The retailing paradox: A study of the green market development in food retailing

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CSR has become an important issue in the business practices of retailers worldwide. When it comes to the food sector, retailers are expected to adopt CSR practices and influence their consumers and supply chains to behave in a socially responsible way. Since the food consumption in answerable for 30 per cent of the negative environmentally impact the retailers are suggested to stimulate the green market development and sustainability in both production and consumption practices. This can be done with establishment of the responsible assortment. In relation to that, one of the main tools that food retailers use to create responsible assortment is called CSR labelling.

The purpose of this study is to explore how food retail store managers engage to adopt CSR in the store assortment and how private eco-brands contribute to the green-market development in food retail. In order to achieve a widely understanding of food retailers practices when the creation of responsible assortment and the stimulation of the green market development are in case, a qualitative method with 9 semi structured interviews was applied.

The results show that retailers use CSR and eco-labels with the intention to motivate consumers to buy sustainable food products. The retailers are also showing increased attention of controlling the supply chain and influencing suppliers to behave in a socially responsible way. However, the findings indicates that both store managers and consumers need to be better informed about the benefit of the sustainable products.

Keywords
Corporate social responsibility; CSR labeling; Food retailing; Private eco-branding; Green market development.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a consequential issue in business practice across retail industry (Carrero & Valor, 2012; Schramm-Klein, Morschett & Swoboda, 2015). According to Schramm-Klein et al. (2015) a socially responsible behavior involves activities that influence the overall reputation of the company and creates the image of a good corporate citizen. That is why, more and more retailers spend their money, time and effort on CSR-related activities with the intention of influencing their reputation and presenting themselves as good corporate citizens (Schramm-Klein et al., 2015). Wiese and Toporowski (2013) state that one of the definitions describes CSR as a concept trough which companies combine social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis. There have also been indications that adoption and implementation of good management practices have a positive impact on the success of the companies (Wiese & Toporowski, 2013). As a large sector of the world economy, retailers have the capacity to influence the growth of consumer rates which increases the demand for responsible behavior within the industry. This represents the phenomena called “the retailing paradox” which is based on the question: how to meet business targets while establishing a commitment to sustainability (Carrero & Valor, 2012)?

In relation to that, many companies are implementing CSR policies because they believe that these policies lead to better performance. Even though the corporate social responsibility is globally understood as an origin of competitive advantage, retailers have recognized that it is not only the way to become different than competitors but also to meet the demands from market and society (Carrero & Valor, 2012). Since the socially responsible behavior increases customers’ attention, the retailers are becoming more and more involved in CSR initiatives. That is why most retailers have included CSR activities in their strategies in the last few years. Those activities are mainly linked to: products offered (e.g. fair trade products and private labels), pricing, services, employee treatment (e.g. fair-minded wages and working hours), ethical sourcing (e.g. sustainable farming, no child labor), corporate philanthropy and cause-related marketing. However, the retailers who are communicating their CSR activities to society can receive a critique if they do not really implement CSR strategies in their daily business. There are some retailers, like for example, Lidl from Germany that have been
criticized for green-washing because they did not really follow CSR messages that they have promoted (Schramm- Klein et al., 2015).

When it comes to the food retail sector, the expectations of governments, non-governmental organizations and academia are not only linked to retailers’ own operations. Thus, the food retailers are not only expected to behave in a socially responsible way but also to influence their consumers and supply chains. The question is, however, to what extent retailers are engaged in their suggested role and how they are developing the market for sustainable products (Chkanikova & Lehner, 2015). As Vukasovic (2013) states, modern food consumers are becoming more and more interested in safety and quality of purchased food products. These consumers are also interested in the relationship between the production practice and the quality of food products (Vukasovic, 2013). In relation to that, the food retailers are increasingly using two marketing tools that are the basis of green market development. These tools are: third-party certification and private eco-branding. The purpose of eco-branding is to reach higher market shares by having product differentiation which is based on sustainability attributes. On the other hand, third-party certification guarantees that the products comply with certain environmental, social and ethical standards (Chkanikova & Lehner, 2015). Coordination between CSR strategies and own product brands enables food retailers to create the future of food markets and to influence social and policy debates. Furthermore, adopting organic or fair trade labels on private label products provides retailers with the opportunity to differentiate product offering from national brands (Souza-Monteiro & Hooker, 2017). Also, eco-labeling policy affects consumers when making the buying decision and it also influences consumers to a pay higher price (Bernand, Bertrandias, & Elgaaied-Gambier, 2015). However, the consumers still need time to comprehend the higher price of environmentally friendly products which covers the supplementary environmental effort (Puopolo, Teti, & Milani, 2015).

1.2 Problematization

Previous research within this field has demonstrated that CSR orientation of consumers affects product and brand choice (Schramm- Klein et al., 2015). Earlier research has also shown that private eco-branding increases brand value and that consumers appreciate CSR-labelled products (Chkanikova & Lehner, 2015; Carrero & Valor, 2012). However, past research was mostly focused on analyzing the implementation of CSR to global supply chain
and the CSR activities of retailers that were linked to the environment, the market place, the workplace and the community (Weise and Toporowski, 2013; Carrero & Valor, 2012).

Regarding previous studies about retail assortment, there are some studies which consider retailer brands and their effects on assortment variation and some studies about the arrangement of assortment (Anselmsson, 2008; Carrero & Valor, 2012). But still, there are not many studies that have focused on how grocery store managers work with CSR and private eco-branding products in their assortment. Thus, this research focuses on the food retailing considering the CSR labelled products and private branding work as stimulators for the green market development within food retail stores.

According to Green, Toms and Clark (2015) consumer demand for environmentally friendly products and services has increased and the sustainability has become a superior interest of companies with a market orientation. Organizations with the market orientation are in an extraordinary position. Their strategies can be aligned with the needs and wants of customers and stakeholders who are actively involved in organizational responsibility to society (Green, Toms, & Clark, 2015). Souza-Monteiro and Hooker (2017) highlight that there are clearly opportunities for win-win situations if retailers coordinate their CSR and marketing strategies to meet consumers’ and shareholders’ interests. In relation to that, some grocers have been improving a portfolio of private label products competing with already established national brands in their stores. These products may be designed to improve market competitiveness and the opportunity of retailers to differentiate their assortments from other retailers and food manufacturers (Souza-Monteiro & Hooker, 2017).

In fact, food supply chains construct CSR challenges because the products have different origins. This means that products, like for example tea or coffee, cannot grow in Europe. Therefore, these products provide retailers with challenges when the guarantee of their quality is in question. In relation to that, there are eight fields of responsibility that have to be considered. These are: animal welfare, biotechnology, environment; fair trade, health and safety, labor and human rights, procurement; and community (Wiese & Toporowski, 2013). Retailers use different tools to establish a responsible assortment. One of them is CSR labelling which has a role to distribute guidelines for brands and to enable greater performance to retailers. CSR labels guarantee that the products have accomplished an improved level of environmental or social performance compared to non-labelled products.
Furthermore, labeling is seen as the best tool when informing consumers about the social and environmental attributes of a brand (Carrero & Valor, 2012).

Previous studies have shown different results about the motives of retailers to adopt CSR strategies and activities. Schramm-Klein et al. (2015) argue that retailers apply CSR activities with the intention to influence the overall reputation of their companies. Also, retailers communicate their socially responsible behavior to society in order to present themselves as the good citizens in the marketplace (Schramm-Klein et al., 2015). Hooker and Souza Monteiro (2013) agree by writing that food corporations operate CSR strategies in order to improve goodwill and reputation. That is why CSR activities are also used as competitive tools (Hooker & Souza Monteiro, 2013).

