian product to “Chörizo”, is because the consumer will associate it with the meat product “Chorizo” and therefore get a greater understanding of how to use the product.

Further, when ranking the different sensory factors smell, flavour, texture and visual appearance Mortazavi explains that the most important factor for Astrid och Aporna is the flavour but the combination of all four is still important. If a product taste very good a consumer can still choose not buy it if it has a strange visual appearance.

4.1.4 Products’ Appearance

Astrid och Aporna’s products have names and shapes similar to meat to help consumers to know what the product will taste like. Mortazavi states that the company’s aim will never be to imitate meat products fully. Further, she explains that she would rather like to call the products meat alternatives than meat imitation or meat substitute.

“A piece of chicken has a lot of nasty stuff. You will never make, even if you could, a meat substitute product that is bleeding.” – Mortazavi, 2018

The reasons for Astrid och Aporna’s products to have a similar look, taste and name as real meat products are many. Firstly, it can help many elderly consumers where the intention is not to stop eating meat but rather that they have been recommended to cut down on it because of potential health benefits. Then meat alternative products that imitates meat can act as a recognition factor. This kind of consumer group have always been eating meat and by designing a product that reminds of meat it will make the product feel more familiar and attractive. Additionally, younger consumers who want to start with vegan and vegetarian diets can also find it easier to replace the meat with an alternative that reminds of meat. It also helps to communicate how to use the product and what to
use it with. However, the ones who have been vegetarians and vegans for a long time do not appreciate the products as much. This consumer group do not find it attractive that their vegetarian or vegan food reminds them of real meat. This because these consumers have made a choice to avoid meat.

4.2 Tzay

Tzay is a brand owned by the Finnish food concern Atria. Atria, which is a company that owns some of the biggest meat brands in Sweden, is owned by Finnish meat farmers. Tzay is a fairly niched brand within the concern and is well known among vegans, fairly known among vegetarians and not very known among meat eaters according to the marketing manager of Tzay. Tzay offers vegan and gluten-free products that are based on soy protein. The products are available for Swedish consumers at grocery stores like ICA, Coop, Willys, Hemköp as well as independent vegetarian stores. The brand has been established on the Swedish market since 2002 and have an assortment of six different vegetarian and vegan products like “Natural Soy Bits”, “Natural Soy Fillets” and “Happy Soy Skewers” (Tzay.se, 2018). Explained by the marketing manager at Tzay, their main target group is vegetarians and vegans.

4.2.1 Psychological Factors

To eliminate the risk of buying, Tzay puts a lot of emphasis on the taste of their products. They offer products that are already flavoured with Thai spices as well as products that are natural in taste so that the consumer can cook and flavour it how they prefer. Tzay differentiates itself from competitors by having an original recipe from Thailand that they are very reluctant to change. This original recipe gives the products a unique taste which is different from the competitor’s products. Their way of maintaining consumer expectations and attitudes towards the products, Johansson explains, is to keep it vegan. This because they target vegans and they do not try to imitate them with meat like many of their competitors do to reach wider target groups. The products have existed on the Swedish market for a long time and are well known and popular among vegans. Therefore, the best way of maintaining expectations and attitudes is to stay with their original recipe and not change the products.
Johansson states that Tzay has noticed that the consumers who prefer vegan food care about environmental impact and animal conditions when choosing what to eat. It is because of these reasons that most of them chose to be vegans in the first place. Many of Tzay’s consumers belong to this particular group. Moreover, Johansson believes that there are no specific socio-cultural effects in mind when choosing target consumer.

4.2.2 Marketing Factors

A couple of years ago, Tzay had a higher price on their products and was regarded as a premium brand on the market of vegan products. One group of consumers were willing to pay this premium price because of the unique and characteristic taste and good protein source. However, this group was relatively small and in order to attract a bigger part of the market, they had to set their prices a bit lower during recent years. Johansson explains that this price change was entirely due to the consumer perspective and not due to consideration of new entrants. Thus, Tzay consider itself as an established brand with loyal customer and they feel comfortable with their price strategy. They are also comfortable that their consumers will buy their product. Since Tzay only target vegan consumers, they do not consider themselves as a meat substitute brand and do not have aspects like the prices of meat in mind when setting their prices.

Regarding the labelling and packaging of the products, Tzay focus on a happy and appealing labelling. It is important that the products are easily identified on the shelves in the grocery stores. Before, the focus was made on the actual product and they had a transparent packaging, meaning only the vacuum packaged product, in order to be able to see the product as much as possible. Later, Tzay changed the package to a more appealing design with more labelling that would attract the consumer in a different way.

According to the consumers, Johansson explains, the taste and the texture are the most important factors that differ Tzay from its competitors. Tzay adds a social aspect to its product, meaning that the they are intended to be enjoyed and shared with others. Furthermore, Tzay has a great focus on maintaining the original recipe and unique product associations and is not following trends on the market to the same extent as their competitors. Compared to their competitors that want their products to be found among products aimed for flexitarians, Tzay wants their products to be found on the vegetarian
and vegan shelves in grocery stores as that is were their main target group will look for it. The product placement in store is not meant to attract other consumers, but to keep the loyal vegans as consumers.

4.2.3 Sensory Factors

Johansson explains that there is no strategy behind what the products looks like. The products have been taken from, and influenced by, the Thai market which is known for its unique food culture and unique flavours. Therefore, Tzay has not been focusing on developing a product specifically for Swedish consumers, it has found its own place on the Swedish market. As a result, to this, texture and flavour have become two of the main characteristics of Tzay’s products. However, further stated by Johansson it is the texture of the products is the most important.