Moreover, Elg and Hultman (2016) state that earlier research also proposes that the social responsibility of retailers influences consumer attitudes and trust in a positive way. However, there do not seem to be many studies that consider CSR strategies of retailers that are associated with labelling private eco-branding products. Carrero and Valor (2012) highlight the lack of research within this field. Nevertheless, some studies have focused on organic and fair trade labelled brands in assortments of retailers (Carrero & Valor, 2012). Furthermore, Schramm-Klein et al. (2015) state that previous studies focus mainly on the impact of CSR activities on firm performance. Since the issue of CSR is significant in retail industry, further and more explicit investigation is necessary (Schramm-Klein et al., 2015). Thus this study focuses on retailers’ CSR strategies and sustainable consumption ethics in food retailing. The aim of this study is to explore how engaged are food retail store managers to embrace CSR in their assortment with intention to stimulate green market development.

1.3 Research question

How food retail store managers work to embrace CSR labelled products and private eco-brand products in store assortment to stimulate green market development?

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore how food retail store managers engage to adopt CSR in the store assortment and how private eco-brands contribute to the green-market development in food retailing.
1.5 Outline

This thesis is divided in five chapters. In the first chapter the background, problematization, research question and purpose are presented. The second chapter consists of a literature review where the relevant theories are displayed. The methodology is described in the third chapter. The fourth chapter illustrates empirical findings and analysis. In the last chapter the conclusion, further research and limitations are presented.
2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework includes a section about corporate social responsibility (CSR) in food retail where the motives of food retailers to engage in CSR labelled product activities and private-eco branding are presented. Furthermore, CSR and private labelling are discussed. The section is then concluded with the discussion about green market development and the role of the retail store managers.

2.1 CSR in food retail

According to Schramm-Klein et al. (2015) CSR has had a long and distinctive history. For example, in 2011 CSR was ranked as the most crucial issue in the Global Retail and Consumer Goods Sector. Furthermore, CSR has also increased its importance in the scientific, political as well as in the public arena. Moreover, the term: “corporate social responsibility” indicates that the companies are answerable for their impact on society and the environment. (Hartmann, Heinen, Melis, & Simons, 2013). Despite this fact, CSR is still missing its leading definition. This concept is, however, described as the commitment of the company to minimize or exclude any destructive effects on society (Schramm-Klein et al., 2015). That is why CSR could be understood as a strategic tool of the firm. The strategical use of CSR can be beneficial to the organization in creating goodwill and strengthening its reputation (Hooker & Souza Monteiro, 2013). However, when it comes to the food sector the term CSR is mostly associated with food safety. The reason for this is that the food retailers have been criticized for animal welfare incidences, high emissions of green-house gas and low labor standards and rainforest destruction due to GMO feed (Schramm-Klein et al., 2015).

In relation to that, food consumption is answerable for 30 per cent of the negative environmental impact and that is why the reduction of its negative effects is becoming increasingly important. Considering this, the retailers are developing product offers that create meaning for consumers and influence their choice of products (Gunn & Mont, 2014). In fact, food manufacturers and retailers have many CSR approaches to choose among. Retailers also have the opportunity to adopt their marketing tactics with product offers, community engagement, integrated marketing communication messages, prices and personnel/training programs (Hooker & Souza Monteiro, 2013). In fact, retailers are increasing their CSR initiatives even though these initiatives are not really rewarded. On the other hand, the irresponsible behavior of retailers affects consumers negatively (Elg & Hultman, 2016). However, the motivation of retailers to engage in CSR activities is not only rooted in laws,
regulations and ethical motives. Thus, a socially responsible behavior of retailers could be defined as both ideological and economic in nature (Schramm-Klein et al., 2015). In relation to that, Elg and Hultman (2016) state that one of the motives for the expansion of work with CSR could be consumers’ increased attention for socially responsible behavior. This indicates that consumers have positive opinions about socially responsible retailers who are presenting themselves as good citizens (Elg & Hultman, 2016). According to Schramm-Klein et al. (2015) “being a good citizen” is one of four society’s expectations described in the “pyramid of corporate social responsibility” by Carroll (1991). “Being a good citizen” belongs to the philanthropic domain of the already mentioned pyramid. Besides this philanthropic domain, there are three more specific expectations that belong to the economic domain, the legal domain and ethical domain. These are: being profitable, conform to the law and being ethical (Schramm-Klein et al., 2015). According to Carroll (2016) the original definition of CSR was stated in 1979 as:

“Corporate social responsibility encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (philanthropic) expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time.”

Archie B. Carroll (2016, p. 2)

Carroll (2016) argues that this set of four responsibilities has helped to create the nature of business responsibility and demonstrate them to society. The first responsibility called economic is related to the profitability of the company. In fact, business organizations need to be profitable in order to stimulate owners or shareholders to make investments and have enough resources for business operations. The legal responsibility means that the corporations follow laws, fulfill their legal obligations to societal stakeholders and supply goods and services that at least meet minimal legal requirements. On the other hand, the ethical responsibility includes involvement in ethical activities and practices that are expected even though they are not codified into law. The fourth corporate responsibility is called discretionary or philanthropic and it is about business organizations’ voluntary or discretionary activities. These activities are becoming everyday expectations of the public nowadays (Carroll, 2016).

However, corporate responsibility in retail involves operating the relationship with four main actors: the retailer’s environment, the marketplace, the community and the workplace. This indicates that retailers observe both internal and external dimensions of CSR. The internal
dimensions are linked to responsible practices within the company while the external dimensions include the relationship with stakeholders, business partners and suppliers (Carrero & Valor, 2012). In relation to that, the retailers are able to engage in environmental supply-chain management and force green products in their supply chains. Furthermore, the implementation of management guidelines enables food retailers to focus on food safety and animal welfare which sends a positive message to consumers. This shows that food retailers have a big interest to engage in food safety issues (Wiese et al., 2012). In relation to that, Piacentini, MacFadyen and Eadie (2000) state that retailers’ motivation for engaging in CSR activities and the only right business goal is to maximize the owner's wealth while acting in the legal, ethical and moral manner.

Additionally, another possible motive for retailers to adopt CSR practices might be cost savings because CSR could lead to reduced costs. The reduction of costs might appear because of increased relationship value and operating efficiency or reducing risks. The stakeholder contract theory points out that the social performance initiatives of the company might cause reduced relational costs with stakeholders who assume firms to play fair, when moral values are at stake. Also, CSR initiatives might increase revenue by bringing new consumer groups or enabling new investment opportunities (Schramm-Klein et al., 2015). In relation to that, Elg and Hultman (2016) state that CSR activities have an important role in building a satisfied consumer base. Also, retailers who behave in a socially responsible way can influence trust and consumer attitudes in a positive way (Elg & Hultman, 2016).

Moreover, the environmental impact of food retailers can be separated into their direct impact of service operations and the indirect impact through their products. Retailers are, however, mainly focusing on their direct impact on the environment. Indeed, food retailers are able to influence consumers and producers to behave in socially responsible manner. That is why they are working with development of climate smart visions, policies and goals (Tjärnemo & Södahl, 2015). However, the retailers need to offer sustainable products alongside their usual product assortment in order to promote sustainable consumption. By providing sustainable products together with the mainstream products the retailers have an opportunity to improve the green image and affect consumer attitudes positively (Gunn & Mont, 2014).
2.1.1 CSR and private labelling

Carrero and Valor (2012) define the creation of responsible assortment as one way to show retailers’ responsible behavior to consumers. One of the tools used to create responsible assortment is called CSR labelling. Labels are defined as symbols on any packaging, like for example: words, trademarks and brand names. When it comes to CSR labels, they could be allocated by using several criteria. One is called “the issue covered” and includes differentiation between environmental (planet), social justice (people) and animal welfare (animals). Another important criterion is quality which is categorized into three types by International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The CSR labels that belong to the first type are process-based, like for example: eco labels. The second type of CSR labels is self-declared labels e.g. ozone friendly. The third type CSR labels are performance based like for example: Fair Trade (Carrero & Valor, 2012). Fair trade is defined as an approach related to the buyer-supplier transaction which highlights the importance of recognizing equality in the power variation between the developed and developing countries. This approach has several main practices: purchasing goods directly from producers, transparent partnership, co-operation instead of competition, minimal market prices, focus on development and provision of market information. Additionally, fair trade could be seen as the retailers’ strategic response to the growth of ethical consumerism (James, 2002). In relation to that, choosing eco-label concerns also indicates that the company has a strategy which is orientated towards sustainability. The eco-labelled products are, however, not addressed to the whole market. As the results of sustainable differentiation strategies, these products are addressed to particular market targets (De Chiara, 2016).

Furthermore, Binnekamp and Ingenbleek (2008) argue that there is some insecurity among retailers when inclusion of sustainable- labelled1 products to assortment is in question. The reason for this might be found in the argument that sustainable labels stimulate positive association with consumers which can lead to negative attitudes to mainstream products. The products which are not sustainable labelled could be understood as not completely environmentally friendly. However, labelling is a meaningful instrument when creating demand for socially and environmentally friendly products. Some examples of such labels are: Fair Trade, Organic and Marine Stewardship Council (Binnekamp & Ingenbleek, 2008). According to Bezençon and Etemad-Sajadi (2014) sustainable labels can help to acculturate

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1Eco-labels and sustainable labels are used as synonyms in this study.
business processes and influence consumer behavior positively. Also, organic labels have positive effects on perceived taste and quality of the brands with low brand equity. When it comes to the high brand equity, good taste and high quality are already expected (Bezençon & Etemad-Sajadi, 2014).

On the other hand, Bodur, Tofighi and Grohmann (2016) state that private label brands are defined as consumer products assigned by retailer. The retailer-owned private label brands usually have a retailers’ name or a brand name which is created by retailers. Furthermore, private labelled brands with ethical attributes are becoming more and more appreciated. Ethical attributes are defined as product attributes which are positive associated with environmental protection, human rights, animal welfare and social issues. The ethical attributes of the products are related to pollution reduction and recycling, environmentally friendly products, natural ingredients and locally supplied ingredients (Bodur et al., 2016).

In relation to that, Chkanikova and Lehner (2015) state that private branding could be used as a corporate tool when managing competitive market strategy. Branding is beneficial for the retailers in achieving higher profits by lowering manufacturing and promotion costs (Chkanikova & Lehner, 2015). Within the retail stores, private labels exist in almost all product categories and they are helpful to achieve customer loyalty. Actually, private labels can be used by retailers with the intention of differentiating their stores from competitors and stimulate consumer loyalty in that way (Coelho do Vale & Matos, 2017). Additionally, private label brands are owned and sold exclusively by retailers. This allows retailers to gain competitive advantage and differentiate their private label brands. It is, however, essential for retailers to understand factors that lead to competitive advantages and to increase the success of offering socially responsible products and brands (Tofighi & Bodur, 2015).

2.2 Green Market Development

Sustainable market\(^2\) development has become a challenge for food retailers and the companies that are increasing their promotion of sustainability in production and consumer practices (Chkanikova & Lehner, 2015). The term which is related to sustainable market development is **sustainable consumption**, which was introduced in 1992. Sustainable consumption might be defined as:

\(^2\) Terms green market and sustainable market are used as synonyms in this study.
“The use of services and related products that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials...”

Peter Jones, David Hillier and Daphne Comfort (2011, p.938)

Supermarkets have the power to encourage sustainability within the stores as well as in the supply chains. That is why the issue of encouraging sustainable consumption is growing in importance within the retail spectrum (Jones, Hillier, & Comfort, 2011). According to Clark, Toms and Green (2014) sustainability has three main components: economic, social and environmental. However, environmental sustainability has become an important topic for many organizations and retailers. This type of sustainability is linked to consumption of resources which are not demanding for the environment (Clark, Toms, & Green, 2014). Moreover, the interest in green consumerism has grown in the last few years (Puopolo et al., 2015). The green products are seen as key factors when achieving sustainability and a better life-quality. That is why green markets are growing in size and are expected to become even bigger in the future (Dangelico & Pujari, 2010). In relation to that, the consumers are expecting companies to adopt sustainable managerial practices even though they do not always choose eco-friendly products. Therefore, many businesses maintain environmentally friendly business practices and expect their partners to act in the same direction (Puopolo et al., 2015). In relation to that, suppliers and shareholders must meet criteria like for example: having the ability to be positively or negatively impacted by activities of the manufacturers, being able to include and or eliminate resources necessary to the manufacturer’s organizational activities and to be respected by manufacturers (Clark, Toms, & Green, 2014).

Moreover, Clark, Toms and Green (2014) state that consumers’ desire for eco-friendly products is growing. Manufacturing organizations are therefore working to provide eco-friendly products. Furthermore, manufactures are implementing environmental management systems (Clark, Toms, & Green, 2014). Further, increased demand of organic and wellness-related products has resulted in sustainable retailing. Sustainable retailing is not only linked to sale of sustainable products. It includes selling products, directing the retail supply chain and developing customer-facing initiatives and facilities (Youn, et al., 2016). Additionally, more responsible green behavior is beneficial because it improves performance of the firm. However, the adaptation and implementation of environmentally friendly principles is still a new practice. This indicates that it will take some time until all companies adopt green
behavior (Puopolo et al., 2015). Furthermore, the retailers are understood as vital change agents when it comes to sustainable food systems. The size of retailers enables them to affect the supply chain and reinforce the sustainability agenda both in production and consumption practices. Despite this fact, recent reports on controlling European retailers’ environmental commitments have characterized retailers’ sustainability initiatives as still marginal and unsystematic (Mont & Chkanikova, 2015).

Still, more and more retailers are increasingly working with CSR activities which could strengthen a retailer’s brand and reputation. In the retail industry, issues with the supply chain are becoming specifically challenging (Elg & Hultman, 2016). According to stakeholders theory CSR in supply chains is defined as a strategic behavior that can maximize stakeholder benefits. However, the firm does not only face pressure from its suppliers but also from its consumers and governments (Schramm-Klein et al., 2015; Jean et al., 2016). Therefore, retailers communicate their socially responsible behavior to society. They want to upgrade their image in the market place and to increase their reputation (Schramm-Klein et al., 2015). The retailers are, however, in a difficult situation because they are facing uncertainty in their effort to behave in more sustainable way and promote sustainable business practices. They need to find a balance between following sustainable standards and showing their effort to consumers. Otherwise, their interest in sustainable business practices can counteract their business interest (Lehner, 2014).

2.3 The role of the retail store managers

According to Zairis (2013) the term “role” has a double definition in a business environment. It can be defined both as managers’ and employees’ expectations of each other but also as the activities they perform in the company. The activities of the retail store managers can mainly be concerned with defining the areas of responsibility and the authority that managers have to accomplish their work. The store manager’s responsibilities can be divided into four categories. These are: managing staff members, controlling costs, managing and promoting products and providing customer services. Some store managers can also provide leadership in planning and being answerable for the total operation of the store (Zairis, 2013). Moreover, Arnold et al. (2009) highlight store manager work behavior and skills as significant for the success of the retail store. Additionally, the relationship between store managers and their direct supervisors is also meaningful because it demonstrates the retail chain’s controllable activities. Actually, the store managers’ behavioral obligations are formed through this
Previous research in this field has showed that the autonomy of the retail store managers leads to increased job satisfaction, while the rigorous managerial behavior from a retail chain’s higher levels of management decreases the job satisfaction of the store managers (Zairis, 2013).

Furthermore, Teller and Alexander (2014) state that retail store managers have a necessary boundary role between the corporate organisation, the store operations, and the marketplace. The store managers have a position at the organizational interface which allows them a profitable source of customer and operations-related knowledge. This knowledge is significant for organization’s management and marketing because it can lead to success and competitiveness. So, the retail store managers present useful informational sources for retail management (Teller & Alexander, 2014). Since the store managers are responsible for the overall store performance and operations strategy (Lynn & Kenneth. R, 2013), they might also have an essential role in planning the achieving business targets while establishing a commitment to sustainability which is defined as the retailing paradox (Carrero & Valor, 2012).