4.2.4 Products’ Appearance

Looking at the strategy behind Tzay’s names of their products, the main thoughts behind it are to explain the product’s main ingredient (often soy) as well as its shape. Additionally, some products are also explained further by adding selling words such as ‘happy’ and ‘cute’.

“It's rather a reconstruction because it's a unique product that has not been developed to imitate meat from the beginning...” - Johansson, 2018.

The products are aimed for vegetarians and vegans. Vegans are generally a more loyal consumer group because of the limited range of vegan products on the Swedish food market. Further, the taste of Tzay’s products is rather special. The products are made of soy protein which is a taste that takes time to get used to for meat-eaters. Therefore, Johansson explains that meat-eaters do not belong to the consumer group who will be attracted to the products. However, if the aim was to reach the wider market, Johansson believes that both taste and texture of the products have to be changed significantly to meet the meat-eater needs. Even many flexitarians who are more than willing to eat vegetarian food would agree that soya protein has a quite different taste. This further explains the difficulties with reaching a bigger consumer groups with these products.
“If we should try to reach non-vegetarians who have never eaten vegetable protein before with this the product, then maybe we would have to think differently” - Johansson, 2018

4.3 Ekko Gourmet

Ekko Gourmet is a Swedish company founded by Jared Christensen in 2006. Jared is originally from New Zealand and used to work as a chef in his home country. When he moved to Sweden Jared could not find any tasty vegetarian food in the supermarkets that he would like to buy. The first product he created was “Peanut burgers”, a vegan product with the main ingredient peanuts. He decided to rent a food tent for the annual Malmö Festival to test the product on the market. The ‘Peanut burgers’ was a success and this resulted in the start of the company which was named Ekko Gourmet. Today, Ekko Gourmet offers a wide range of different plant-based products such as ‘Mexicali Nuggets’, ‘Swedish Beetroot Patties’ and ‘Spicy Peanut Burgers’. All products are vegan och ecological and are often based on natural ingredients such as nuts, seeds and quinoa (Ekko Gourmet, 2018). Christensen explains that when Ekko Gourmet was founded the main target group was both vegetarians and vegans. But in the last few years the market of flexitarians has increased to a great extent and the company now tries to reach this consumer group.

4.3.1 Psychological Factors

Ekko Gourmet’s products are not high in protein like similar products that are based on soy and wheat. Therefore, the company believes that their products may not meet the consumer needs of protein, as meat substitutes would, which can be a big factor for vegan consumers who need to include plant-based protein into their diets. By having a unique product together with being clear with the name of the products and ingredients, the Christensen states that the company ensure that they meet consumer needs and eliminates the risk of buying their products. Ekko Gourmet do not copy the name of meat. By not doing this, they are eliminating the risk of potential consumer dissatisfaction. For example, if a consumer buys a “Peanut burger” from Ekko Gourmet, he/she will not expect that the product will taste as meat as he/she would if the product was named “Vegetarian burger”. Christensen further explains that their consumer expectations and attitudes are controlled just because of this fact.
When the product was first launched on the Swedish market, the vegan consumer group was the segment that was targeted. Back then, the company mainly competed with Quorn and Hälsans Kök and tried to grasp a bigger market share of plant-based food products. However, the vegan market is only about 2-3% in Sweden and is therefore not a big market which can mean that it is not very profitable for a company. Therefore, the vegetarians were also targeted in order to reach a bigger consumer group. Lately, the company has embraced the ongoing trend with flexitarian diets. According to Christensen, statistics states that 40% of the Swedish population consider themselves following this diet, where 68% are women. Therefore, women is the target group that the company put most emphasis on. This is an example of a socio-cultural effect that Ekko Gourmet has taken into account when positioning and marketing their brand.

4.3.2 Marketing Factors

To be able to differentiate Ekko Gourmet’s products and brand from competitors, the company puts a lot of effort on the taste of the products. It is seen as very important to be transparent so the customer knows what they get when they buy the product. This is something that Ekko Gourmet communicates in their labelling and packaging where they want consumers to associate the brand as vegan and vegetarian friendly but most important that it has great taste. The strategy behind the labelling and packaging is to clearly show the products and always include the green colour that is part of their logo. Additionally, all the different products have different colour coding to simplify for the consumers to recognize the products.

“We are trying to communicate that, you know ’this is what it is, this is what you are getting’. Lime, cumin, cilantro, lemon and orange and different flavours from different cultures. So we are not so much about the brand, it is more about the message and the packaging” – Christensen, 2018

Apart from the clearly communicated content of the product displayed on the package, Ekko Gourmet compete with competitors with a relatively low price. This both as a strength and a weakness. When Ekko Gourmet was launched on the Swedish market 11 years ago, the price of the products was low in comparison to competitors. Christensen explains that when he started the company he did not know much about running a
business. The margins where not taken into account and he did not break even. This has become a problem today where the big grocery stores and retailers wants to buy the products at the same price as they always have done. Ekko Gourmet distributes its products to all the big supermarkets such as Ica, Willys, Hemköp and Coop in Sweden. They want their products to be found next to other vegetable based products in the freezers. They have also tried to put the products close to the gluten free products in the grocery stores.

4.3.3 Sensory Factors

Christensen explains that it is of main importance that the company makes it easy for consumers to see what the food contains. For example, many of their products contains whole grains, seeds and spices that have not been mixed. The products are supposed to look like homemade food and not like semi-manufactured food.

Looking at the shape of the products, Ekko Gourmet feel that they are restricted when it comes to the design and form of the products. This is because the factories where their products are produced only have a few machines that only presses out shapes like burgers, balls and nuggets.