2.4 Summary of literature review: developing a model

The aim of this study is to explore how food retail store managers engage to adopt CSR in the store assortment and how private eco-brands contribute to the green-market development in food retail. Food consumption produces negative impact to environment and therefore the retailers try to influence consumers to make responsible and environmentally friendly food choices (Gunn & Mont, 2014). In relation to that, retailers and manufacturers have various tactics to choose among in order to influence consumers to change their attitudes. Two of them are: adopting product offers and integrating marketing communication messages (Hooker & Souza Monteiro, 2013). The retailers are also creating responsible assortments in order to show their responsible behavior to consumers. The most popular tool used to create responsible assortments is called CSR labeling which is defined as symbols or brand names on the packaging (Carrero & Valor, 2012). Additionally, retailers’ private label brands with ethical attributes like for example: human rights and animal welfare are becoming more and more appreciated by consumers (Bodur et al., 2016).

Moreover, Mont & Chkanikova (2015) state that the retailers are able stimulate the sustainability in both production and consumption practices. Due to their size, they are
effective in affecting the supply chain and influencing the development of a sustainable market in a positive way (Mont & Chkanikova, 2015). In relation to that, Elg and Hultman (2016) highlight that there is an increasing number of retailers who work with CSR activities in order to solve challenging issues with supply chain and strengthen a retailer’s brand (Elg & Hultman, 2016). However, the supermarkets are seen as powerful players which can stimulate sustainability within the stores as well as in the supply chains. Therefore, supermarkets are becoming crucial actors for encouraging sustainable consumption and influencing consumers’ choices (Jones, Hillier, & Comfort, 2011). Moreover, Teller and Alexander (2014) state that retail store managers personate useful informational sources for retail management which might indicate that they also have an important role in promoting sustainable consumption and influencing consumers’ choices.

Thus, this study intends to answer the question: How the managers of food retail stores work to embrace CSR and private eco-brand products in store assortment in order to stimulate green market development? Since the theories used in the theoretical framework define CSR-labels and private eco- brands as the parts of responsible assortment, Figure 1 is designed to demonstrate the purpose of this study and show the link between responsible assortment and green market development.

![Diagram of responsible assortment and its impact on green market development](image.png)

Figure 1: Responsible assortment and its impact on green market development
3. Methodology

The third section describes methodology. This section presents theoretical methodology where research philosophy and approach are discussed. Moreover, this section illustrates empirical methodology where data collection is demonstrated.

3.1 Theoretical Methodology

This section describes research philosophy and critical review of theory used in this study.

3.1.1 Research philosophy

According to Saunders et al. (2009) research philosophy is linked to the way the researcher views the world. Researchers use different strategies and methods but they also have dissimilar views on what is valuable and important. However, there are two leading ways of thinking about research philosophy: ontology and epistemology. Ontology is related to the nature while the epistemology concerns what creates satisfactory knowledge in the chosen field of study (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 108-112).

To begin with, Saunders et al. (2009) state that ontology has two main aspects called objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism symbolizes a point of view that social entities are independent to social actors in reality (p. 110). Additionally, Bryman and Bell (2011) define objectivism as an ontological position which indicates that social phenomena challenge us as external facts that are out of our influence. Moreover, objectivism might be described with an example where an organization could be discussed as the tangible object. It has rules and procedures that guideline people to do things in a proper way. There is a hierarchy and people are employed in order to follow the organizational mission statement. So, the organization might be described as a social order which pressures individuals to do their jobs by following rules, regulations and mission statements. If the employed individuals don’t act in this way, they might be fired. That is why the organization could be defined as a force that controls its members (p. 21).

On the other hand, the alternative ontological position called subjectivism is related to the actions of social actors. It is essential to understand reality in order to analyze the details of the situation. This is related to the phase called constructionism (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 111). Bryman and Bell (2011) stress constructionism as a position which suggests that classifications as organization and culture are pre-given and that is why social actors don’t have a role in fashioning (p. 21).
When it comes to epistemology, the main issue is what should be noticed as acceptable knowledge in a particular field of study. The acceptable knowledge can be divided into three different categories: positivism, interpretivism and realism (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman and Bell, 2011). According to Saunders et al. (2009) positivism is associated with the philosophical position of the natural scientist (p. 114). Positivism involves elements of both deductive and inductive approach. The main function of research is to prove theories and to provide data for the development of laws. However, the link between theory and research implicates that the observations can be collected without the influence of pre-existing theories (Bryman and Bell 2011, p. 15). On the other hand, Saunders et al. (2009) state that interpretivism promotes that it is significant to understand differences between human and social actors. Interpretivism underlines the diversity between doing a study among people and studying the objects. In relation to that, humans portray their social roles depending on the meaning that they give to these roles. According to the interpretivist philosophy it is important to understand the research subjects from their perspective. On the contrary, realism states that there is a reality which is independent of the mind. The main issue here is whether objects exist independently of our awareness of their existence (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 115-116).

Since the purpose of this study is to understand human actions, it can be concluded that this study adheres to interpretivism. According to Saunders et al. (2009) interpretivism focuses on the research about individuals rather than objects. In relation to that, this study focuses on how food retail store managers engage to adopt CSR in their assortment in order to stimulate the development of a green market, which can be understood as human action.

3.1.2 Critical review of choice of theory

In this study journal articles have been used as theoretical support. The search for the relevant articles was done with Kristianstad University’s database called Summon and Google Scholar. The articles used in the literature review were found by entering the following keywords: “CSR in food retail” + “Corporate social responsibility of retailers”+ ”CSR labelling” + “Private eco-brands” + “Private brands” +”Green market development” + “Sustainable market development”.

All selected articles are written in English between 2000-2017. “ABS Academic Journal Guide 2015”, by Association of Business School, was used in order to evaluate the quality of the chosen articles. This journal guide consists of a rating list where the different journals are
graded with five different grades: from 1 to 4*, where 1 is the lowest and 4* is the highest grade. Table 1 presents the grading system by Association of Business Schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Meaning of quality rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4*</td>
<td>Journals of Distinction: high quality journals that are recognized worldwide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Most original and the top journals in their field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Journals that publish well executed and highly regarded research papers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>These journals are regarded in their field and they follow the acceptable standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>In this category, the journals are recognized but they have a citation impact.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The definitions of journal ratings by Association of Business School

34 articles from 15 different journals have been used in this study; 10 of the chosen journals can be found on the ABS Academic Journal Guide’s list. 5 journals used in this study are not ranked by ABS. However, the articles from the journals that are not on ABS’s rating list are considered as relevant for this study by the author and that is why they have been used as well. Table 2 presents the used articles and their ranking according to ABS Academic Journal Guide 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABS rating</th>
<th>Name of the journal</th>
<th>Amount of cited articles</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Journal of Retailing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Business Strategy and Environment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>European Journal of Marketing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>International Marketing Review</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Journal of Business Ethics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Journal of marketing management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>British Food Journal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>Articles that does not exist on the list</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37.8 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Ranks, ABS Academic Journal Guide 2015
The total number of cited articles in this study is 37 (100%); 23 of the cited articles (62.2 %) are from journals that are rated with the ranks presented above while 14 of the cited articles (37.8 %) do not exist in the ABS Academic Journal Guide 2015.

3.2 Empirical Methodology

This section explains how the data is collected and analyzed. Firstly, the choice of methodology and the research strategy are presented. Furthermore, chosen companies are presented and the data collection, interview guide and coding data are illustrated. The reliability, validity and ethical considerations are demonstrated as well. The section is then concluded with a summary.

3.2.1 Choice of methodology

As already mentioned, the purpose of this study is to explore how food retail store managers engage to adopt CSR in their assortment and how private eco-brands contribute to green-market development in food retail. According to Bryman and Bell (2011) there are two types of research methods that could be applied in order to fulfill the purpose of the research: quantitative and qualitative (p.26).

The main difference between these two research methods is that quantitative research emphasizes numbers while the qualitative research gives priority to words as the instruments for analyzing and collecting data (Bryman & Bell 2011, p. 386). In order to fulfill the purpose of this study qualitative data analysis has been chosen and considered as the most appropriate. The qualitative research can be described as concerned with the generation of theories instead of testing the theories. In relation to that, the qualitative research usually underlines an inductive approach (Bryman & Bell 2011, p. 27). Moreover, qualitative research allows rich data collection and the opportunity to explore the subject in as virtual manner as possible. Since the result collected from qualitative research is non-standardized data, it needs to be classified into categories (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 482).

3.2.2 Research Strategy

Saunders we al. (2009) state that there are seven main research strategies: experiment, survey, case study, action research, grounded theory, ethnography, archival research (p. 141). For this study the case study strategy has been chosen. This research strategy includes an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using various sources of evidence. Furthermore, the case study is the suitable research strategy for
the studies that aim to gain a deep understanding of the context of the research and the processes that have been achieved. The case study research strategy is applied to answer the questions: “why?”, “what?” and “how?” and that is why it can be used for both explanatory and exploratory research (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 144-145). Since this is an exploratory study which explores how food retail store managers work with CSR and private eco-brand products in store assortment to stimulate green market development, the case study strategy was considered as relevant and applicable.

### 3.2.3 Chosen companies

Food retail stores are chosen from four towns in the south area of Sweden: Kristianstad, Hässleholm, Höör and Olofström. The reason for choosing stores in different towns is because it might be interesting to compare different food retailers and to see if there are differences in their assortments when private eco-branding products are in case.

The chosen stores are divided in three groups: soft- discounters, hard- discounters and those that are promoting quality at the first place. According to Lamey (2014) soft discounters are offering limited assortment and they are price-aggressive; while the hard-discounters offer even more limited assortment, have lower operational costs and contain the more competitive pricing level than the soft discounters. In addition, Table 3 shows how the stores are divided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soft-discounters</th>
<th>Hard- discounters</th>
<th>Retail stores that are promoting quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willys Hemma, Kristianstad (Owned by Axfood)</td>
<td>Lidl, Kristianstad</td>
<td>Ica Maxi, Hässleholm and Olofström, and Ica Supermarket, Höör</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willys, Olofström (Owned by Axfood)</td>
<td>Lidl, Höör</td>
<td>Coop Konsum, Höör and Coop City, Kristianstad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Chosen food retail stores

The different types of food retail stores are chosen in order to compare different concepts and store assortments.
3.2.4 Presentation of chosen food retail stores

Willys and Willys Hemma

Willys is a retail store chain owned by Axfood AB which is one of the largest food retailers in Scandinavia. Axfood owns two store chains in Sweden called Willys and Hemköp that together include 263 stores (Axfood AB, 2017). Willys is one of the leading soft-discounter’s store chains in Sweden. It has 190 stores and about 6000 employees all over the country. This store chain has a business idea to lead and develop the low-price segment by offering Sweden's cheapest and various food products (Willys, 2017a). Willys is actively working with providing consumers with eco- and CSR products by having low-priced ecological product offerings. Despite the wide and various assortments of ecological products, Willys is also showing involvement by doing other activities which have positive impact on the environment like for example: recycling and reducing the food waste. That is why this food store chain is characterized as “A good environmental choice” (Swedish: “Ett bra miljö val”) (Willys, 2017b). When it comes to Willys Hemma stores, these are described as the sister grocery chain’s stores that are following the same concept as the bigger Willys stores (Willys, 2017a).

Lidl

Lidl is a German grocery store chain which exists in 27 countries and has about 10 000 stores worldwide. This store chain has been existing in Sweden in 13 years with 169 stores and 3600 employees all over the country. Lidl Sweden is, however, a subsidiary of Lidl Stiftung & CO KG that belongs to the Schwarz group. This food retail chain was awarded for being “The Retail chain of the year” in Sweden last year. Lidl is offering food products of high quality to the best possible prices. Stores’ food assortment consists of both Swedish and the international products (Lidl Sverige, 2017a). This food retail chain is actively promoting sustainability and CSR and eco- private labels on their homepage and within the stores. The promotion of sustainability is done with the Lidl’s objective to continue to grow economically and become the industry leader in environmentally and corporate social responsibility (Lidl Sverige, 2017b).

Ica Maxi and Ica Supermarket

Ica Maxi and Ica Supermarket are food retail stores owned by ICA Gruppen AB which is a Swedish retailer. ICA Gruppen AB includes two grocery retailers which are called ICA
Sweden and Rimi Baltic (ICA Gruppen, 2017). Ica has 1400 stores that are placed all over Sweden (ICA, 2017a). As a food retailer, Ica is focusing on food and health by promoting highly qualified food products. The Ica Maxi’s stores are offering help from employees to find the products that are doing everyday life easier. Ica is promoting Swedish meat and fresh vegetables at good prices. This food retailer is working for sustainability and Ica Maxi’s stores are eco-labelled and quality certified according to the Swedish Food Standards Standards (ICA, 2017b). The Ica food retail stores are showing that they care for food safety by promoting high standards of animal care and quality of raw materials and food products. Additionally, Ica requires its suppliers to follow the environmentally friendly standards. In that way, this retailer wants to ensure consumers that the products are good for their health and the environment (ICA, 2017c).

Coop
Coop is the name for the KF’s grocery retail group which includes five retail chains: Coop Forum, Coop Extra, Coop Konsum, Coop Nära and Coop Bygg (Coop, 2017a). There are about 655 Coop stores in Sweden. This retail chain was awarded for being “The most sustainable retail chain of the year” in 2016. Further, Coop’s two private brands called Änglamark and Coop were named as Sweden’s most green private brands (Coop, 2017b). Änglamark, Coop’s private eco-brand is promoting products that are eco-labelled with Krav, Svanen och MSC (Coop, 2017c). Coop is actively working with the promotion of sustainability and ecological products. Therefore, this food retail chain has recently showed a movie called “Ekoeffekten” about ecological meat and its positive impact on human health. More than 6 million individuals have watched this movie and it has been appreciated by consumers. Moreover, one of Coop’s main objectives is to make it easier for consumers to choose food products that are better, healthier and sustainable (Coop, 2017d).