The strategy behind the products taste, smell and texture is to make sure that the consumers easily can see and feel what the products are made of as well as what they contain. Ekko Gourmet puts a lot of effort into sensory factors because they believe that this can differentiate them from their competitors and also because these aspects are of main importance in order to make consumers buy the products. According to Christensen flavour is the most important sensory factor.

4.3.4 Products’ Appearance

Christensen explains that there is a straightforward strategy with the products names. Ekko Gourmet product names should clearly indicate what the main ingredients of the product is and not trick the consumer that it tastes something else. In Ekko Gourmet catalogue of products there is only two products that have ‘fantasy names’. These are Mexicali Nuggets and Lemon Masala Burgers, but even the Lemon Masala Burger gives a clear indication of what it will taste like.
According to Christensen, Ekko Gourmet’s products are not imitated with meat at all. By using names on the products such as ‘burgers’ and ‘nuggets’ helps with guiding the consumer of how to eat and what to eat it with. Most meat-eaters will prefer meat substitutes that are imitated with real meat because it makes it easier to switch from meat to plant-based products. Christensen believes that they could attain more customers by changing the products to look like meat.

4.4 Quorn

Quorn was launched in 1985 by Marlow foods and is a global market leader that produces and sells meat-free protein which offers a wide range of products. Today, Quorn exists in 20 countries worldwide and is owned by Monde Nissin Corporation with its headquarter in the United Kingdom. Quorn’s products are made of meat-free protein with a nutritious protein source called mycoprotein. According to Blackburn, Quorn is a brand that wants to help people with making tasty meals without meat and offer food that is better for both the people and the planet. Quorn offers a wide range of products such as sausages, burgers, mince and nuggets.

Blackburn believes that everyone can benefit from their products whether they are vegetarians or just wanting to reduce their meat consumption or be healthier. A spaghetti Bolognese made with Quorn Mince instead of beef mince has 90% less fat and 90% lower carbon emission.

4.4.1 Psychological Factors

Quorn has been selling their products for over 30 years and have created a large and loyal fan base. Blackburn, consider the company as experts on creating meat-free products. A trust has been developed over the years among consumers and the company communicates all the benefits with their products both on the packaging and in their marketing campaigns. This helps Quorn reducing the risk of buying for their consumers. Quorn aims to help and educate consumers how to cook Quorn’s products and how to best enjoy them by sharing recipes based on their products online. Blackburn explains that the company wants to communicate all the positive things about their product. On their website, Quorn presents different engagements that the company is involved in that regards the environment and health (quorn.com, 2018).
Quorn’s consumers are said to be conscious about their health and the environmental. In general, the consumers who are buying Quorn products are younger, well-educated and have an urban lifestyle. At the moment it is predominantly females with a higher income who buy Quorn’s products. This consumer group prefer ethical brands and wants to have an active and healthy lifestyle. Further, the recent trend with vegetarian and vegan diets has broader the company’s audience from only vegetarians to flexitarians and meat-eaters who want to eat healthy and environmental conscious.

4.4.2 Marketing Factors

Quorn’s packaging does not only communicate the benefits of the products but also that they work with ‘Carbon Trust’. Quorn can calculate how much carbon emission when producing the product and this is communicated to the consumer. By using the carbon footprint logo and the coeliac society logo, the company can be certain that consumers easily find the products that are preferred by them.

Blackburn explains that Quorn is the only brand that uses Mycoprotein which is a natural, nutritious fungus that grows in the soil, and uses an old process of fermentation to produce a dough called mycoprotein. Mycoprotein is high in protein, fibres, low in saturated fat and does not contain cholesterol. The production process requires less land and water than production processes of animal proteins which makes it a more environmentally friendly choice. Quorn’s products have a high nutritional value, containing all nine essential amino acids which makes the products to first-class protein sources. This can be directly comparable with protein sources such as meat or fish. Mycoprotein also gives the products the same texture as meat.

Quorn wants their products to be found in as many places as possible and states that they believe that everyone should be able to try the products whether it is in supermarkets, at home, in school, work or in restaurants. When setting the prices, they keep both the market and consumers in mind. The company has noticed that consumers want good value for the money. Thus, they are willing to pay more for good quality food that tastes good and have green credentials.
4.4.3 Sensory Factors

Quorn wants their products to taste great and enable meat eaters to enjoy their healthy and sustainable food. The flavourings that Quorn uses are all natural and meat free but give the taste, texture, smell and appearance of for example sausages and burgers.

“Our products must look visually appealing and look appetising so we use this as a starting point. As we create products that make switching from meat to meat-free as simple as possible the products look like their meat counterparts.” – Blackburn, 2018

4.4.4 Products’ Appearance

Quorn wants their products to make it easy for the consumers to enjoy their favourite meals but as meat-free alternative. Their products are made and designed to make it easy for the consumer to envision how they can cook and enjoy the products without any meat. Therefore, most of Quorn’s products look like meat and have a similar taste and texture like meat. Quorn has noticed a growth opportunity in the flexitarian market and by imitating meat, their products can help consumers who eat meat to reduce their meat consumption. The company states that they attain more consumers by imitating meat since most people have always eaten meat and by imitating familiar food, it will reduce the difficulties in trying plant-based protein products for this consumer group. Meat eaters can make a simple behavioural change that is better for their health and the planet.
5 Analysis

This section will cover a combination of the empirical findings and theoretical framework. This section will also provide answers to our research questions as well as interpretations of the answers collected from the interviews.