3.2.5 Data collection method
According to Saunders et al. (2009) the main difference between quantitative and qualitative data is that quantitative data is collected from numbers while qualitative data is expressed through words (p.482). Considering the purpose of this study, the chosen method is qualitative with interviews used for data collection. This data collection method is considered as suitable because of the intention to generate knowledge about the research topic and explore how retail stores stimulate sustainable consumption through store assortment. In relation to that, Saunders et al. (2009) state that semi structured interviews might be relevant
to an exploratory study. Furthermore, semi structured interviews are informal in their structure and because of that these interviews are also called unstructured (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 321). In order to fulfill the purpose of this study nine interviews were conducted and they lasted from 30 to 42 minutes (Appendix 1). All interviews were done in Swedish but the collected data was analyzed in English. Moreover, the interviews have been recorded and transcribed. As already mentioned, 9 interviews with the total number of 10 respondents have been conducted. The interviews have been done with eight store managers, one store team manager and one department manager (Appendix 1). Moreover, all interviews have been completed with short observations of CSR and eco-products and labels in the chosen food retail stores, where the pictures of what the stores look like are taken (Appendix 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12). However, all chosen respondents have been working in different types of food retail stores when the interviews were conducted. Table 4 presents the information about chosen respondents and their work places.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent’s working position</th>
<th>Years of experience in food retailing</th>
<th>Food retail store</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Total number of employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The store manager</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Coop Konsum</td>
<td>Hässleholm</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The store team leader</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Willys Hemma</td>
<td>Kristianstad</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The store manager</td>
<td>16 at Ica Maxi</td>
<td>Ica Maxi</td>
<td>Hässleholm</td>
<td>Totally 130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The department manager</td>
<td>17 at Ica Maxi</td>
<td>Ica Maxi</td>
<td>Hässleholm</td>
<td>Totally 130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The store manager</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Coop City</td>
<td>Kristianstad</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The store manager</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Ica Supermarket</td>
<td>Höör</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The store manager</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Lidl</td>
<td>Höör</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The store manager</td>
<td>Many, 19 in Willys</td>
<td>Willys</td>
<td>Olofström</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The store manager</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lidl</td>
<td>Kristianstad</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The store manager</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Ica Maxi</td>
<td>Olofström</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: The information about chosen respondents and their work places
All respondents were asked to participate before the interviews took place. Firstly, email requests were sent to potential respondents. In the beginning the potential respondents were store managers of Willys, Coop City, Coop Konsum Sommarlust, Coop Konsum Vä, Ica Maxi and Ica Kvantum in Kristianstad and store managers of Ica Kvantum and Ica Maxi in Hässleholm. Since only one store manager answered and explained that he could not participate, others were contacted again via phone. However, only two respondents had time to meet me: the store manager of Coop City store in Kristianstad and the store manager of Ica Maxi in Hässleholm. That is why, the store managers from Coop and Ica Maxi in Höör and the store managers from Willys and Ica Maxi on Olofström were contacted via phone and the time for interviews was booked. Moreover, the store manager from Willys Hemma in Kristianstad was also called and accepted to be interviewed by me. When the interview should begin this store manager was prevented to participate and that is why the store team leader was interviewed instead. This respondent was, however, considered as relevant because of his knowledge about CSR and ecological products and long working experience in Willys Hemma. When it comes to Lidl stores, it was difficult to receive mail addresses of store managers when I called Lidl’s call-center. I was, however, recommended to go to the stores in Höör and Kristianstad directly and ask them to participate. So, I went to the Lidl stores and both store managers were willing to be interviewed. Furthermore, the store manager from Ica Maxi in Hässleholm asked me to be interviewed together with his colleague who is the department manager in order to answer the questions in the best way and enable a rich data collection for this study.

3.2.6 Interview guide

This section provides all 40 questions of the interview guide and the explanation about them. The interview guide is divided in 3 parts: Questions about the food store and retail chain, Ecological food products and Private eco-brands (Appendix 1).

**Question about the food store and retail chain**

This part consists of 6 questions that are mainly related to the experience of the food retail store manager and the food store characteristics. These questions are designed with motivation to introduce respondent to the main topic and achieve information about the store (Appendix 1). The first three questions are, however, designed with intention to gain the data about respondent’s experience by asking: “How long have you been working in this store?”,
“How long have you been working as the store manager?” and “How long have you been working in retail?”. Moreover, next two questions aim to introduce the interviewer with the store size and the total number of employees who work there. On the other hand, the sixth question is directly related to the topic of this study. By asking “How would you describe the food store’s work with CSR assortment (e.g. ecological, locally produced products and animal welfare)?”, the interviewer gains insight about store’s CSR assortment and store manager’s knowledge about it.

**Ecological food products**

This part of the interview guide aims to gain data about the ecological food products as a part of the store’s assortment. There are 14 questions about this topic in the interview guide. The first question in this part is: “How do you consider the corporate responsibility of this retail chain when it comes to store’s assortment e.g. aspects like: Swedish meat, locally produced food products and local supply chain?” (Appendix 1). The motivation behind this question is the interview’s willingness to reach the data about retail chain’s social corporate responsibility and the store manager’s opinion about it. However, next two questions are directly linked to the store’s assortment and they aim to gain knowledge about the difference between consumers’ attitudes to ecological products now compared to some years ago when they were introduced to consumers. Further, fourth and fifth question in this part are about the ecological products that the store sells the most and the store manager’s opinion about the reasons why are the mentioned eco-products most sold. The sixth question is: “Do you inform consumers about ecological products and their positive impact on health and environment?”. This question is motivated with the author’s need to achieve the data about the potential information that consumers achieve within the stores about ecological products and their importance. The next question is addition on the sixth question and it has the intention to understand in what way food retailers inform consumers about the positive impact of ecological products.

Furthermore, following questions in this part of the interview guide are also related to ecological products specializing on: do consumers ask about the ecological products and in which product categories do the ecological products exist. These 2 questions are relevant because they enable the interview to understand if the consumers have interest for eco-products and in which categories can ecological alternatives be found. Additionally, the next two questions aim to get further understanding of consumers’ demand for ecological products.
by comparing their preferences now and some years before. Finally, the two last questions are: “Do you sell ecological meat?” and “Do you sell locally produced food products?”. The purpose of these questions is to investigate what kind of ecological products does the store offer. These two questions can be answered with only “yes” or “no” answers and therefore the ecological meat and locally produced products are further discussed in the third part of the interview guide.

**Private eco-brands**

The last part of the interview guide contains of 20 questions (Appendix 1). The first question in this part of interview guide is: “Does this retail chain have private eco-brand?” The first question indicates that this whole part of the interview guide aims to gain the information about private eco-brands. Since the aim of this study is also related to private eco-brands and how they contribute to green-market development in food retail, questions about private eco-brands are necessary for analyzing and comparing different food chains and stores. That is why the next question is: “If yes, which brand/brands is/are that?”. With this question, the interviewer achieves the knowledge about the private eco-brand or brands which also gives the author possibility to illustrate richer analysis of the achieved data. However, the next 2 questions are about other eco-brands and their quantity in the assortment. The fifth question discusses private eco-brand again by questioning the respondent if the own brand is important and why? This question aims to find out the store’s manager opinion about the private eco-brand and its importance. It might be interesting to understand the possible reasons or benefits of having private eco-brand/brands.

In addition, questions 6, 7 and 8 concentrate on who is deciding about the assortment and if the store manager has the freedom to decide about the products on his own. These questions have the interest to achieve information about whether the food store manager has the possibility to affect the choice of products in the assortment. Furthermore, the next three questions are about the suppliers of CSR and locally and farm produced products and who is responsible for taking them into the store’s assortment. Since the consumers attitudes and demand are also important, the next 2 questions are about their understanding of ecological products compared to animal welfare and their preferences to the private eco-brand. The explanation for having these two questions is that they can help the interviewer to explore what the stores’ managers think about how consumers value the private eco-brand.
Considering the fact, that the private eco-brand is a central strategy of retailers the next question is asking how the ecological products are promoted within the stores. This question is linked to marketing of above mentioned products on the store level and that is why this question is valuable for this study. Moreover, next three questions are linked to the store manager opinion about how CSR products and private eco-brand motivate consumers to buy these products. However, the question number 18 is directly related to the purpose of this study and the question “How food retail store managers engage to adopt CSR in their assortment”, which is a part of the research purpose. Thus the question number 18 is designed like this: “What do you use to do in order to affect consumers to buy ecological products?”. Furthermore, last two questions are linked to the impact of ecological products on other products in the assortment. Having this question enables the interviewer to reach the data about consumers’ attitudes to ecological products compared to other products in the store assortment.

3.2.7 Data analyzing – Codes

As already mentioned, the data-collection is done by using semi-structured interviews. All interviews were transcribed with intention to provide a rich analysis. Moreover, coding is used in order to easily present and analyze the collected data. According to Saunders et al. (2009) the collected data could be analyzed by using themes which are helpful in determining where data collection should be focused in the future. In relation to that, the data collected from the interviews is divided in three main themes: CSR in food retail, Responsible assortment and Stimulation of the green market development. Furthermore, every theme is further categorized into two subthemes. This indicates that the axial coding is done as well. Saunders et al. (2009) define axial coding as the process which focuses on the relationship between the categories of collected data that has already appeared. In relation to that, Table 5 presents how the data is coded and categorized.
The category **CSR in food retail** is divided into two subthemes: *Food retail chains’ corporate social responsibility* and *Food store managers’ information*. The subtheme *Food retail chains’ corporate responsibility* is about the store managers’ perception about the retail chain and its CSR activities. The stores’ managers were asked: “What do you think about retail chains’ CSR activities in the store assortment when it comes to the aspects like: ecological food products, locally produced products and animal welfare. The second subcategory, called *Food managers’ information* is created with intention to achieve the knowledge about how informed are store managers about ecological and CSR products. The second category called *Responsible assortment* is divided in two subcategories as well. These are *Ecological and CSR products within the stores* and *Private eco-brands*. The second category is separated with intention to analyze store managers’ answers on the questions about CSR and ecological food products’ offers in stores. The subcategory: *Private eco-brands* is designed to achieve the knowledge about private eco-brands that the stores promote. The third category *Stimulation of the green market development* is divided into two subcategories. The first is called: *Food store managers’ promotion of sustainability*. This subcategory is created with the ambition to analyze the respondents’ answers about their engagement to promote sustainability within the

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3 Responsible assortment is used as a base for sustainability and socially responsible behavior of the retail food stores in this research.
stores and their ability to make changes in already decided promotion practices and the store’s assortment. On the other hand, the second subcategory: *Information about CSR and eco products* is about respondents’ practices to inform consumers about ecological and CSR products.

### 3.2.8 Validity and Reliability

According to Saunders et al. (2009) the data collected by using nonstandardised research methods should not be repeatable because this data is reflecting to the reality of the situation that is the topic of the research. Data for this research is done only for the purpose of this study and every interview was audio recorded and transcribed. According to Saunders et al. (2009) the validity and reliability could be maximized with carefully created questions and carefully designed and executed administration (p. 362). All the questions in this study are carefully designed with the intention to receive the knowledge about the research topic and enable a rich discussion with the respondents.

### 3.3 Summary

This study aims to answer the question: How food retail store managers work to embrace CSR labelled products and private eco-brand products in store assortment to stimulate green market development? In order to answer the research question and fulfill the purpose of this study, 9 semi-structured interviews were done. The participants of this study were 8 store managers, 1 department manager and 1 store team leader. Furthermore, the qualitative research method is considered as suitable because it enables to achieve knowledge about the research topic and write a rich analysis.

In relation to that, the next section presents empirical findings and analysis of the collected data.
4. Empirical Findings and Analysis

In this section the collected data is presented and analyzed by using the concept from the theoretical framework. In order to allow rich analysis the findings are divided into three different food retail stores’ categories: soft discounters, hard discounters and stores that promote quality in their assortments. Furthermore, the whole section is summarized in order to compare retailers’ engagement in different food retail stores.

4.1 CSR in food retail

CSR in food retail is assumed with two subcategories: corporate social responsibility of the different food retail chains and food store managers’ information. The empirical data is analyzed by discussing findings from the soft discounters: 2 Willys stores, the hard discounters: 2 Lidl stores and the stores that promote quality: 3 Ica stores and 2 Coop stores.

4.1.1 Food retail chains’ corporate social responsibility

In order to receive the knowledge about CSR activities of the food retail chains, all 10 respondents were asked the question: “How do you look at the chain's social responsibility regarding the store's assortment, when it comes to the aspects like for example: Swedish meat, organic nutritional products and local suppliers?”. As mentioned by Hartmann et al. (2013) the CSR has become the important concept in the scientific, political and the public area. The term CSR indicates that the retailers have the responsibility for the environmental impact of their activities (Hartmann et al., 2013). Furthermore, Schramm-Klein et al. (2015) state the biggest issue within the food sector is related to food safety. The reason for this can be found in the fact that the food retailers have earlier been involved in animal welfare incidences and critiques about low labor standards (Schramm-Klein et al., 2015). In relation to that, Chanikova and Lehner (2015) state that the governments and non-governmental organizations suggest and expect retailers to behave in socially responsible way but also to stimulate their consumers and supply chains to behave in the same way. Since the retailers are expected to control supply chains and motivate suppliers to behave in socially responsible way, this section is about respondents’ perception and opinion about how different food retail chains control their suppliers. All respondents highlighted that the food retail chains engage in controlling their suppliers of locally and garden produced food products. Since Gunn and Mont (2014) state that the food consumption has a negative environmental impact and that the food retailers can influence consumers’ choice of products by developing their product offers,
this question might be helpful in achieving knowledge about the chain's social responsibility when it comes to the store's assortment, product offers and control of the supply chain.

**The soft discounters- Willys’ stores**

The store team leader at Willys Hemma in Kristianstad highlighted during the interview that Willys works actively with the sustainable products. This is in line with Elg and Hultman (2016) who argue that retailers increase and improve their CSR activities in order to show that they act as good citizens. In addition, Hooker and Souza Monteiro (2013) highlight that food retailers’ CSR strategies develop the goodwill and strengthen the reputation. So, active improvement of retailers’ CSR practices can also be used as competitive tools (Hooker & Souza Monteiro, 2013). Moreover the store team leader stated that Willys want to prevent food waste by trying to carefully order the products that are demanded by consumers. According to this respondent, Willys Hemma is also always trying to provide consumers with Swedish locally produced products. He stated:

“Willys has the willingness to find best environmentally alternatives for consumers.”

The store team leader from Willys in Kristianstad

Moreover, this respondent expounded that they try to receive Swedish produced products. He added that Willys evaluates suppliers and production halls but this store does not have a near relationship with local producers.

On the other hand, the food retail store manager who works at Willys in Olofström said that this store works very much with locally produced fruits, vegetables, meat and egg. He further stated:

“Some suppliers have their farms near to the store in Olofström.”

The food retail store manager from Willys in Olofström

This indicates that this store has a near relationship with the local supply. However, this respondent explained that this food retail chain tries to find engaged suppliers that meet the criteria that Willys requires. As stated in Chanikova and Lehner (2015) the governments and NGOs expect retailers to influence their supply chains to behave in social responsible way. This indicates that Willys wants to meet these expectations by controlling suppliers’ activities.

**The hard discounters- Lidl stores**

When it comes to Lidl, the retail store manager from Kristianstad stated that the corporate social responsibility of this chain has become better and more improved in the last few years.
For example, 5 or 6 years ago this retail chain employed a person who should work with CSR issues. According to the store manager from Lidl in Kristianstad this food retail chain wants to strengthen its reputation in the Swedish market and that is why this retail chain increases CSR activities constantly. This is in line with Schramm-Klein et al. (2015) who state that retailers CSR activities might be both ideological and economical. The store manager from Lidl in Kristianstad added that this store also have locally grown sustainable food products. He also stated that these suppliers are aware that Lidl only wants to have secure food products. The store manager said:

“Lidl has satisfactory partnership with its suppliers and they know that we want to receive good products.”

The food retail store manager from Lidl in Kristianstad

This indicated that Lidl control its supply chain as well. As mentioned by Schramm-Klein et al. (2015) this food retail chain has already been criticized for green – washing which means that they did not really followed CSR massages that they have promoted. That might be a reason why Lidl includes CSR activities that are related to ethical sourcing like for example: sustainable farming (Schramm-Klein et al., 2015).

The store manager from Lidl in Höör explained that this food chain is becoming more and more engaged in the improvement of CSR and ecological product offerings. He stated:

“Lidl develops CSR activities and promotion of CSR and ecological products all the time.”

The food retail store manager from Lidl in Höör

This store manager added that Lidl’s head office improve CSR marketing activities all the time in order to promote and clearly introduce the ecological products to consumers. Furthermore, this respondent explained that he has visited one local farm and looked at salads and vegetables there. This might indicate that the Lidl controls its suppliers in this way. However, this food retail store manager was not able to say more about the local suppliers because the head office takes decision about them.

**Quality promoters- Ica stores**

The food retail store manager who works at Ica Supermarket in Höör stated that the food retail chain Ica does a great job when it comes to CSR practices and products. He added:
“Ica is very good in working with CSR issues but this retail chain is, however, not that good in telling and showing that to consumers.”