5.1 Products’ Appearance

Visual appearance can be characteristics of the food such as colour and shape (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014). Looking at vegan and vegetarian companies that operate in Sweden, visual appearance plays an important role in communicating the purpose of the products. We have found that the strategies behind the products’ visual appearance vary between the different brands and these strategies have a strong relationship to different target groups.

5.1.1 Products’ appearance in relation to meat-eaters as target group

According to Tuorila et al., (1994), if vegetarian and vegan products have the same attributes as meat products, they can be more attractive to consumer who are meat-eaters. Thus, that these products will be looked at more positively if it resemblance to familiar food. One strategy that we have noticed is that some vegan and vegetarian companies imitate their products with familiar food, in this case meat, to guide the consumers in understanding how to consume and use the product. The aim of these plant-based products is to simplify for meat-eaters and makes it easier for these consumers to switch to vegetarian and vegan food. This strategy is mainly used among the vegetarian and vegan companies who target meat-eaters. The companies who target meat-eaters have many products with names very similar to meat products names in their product line. Looking back at the study made by Tuorila et al., (1994), we can see that their findings are in accordance to the strategies that vegan and vegetarian companies use to reach the consumer group meat-eaters. However, one negative aspect might be that they forget about the consumer group of vegans and vegetarians.
Looking at the shapes and names of the vegetarian and vegan products that can be found on the Swedish market, the products’ shapes are often imitated with meat products. Many of the products are pressed like fillets, sausages and schnitzels. Also, many products are called ‘Fillet’, ‘Sausage’, ‘Schnitzel’ or similar which can be interpreted as names of meat products. Looking at the dictionary definition of fillet, it is a meat piece of meat or fish that does not contain any bones. A sausage is defined as a thin tube-like case that contains ground meat mixed with different spices. A schnitzel is a fried slice of meat, often veal, that is covered with egg and breadcrumbs (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2018). Looking at these examples, we believe that this clearly shows that the meaning behind the products shapes and names is that it should be associated with meat products.

Further, the vegan and vegetarian companies also offer products that are named ‘Vegetarian Mince’, ‘Vegan Nuggets’ and ‘Grillburgare’. These products are also pressed and shaped as mince, nuggets and burgers. By dictionary definitions, names like mince, nugget and burger are not necessary referred to meat products. However, we believe that mince, nugget and burger are in most cases associated with meat products for many consumers. Looking at the dictionary definition of ‘mince’, it can be defined as two things; beef that is cut up into small pieces but also it can be all types of food that has been cut into fine small pieces. A ‘nugget’ is defined as a small and roughly shaped piece made of gold or a small piece of fried chicken or fish that is covered with breadcrumbs. Further, a ‘burger’ is defined as meat or other food that has been pressed into flat round shapes (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2018). Thus, these definitions are not directly connected to meat. Looking at the study made by Elzerman et al., (2011), it argues that shape and visual appearance are those factors that is a crucial part when it comes to whether or not a non-vegetarian should accept a meat substitute product. The vegetarian and vegan companies operating on the Swedish market who target meat-eaters, seem to primarily consider shape, name and appearance when designing their products. This strategy further strengthens earlier research of how to design meat substitute substitute products with the aim to target non-vegetarians.

5.1.2 Products’ appearance in relation to flexitarians as target group

Furthermore, studies suggest that consumers who wants to avoid meat, like vegetarian and vegan consumers, do not like vegetarian or vegan products to be similar to meat
products (Fessler et al., 2003; Rozin et al., 1997). Looking at vegetarian and vegan companies on the Swedish market, another strategy is to not design the products to look or have the same texture as meat, but to still have shapes and names such as burgers and nuggets that can be seen as a way of imitating meat. This in order to facilitate the choice for consumers by keeping some aspects familiar and similar to meat, but still not being directly connected to a meat product in all terms. In the product line of one of the vegetarian company we can see that the names of the products include the main ingredient in combination with the shape, for example ‘Peanut burger’ and ‘Beetroot burger’. This strategy is said to be used mainly to eliminate the risk of dissatisfaction since consumers often have an assumption that meat substitute product will taste like meat just because the product reminds of it. By indicating what the product looks like, for example a burger, this will help the consumer to understand how to use it. To add the word ‘beetroot’, it will tell the consumer that the product will not taste like a regular meat-burger, that this is something else. This kind of “midway between” strategy of imitating shapes of meat products but have clear names that emphasises on the plant-based ingredient, might allow a company to target a wider customer group of meat-eaters, flexitarian, vegetarians, vegans. However, is it likely that a company can reach all these consumer groups, from meat-eater to vegans, with products that have a visual appearance very similar to meat, while at the same time emphasises the products’ vegetarian ingredient to a great extent?

5.1.3 Products’ appearance in relation to vegans as target group

A third strategy that seems to be used by vegetarian and vegan companies on the Swedish market is to design the plant-based products as something unique and new, i.e. to try to not to make the product as a substitute for something. By creating a new and unique taste and shape of a vegetarian or vegan product, like no other products on the market, can be beneficial for the brand to attract vegetarians and vegans. Usually vegetarian products are made for vegetarian, flexitarian and meat-eaters. However, as mentioned by Elzerman et al., (2011), vegans and vegetarians do not want their plant-based food products to look or taste like meat. Many of the vegetarian and vegan products on the Swedish offer products that have tastes, names and shapes similar to meat products to make consumers understand how to use the products and the products purpose. However, using the strategy of designing an own and unique product that try not to imitate meat, it will fulfil the need of vegan consumers who not want their food to look like the food that they have chosen
to exclude from their diets. What has been stated from several of the vegetarian and vegan companies on the Swedish market is that they find this consumer group quite small and thus not very profitable, even though they consider their consumers very loyal. This can be the downside with this strategy, even though they are actually offering a vegan/vegetarian product for vegans and vegetarians.

### 5.1.4 Why do companies produce vegetarian and vegan products imitated with real meat products?

Looking at vegetarian and vegan companies operating in Sweden, some of them states that they do not consider themselves as meat substitute companies. However, all of them produce products that can remind of meat in many ways, including visual appearance, names and shapes. The answers to the question why vegetarian and vegan companies produce products imitated with real meat products are therefore several. One of the key findings is that the visual appearance of vegetarian and vegan products are in relation to the target customer. Further, even though the companies offer the same kind of products and from the beginning can be seen as very similar to each other, they target completely different consumer groups. Most of the companies understand that they imitate, or at least make certain aspects of the products similar to meat. This is to facilitate for, and guide, the consumers to make them understand how to use the products. It also seems like many of the companies’ target groups have changed from vegans and vegetarians which the products are actually aimed for from the beginning, to target those in transition from meat-to vegetarian diets. This can have to do with the recent trends of meat-free diets where a big part of Swedish consumers has started to reduce their meat consumption and started to consume more plant-based protein products.

Even though imitating vegetarian and vegan products with meat can attract a larger customer group, there could also be some risks of doing this. Firstly, looking at one of the vegetarian and vegan companies, they started off as a company aimed for vegans. However, they then started to imitate their products with meat and wanted consumers to associate their products with meat in terms of shapes and names. This made them lose their targeted group, vegans, but instead gained more customers. Secondly, a risk of imitating vegan and vegetarian products with meat products is that consumers expect it to be exactly like a meat product. This could likely lead to dissatisfaction among
consumers. However, it seems like some companies have been willing to take that risk to have the chance of attracting a wider consumer group, like flexitarians and meat-eaters.

Further, we can see a connection why vegetarian and vegan companies imitate meat products. As Elzerman et al., (2011) states in their study, it is easier to reach a big customer group, in this case the meat eaters and flexitarians, by imitating substitute products with meat. Although this can make the companies lose the customer group of vegans, it can mean that they gain the customer group of flexitarians and meat-eaters. Comparing the size of these customer groups, we can see that aiming for the group of vegetarians and flexitarian will likely be more profitable than aiming for the customer group of vegetarians and vegans (Sverigesradio, 2018). One can argue that it is strange that companies who produce vegetarian and vegan food alternatives to meat do not have vegetarians and vegans as their main target group. However, since the amount of people who want to reduce meat consumption increase, it can be a great opportunity for these kinds of companies to grow and be more profitable.

Looking from another perspective, by changing aim of target group and concept of the products offered, there is a risk of losing the original target group. Vegetarians and vegans who don’t like meat and don’t want to eat food that looks and tastes like meat, will not be attracted to food that is aimed to imitate meat. Vegans are often very loyal consumers because of the fact that they do not have as many alternatives to choose from. Vegans are however still a very small customer group in Sweden. This can be the reason for why companies choose to exclude their preferences of vegetarian and vegan food products.

As stated by Twigg (1984), meat has been a big part of Western food culture and many dishes are based on some kind of meat. As of today, the majority of people have been raised with meat-based diets. In recent years, when more people have been introduced to vegetarian and vegan diets, it seems like both companies and consumers have prepared vegetarian and vegan food like meat dishes and have not come up with new and unique products. For example, one who likes pasta Bolognese and wants to start with a vegetarian or vegan diet, still want to make pasta Bolognese but with plant-based food. In order to simplify this diet change, plant-based protein products can be seen as a facilitator in this shift. However, we can see that there are also companies that provide unique products
that are aimed for people who have already taken an active stance towards meat consumption and do not want their products to be imitated with meat.

5.2 Factors affecting consumer behaviour in the food domain

Looking back at the Multidisciplinary Model of the Main Factors Affecting Consumer Behavior in a Food Domain, it suggests three different factors that affect consumer behaviour in terms of food. These are; psychological factors, market factors and sensory factors (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014). Looking at vegetarian and vegan companies that operate in Sweden, their strategies are both similar and different from each other.

5.2.1 Psychological Factors

According to Mitchell (1992) it is very important for companies to be aware of the risks that consumers perceive when buying a product. Also, that this can affect the consumer decision-making process to a great extent. The vegetarians and vegan companies on the Swedish market seem to be aware of the perceived risks and mention that it is important to manage them fully. This is especially important in the terms of food since the companies target different groups of consumers and all people have different tastes and needs. When it comes to vegetarian and vegan products, there can be a risk of imitating the products with meat products. The main risk in this case is that consumers may think of meat when buying the product and therefore expect a different texture or flavour of the food. One way to manage this kind of risk is to clearly communicate what the food contains and how to use it so it does not lead to consumer dissatisfaction because of consumers’ associations. This can be communicated through the products’ names, packaging and labelling. Some of the vegetarian and vegan companies on the Swedish market offer products that are more similar to meat than others. We believe that the companies who imitate meat to a greater extent in terms of shape, flavour and texture, have a higher risk to dissatisfy the consumers. If the consumer cannot tell if the product is meat or not by its visual appearance, the risk will become higher since the consumer likely will have an underlying expectation of that the product will be like meat. Expectations play a significant role in consumers’ buying behaviour and in the decision of accepting or rejecting a product is taken before it is even tested (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014). This indicates on the importance of being aware of consumers’ perceived risks and expectations.
According to Hoek et al., (2011), vegetarians and vegans care most about meat-free diets because of animal and environmental concerns. Studies have shown that females tend to be more concerned about animal welfare, health and weight control related to meat consumption than males (Phillips et al., 2010; Kubberød, Ueland, Tronstad, & Risvik 2002; Hoek et al, 2004). This fact suggest that women can be more valuable customers for vegetarian and vegan companies. Looking at vegetarian and vegan companies that operate in Sweden, some of them have noticed that women are the most frequent buyer of their products and that environmental- and animal concerns are common among consumers. The companies who are aware of that their target group is environmentally concerned, environmental benefits with their products are clearly communicated both on the packaging as well as in other marketing communications.

5.2.2 Marketing Factors

Price, package and labelling, brand and availability are seen as important aspects when communicating a brand message in terms of marketing. The price-quality relationship has been states to be more important to vegetarian and vegan consumers than to meat-eating consumers (Hoek, et al., 2004). For many consumers, the price is seen as a hindering factor when switching from meat to vegan or vegetarian products (Hoek et al., 2011).

Looking at the vegetarian and vegan companies operating in Sweden, the price of meat has not been seen as a predominant factor when setting the price of their vegetarian and vegan products. We believe that this should be questioned since many of the companies are aiming for meat-eaters and flexitarians. Looking back at the study of Hoek et al., (2011), they state that price is a strong and driving factor for consumers. Therefore, we can draw the conclusion that many meat-eating consumers might turn down on vegetarian and vegan products if they are more expensive than a resembling meat product.

However, there are also other factors that affect the price and that has been implemented in price strategies. The price strategies differ among the companies that we have looked at. Tzay, the company targeting vegans, has premium-prices on their products due to loyal consumers and their unique product. The fact that they can keep the prices high can also be due to the market of vegan food is not very big and vegan consumers do not have as many options as other consumers have. A company targeting this customer group can therefore set higher prices. Quorn, a company targeting meat-eaters, has sat high prices
compared to some of their competitors on the Swedish market because they offer a product with a large focus on the environment. For example, all of their products are “Carbon-trust” accepted which means that they produce food products that have small environmental impact. This certificate is labelled on all their products’ packaging. Astrid och Aporna, a company targeting meat-eater, has set their prices low in comparison to competitors on the Swedish market. Their strategy is to keep their prices low in order for everyone to afford vegetarian food, the price should not be the reason for why a consumer needs to buy for example meat instead. Ekko Gourmet, the company targeting flexitarians, consider that their products are worth a higher price. Because Ekko Gourmet sat their prices low when the company was launched, it is hard to change the prices now because the grocery retailers will not accept that.

According to Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero (2014), the expected quality of a product is regarded as one of the most important marketing factors influencing consumer buyer behaviour. Through labelling and packaging, companies can communicate quality and passing on the message of the product to consumers. In their study, Hoek et al., (2004) states that vegetarians and vegans find labelling and packaging of food products more important than meat eaters do. Additionally, consumers have become more conscious about what their food contains and it is therefore important for companies to include clear information labelling (Gracia & de-Magistris, 2016). Looking at the vegetarian and vegan companies operating in Sweden, a common denominator for the brands is that they design their labelling with the aim to make it look fun and happy. Also, all brands show their product either through a see-through, transparent packaging or by including pictures or illustrations of the food on the labelling. This means that they want to communicate a positive association of their products as well as show consumers what the products look like before they even buy it. By doing this, the consumers’ expected quality can be somewhat managed.

Out of these four companies, it is only Astrid och Aporna that has a clear way of differentiate themselves from their competitors in terms of packaging and labelling. Astrid och Aporna’s packaging is childish and reminds of cartoons, even though their target group is not children. We believe that there are both positive and negative aspects with their type of strategy. Their labelling easily stands out from in comparison with their
competitors. However, for consumers it is likely easy to interpret their labelling as that the products are aimed for children. Quorn, Tzay and Ekko Gourmet have similar packaging and labelling in some ways, therefore it might be hard for consumers to differentiate them from each other. According to Luis Méndez et al., (2011), attributes such as brand and labelling are easily recognised by the consumer. From this, consumers make their own appreciation and conclusions which will lead to purchasing decision (Fort-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014). Even though Quorn, Tzay and Ekko Gourmet may seem similar to each other in terms of their labelling and packaging, they use other strategies in order to differentiate themselves from its competitors. What makes Quorn unique from its competitors is that they are the only company that uses the plant-based protein source Mycoprotein. Tzay and Ekko Gourmet on the other hand, believe that they differentiate themselves in the sense that they have unique products. Looking back at the study made by Luis Méndex et al., (2011), if companies differentiate themselves in terms of brand and labelling, they will make it easier for consumers to recognize them. All companies seem to have a strategy of how to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

Looking at the availability and distribution of the vegetarian and vegan products on the Swedish market, all companies distribute their products to the big grocery chains in Sweden such as Ica, Coop and Hemköp. Some of them also also distribute their products to independent vegetarian and vegan stores. There is no big difference between how the companies distribute their products or where they chose to make them available. We believe that in order to reach a great number of consumers in Sweden, the companies have to be available in big grocery chains.

5.2.3 Sensory Factors

Sensory factors are another aspect that affects consumer behaviour in the food domain. Sensory factors in the terms of food can be the visual appearance, texture, flavour and smell (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014). As mentioned before, the strategy behind the visual appearance of vegetarian and vegan products depends on what group of consumers the companies aim to reach. What we have seen is that the companies who imitate meat to a great extent are those companies who target meat-eaters. This in order to guide the consumer to vegetarian and vegan diets and to facilitate for and make the consumer
understand how to use the product. According to Elzerman et al., (2015), it is important for consumers to be able to put the meal in a context when it comes to meat substitute products. This fact strengthens the importance of the visual appearance for these kinds of products. Comparing different strategies, we can see that Tzay focus on the texture of the product and not as much on its visual appearance whilst Quorn and Astrid och Aporna have a great focus on the visual appearance. Looking back at the study of meal context by Elzerman et al., (2015), Quorn’s and Astrid och Aporna’s products have a clearer context just because their products reminds of familiar food. These are also the companies who target meat-eaters. Tzay’s products might be rejected by some consumers because their products do not remind the consumer of familiar food. In that case it can make it difficult to understand how to use it. However, Tzay target vegans who do not want their food to imitate meat and these consumers do not need the same guidance and do not need their vegan food in a context.

According to Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero (2014), the texture of food is important because it will depend on consumers’ acceptance or rejection. Flavour is also a very complex aspect and is correlated with consumer perception and acceptance of meat alternative products (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014). The four vegetarian and vegan companies operating in Sweden all work actively with these sensory factors but have different focus on which they prioritize. Looking at the flavour, texture and smell of vegetarian and vegan products, we have noticed a connection between the companies’ target groups and what sensory factor they prioritize. The companies who imitate meat have a greater focus on the products’ visual appearance since they believe that this is the first thing that the consumer sees and from their make their purchase decision. The companies who claim that they do not imitate their products with meat however, focus more on sensory factors such as the products’ texture and flavour. We believe that this has to do with that the companies who imitate meat and target meat-eaters needs to convince its consumers earlier in the decision making process. By imitating meat products, they can likely attract meat-eaters to a greater extent. Those companies who do not imitate meat and target vegans and vegetarians do not need to focus as much on the visual appearance to catch the consumers’ attention but rather to put focus on the texture and flavour.
5.2.4 How do these companies market their products?

As stated by Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero (2014), expectations play a significant role in consumers’ buying behaviour and in consumers’ decision making process. A psychological risk of vegetarian and vegan products can be that these products often look like meat products. This can make consumers getting an underlying expectation that the product will have the same texture, smell and flavour as meat. In order to eliminate this psychological risk, the vegetarian and vegan companies are trying to clearly communicate what the products contain on their labelling as well as in other marketing communications. The labelling on these kinds of products differ somewhat from meat products. The vegetarian and vegan companies seem keen on including fun colours and they always show the products, either as a picture on the labelling or by see-through, transparent packaging. This can be seen both as a way of eliminating the psychological risk of buying for the consumer and as a way of differentiate the vegetarian and vegan products from meat.

Looking at the vegetarian and vegan companies that operate in Sweden, we can see that only one of them are considering prices of meat when setting prices on their vegetarian and vegan products. Since we believe that many consumers compare meat with vegan and vegetarian products that look like meat, this may be problematic for the companies who target meat-eaters. As mentioned before, according to FAO (2004), meat has been a big part in meal context and have had strong consumption patterns in the Western world for a very long time. Having this fact in mind, the companies who target meat eaters with plant-based meat substitute products should consider prices of meat so that the prices of their products are not the reason for why a consumer choose meat products before their plant-based products.

All companies put much emphasis on sensory factors such as visual appearance, texture, smell and flavour. However, we have noticed that these different factors are valued different among companies depending on their target groups. The companies who target meat-eaters and flexitarians focus on the visual appearance of the products whilst the companies who target vegetarians and vegans focus on the texture and flavour of the products to a greater extent.
6 Conclusion

Our aim with this study has been to understand why vegetarian and vegan companies imitate their plant-based products with real meat products as well as how these companies market their products. Our aim has also been to contribute to the field of knowledge within meat alternative products and its visual appearance. By studying four different meat alternative companies operating in Sweden, we have explored the topic of meat alternative products, its visual appearance as well as meat alternative companies’ general marketing strategies.

The results from this thesis enlightens that there are contrasting strategies behind the products’ visual appearance, chosen target group and marketing among the different vegetarian and vegan companies. We have discovered patterns between the companies’ target audiences and how these companies have designed their products depending on target audience. It appears that those companies targeting meat-eaters, mainly Quorn and Astrid och Aporna, are those who imitate meat to a greater extent both in terms of the products’ visual appearance and names. Their products are designed and marketed in this way in order to make their target group understand how to use the product. This can be seen as a guidance for consumers who have always eaten meat but wants to explore vegetarian or vegan diets. Further, those companies targeting flexitarians, vegetarians and vegans, mainly Ekko Gourmet and Tzay, are those who not consider themselves imitating meat. These companies want their products to be seen as a unique product.

Most of these companies started with targeting vegetarians and vegans. However, along the way these companies have changed to target mainly meat eaters or flexitarians. This is because vegans and vegetarians are a small and limited consumer group in Sweden and constitutes a very small part of the market. Due to the recent trend with flexitarian, vegetarian and vegan diets, vegetarian and vegan products have turned into products that many companies try to reach meat-eaters with.
7 Discussion

Throughout this the writing process of this thesis, limitations have occurred. These limitations will be shared for the reader to get a better and fair understanding of the process of conducting this research. We want to highlight the fact that we were not able to include all companies who are working with vegetarian and vegan products who operate in Sweden. Both because of time limitations and companies’ unwillingness to participate in interviews. This has limited the study in the sense that an even broader perspective could not be given. Another limitation is that even though we have tried to minimize the threats of data validity and reliability, we still have not had any control over the participants’ answers. This means that the answers that we have received must be seen as truthful and can therefore be accepted as empirical data. Our strength with this research is that the companies that have been studied and interviewed are well-known brands and the participants of the interviews have great knowledge of their company and its products. We believe that this increases the trustworthiness and credibility of the research.

The literature of meat substitute products and its underlying theories creates contributions to knowledge about how these products are designed, marketed as well as who it is targeted to. We can also see that our empirical findings in this research goes in consistency with past researches and its findings. The findings of our thesis shows that not all vegetarian and vegan companies who operate in Sweden use similar marketing strategies. Additionally, that these companies, who offer the same kind of products, have very different target groups. Our research will contribute to the field of meat alternative products, its visual appearance and what strategies that lies behind the design and marketing of these products. By conducting this study, we have got a great understanding of the market of meat alternative products in Sweden, why the products are design the way they are as well as whom they are aimed for.

Throughout the writing process, we have identified other interesting aspects within the subject of meat alternative products and gaps that can be further explored. Before we conducted this study, we assumed that all vegetarian and vegan companies’ aim was to imitate their products with real meat products. However, throughout the study we have learned that the strategies behind vegetarian and vegan products’ visual appearance vary
depending on company and target audience. We find this very interesting because we still because we still have the perception that many consumers refer such products to meat in terms of its appearance and names. It would therefore be interesting to investigate the consumer’s perspective and perceptions of these kinds of products by conducting a quantitative research to distinguish if the companies’ strategies are consistent with the perceptions of consumers on the Swedish market. Another proposition for future research can be to investigate vegetarians’ and vegans’ perceptions of meat alternatives and how this consumer group would best appreciate their food.
8 Reference list


Appendix 1

Introduction
1. Can you please give us a short introduction of your company?
2. How would you describe your brand?
3. How would you describe your products?
4. Who is your targeted customer? Why?
   (If not clear: What socio-cultural group do you mean your customer belong to?)
   (Do you target both vegetarians and meat-eaters?)

Questions regarding factors of consumer behaviour in the food domain
1. How do you ensure your customer that you will meet their needs and eliminate their risk of buying your product?
2. Products like meat substitutes are relatively new on the market compared to other foods, how do you make sure that the expectations and attitudes are met in your offered products?
3. What lifestyles and values do you believe that your consumers have?
4. Have socio-cultural effects affected your choice of targeted consumer?
5. How do you set your prices, having both the market and consumers in mind?
6. What are your main thoughts behind your labelling and packaging of your products?
7. How do your products differentiate from other meat substitute brands?
   What consumer brand associations are most important for you?
8. Where do you want your products to be found/seen?
   How do you distribute your products?
9. Is there any specific strategy/thought for your product’s visual appearance?
10. What is your strategy behind the texture, flavour and odour of your products?
   How much emphasis would you say that you put on these sensory factors?
   Which of these sensory factors do you consider being most important?
11. Do you believe any other sensory factors affect consumer behaviour when it comes to meat substitute products?

Questions regarding meat substitutes’ appearance
1. What are your thoughts behind your product’s appearance?
2. What are your thoughts behind your product’s names?
3. Many of your products seems to be imitated with meat products. Do you agree?
   Why/ Why not?
4. Who do you believe will be most attracted to products imitated with meat? Meat-eaters? Vegetarians/vegans? Why?
5. Do you believe you will attain more customers by imitating your products with familiar food, like meat products?
6. Would you like to add something?
Appendix 2

Introduktion
1. Kan du ge oss en kort introduktion till ditt företag?
2. Hur skulle du beskriva ert varumärke?
3. Hur skulle du beskriva era produkter?
4. Vilken är er målgrupp? Varför?
   (Om oklart: Vilken sociokulturell grupp menar du att din kund hör till?)
   (Både vegetarianer och köttätare?)

Faktorer av konsumentbeteende
1. Hur skulle du säga att ni försäkrar er om att ni möter konsumentens behov och eliminera deras risk med att köpa er produkt?
2. Produkter som köttsubstitut är relativt nya på marknaden jämfört med andra livsmedel, hur gör ni för att garantera att förväntningarna och attityder gentemot dessa produkter möts i era erbjudna produkter?
3. Vilket typ av värderingar och livsstil tror ni att er målgrupp har?
4. På vilket sätt har sociokulturella effekter påverkat ert val av målgrupp?
5. Hur sätter ni era priser, med både marknaden och konsumenterna i åtanke?
6. Vad är grundläggande tankar bakom etikett och förpackningen av era produkter?
7. Hur skiljer sig era produkter från andra köttsubstitut produkter på marknaden?
   Vilka varumärkesassociationer är av mest viktiga för er?
8. Var vill ni att era produkter ska synas och vara tillgängliga?
   Hur distribuerar ni era produkter?
9. Finns det några specifika strategier/tankar bakom era produkters utseende?
10. Vilka är era strategier bakom textur, smak och odör på era produkter?
   Hur mycket vikt lägger ni på just dessa faktorer?
   Vilka sensoriska faktorer anser ni vara dom viktigaste?
11. Tror du att det finns några andra sensoriska faktorer som påverkar konsumentbeteendet när det gäller kött substutit produkter?

Frågor angående köttsubstitut produkters utseende
1. Vad är era tankar bakom produktens utseende?
2. Vad är dina tankar bakom produktens namn?
   Varför?
5. Tror ni att ni kan uppnå fler kunder genom att imitera produkter med välkänd mat, såsom köttprodukter?
6. Vill du lägga till något?