The store manager from Ica Maxi in Höör

Moreover, this respondent described that the store in Höör always tries to find local suppliers of the locally grown fruits, vegetables and other fresh goods. The store manager added that this store has regional and local suppliers that deliver strawberries, potato, egg, poultry and sausages. According to him, Ica has smaller local suppliers that deliver only to smaller Ica stores. However, all suppliers are controlled in order to provide the security and safety of food products.

In relation to that, the store manager from Ica Maxi in Hässleholm explained that Ica works a lot with CSR practices in stores’ assortments. According to this store manager, Ica is actively working with the promotion of the Swedish meat. In order to stimulate the consumption of Swedish meat, Ica has the meat campaigns few times a year. The reason for having these campaigns is increased demand for these products. This store manager further explained that Ica has employed a dietitian to work in each Ica Maxi store in the south part of Sweden. He explained the work duties of the employed dietitian by saying:

“The dietitian has the responsibility to visit the store once a month and advise consumers what to eat and how to take care of their bodies.”

The food retail store manager from Ica Maxi in Hässleholm

In relation to that, Elg and Hultman (2016) highlight that retailers who are showing their socially responsible behavior have the possibility to influence consumers’ attitudes and trust in a positive way. So, influencing consumers’ attitudes and their trust might be the reason why Ica hired the dietitian who should inform consumers about the benefits of ecological and sustainable products. Furthermore, Schramm-Klein et al. (2015) state that the retailers show their socially responsible behavior to society in order to present themselves as the good citizens in the marketplace (Schramm-Klein et al., 2015). In relation to that, the store manager explained that animal welfare is an important aspect when talking about the supply chain. He added that it is important that suppliers treat animals in a proper way. That is why some employees that work at Ica Maxi in Hässleholm visit the farms to observe how animals live. The store manager of this store stated that it is important to see whether the farm animals live freely or in the boxes. According to Wiese et al. (2012) focusing on food safety issues and animal welfare sends a constructive massage to consumers which are beneficial for food
retailers. This indicates that retailers’ engagement in food safety and animal welfare issues might have a positive outcome to Ica stores and food retail chain.

Additionally, the food retail store manager from Ica Maxi in Olofström explained that Ica’s head office works very much with the promotion of ecological products. According to the respondent, this food chain has a problem to find the access to CSR and ecological products that are demanded. That is why Ica has decided to become responsible for encouraging producers and locally suppliers to sell ecological products. He explained how Ica wants to motivate suppliers to produce only ecological products by stating:

“There is one thing that Ica has done which I think is really fantastic. Ica told the suppliers that if they start with only ecological farming of food products under three years the Ica will pay the price that they usually get in this market. So, the farmers usually produce and deliver 50 tons of the products and if they deliver only 5 tones the Ica will pay them for 50 tones anyway in three years until they become totally ecological. Because the farming of ecological products needs to last in three years to become classified as ecological farming. If they farm and deliver more than 50 tons of ecological food products Ica will give them a bonus. So they are doing a great job together, Ica and the farmers.”

The food retail store manager at Ica Maxi in Olofström

In relation to that, Wiese and Toporowski (2013) argue that there are many CSR challenges to food retailers in the supply chain because the food products have different origins. The challenge of retailers is, however, to guarantee quality and safety of the food products with different origins (Wiese & Toporowski, 2013). Moreover, the store manager added that Ica promotes the Swedish meat because the animals in Sweden are treated in a good way. This indicates that Ica consider animal welfare as the important aspect of corporate social responsibility.

**Quality promoters – Coop stores**

According to the food store retail manager from Coop Konsum in Höör Coop was the first food retail chain that began to sell and promote ecological products. He also added that the Coop has been working with ecological products in the longest time period compared to its competitors in Sweden. According to Gunn and Mont (2014) the retailers can improve the green image by offering sustainable products. In relation to that, the food store manager at Coop Konsum in Höör stated that Coop’s head office is regulating procurement, animal controls and other controls to insure the quality of the products that this retail chain is offering. According to Wiese et al. (2012) the retailers who are engaged in food safety issues send positive messages to their consumers. This indicates that the retailers have a big interest
in insuring food safety and animal welfare (Wiese et al., 2012). However, when it comes to
the supply chain the store manager explained:

“The local supply chain needs to fulfill Coop’s criteria before they start with products’
delivery… Coop requires locally suppliers to have the certificates and documentation
that ensure food safety and prove products’ quality.”
The food retail store manager from Coop Konsum in Höör

According to this respondent it is also important that the suppliers show how they take care of
food products and provides food products’ security. This store manager added that Coop
protects its brand and reputation in this way. In fact, both Schramm-Klein et al. (2015) and
Hooker and Souza Monteiro (2013) highlight that social responsible activities of retailers
really affect the reputation in the positive way and create the image of good corporate
citizens.

In relation to that, the food retail store manager from Coop City in Kristianstad stated that
this store has local suppliers of CSR products like for example meat, ham and some drinks.
The store manager from Coop City also said that there are some food products that are
produced at the farms or gardens. Additionally, tis respondent disclosed:

“The Coop has generally been called for “The Green Coop” (Gröna Coop).”
The food store manager from Coop City in Kristianstad

This might indicate that this retail chain has offered green and eco products in the stores’
assortments. According to this respondent, the retail chain Coop is trying to offer only
Swedish products especially when it comes to meat. This food retail store is also promoting
their local supply chain in order to encourage consumers to buy Swedish food products.

4.1.2 Food store managers’ information

Since the aim of this study is to explore how food retail store managers engage to adopt CSR
in their assortment, it might be interesting to discover how informed are food retailer
managers about the ecological and CSR products. That is why, all respondents were asked to
describe if they achieve information about the benefits of these products from the retail
chain’s head office.

Most of the respondents stated that the food retail store managers’ have information about
CSR and ecological products available on both intern and extern food retail chain’s
homepage. So, the store managers should show personal engagement and interest to learn and
read more about these products. In relation to that, Piacentini et al. (2000) define retailers’ engagement in CSR issues as the only right business goal, which can be helpful to show that the retailers act in line with legal, ethical and moral conducts.

However, in the most food retail stores that were visited, the stores managers were not required to be informed about the benefits of CSR and ecological products. Some of the respondents had, however, the opinion that this amount of information was not enough. For example, the food retail store manager from Ica Maxi in Olofström stated:

“We do not receive enough information about the importance of ecological and CSR products. But, the employees or the stores’ managers who are interesting in that can find all the information on the intern webpage. I think that the employees must read about this topic on their own initiatives. I don’t believe they are sending information from the head office, because it should be too much information.”

The food retail store manager, Ica Maxi in Olofström

However, all participants agreed that they receive information about actual CSR and ecological products that could be offered to consumers. For example, the store team leader of Willys Hemma in Kristianstad described the information that employees in this food retail store receive, by saying:

“We are constantly receiving information about which sustainable products are working well as products’ offers right now.”

The store team leader, Willys Hemma in Kristianstad

Furthermore, the retail store manager from Coop Konsum in Höör explained that Coop allows intern training to employees where the importance of sustainable, CSR and eco products is described. Nevertheless, his colleague from the same food retail store in Kristianstad did not mention this training while answering the question. This store manager agreed with other respondents who said that store managers, who are interesting in CSR and sustainable products, can look for the information about them on the intern webpage.

4.2 Responsible assortment

As already showed in the Figure 1 the theories relate creation of responsible assortment to the green market development. In order to achieve rich analysis of empirical findings about the responsible assortment this section is divided in two parts: Ecological and CSR products within the stores, Private eco- brands and- CSR and eco labels.
4.2.1 Findings about ecological and CSR products within the stores

As already mentioned, Carrero and Valor (2012) relate the corporate responsibility in retail with both external and internal dimensions of CSR which are the retailer’s environment, the marketplace, the community and the workplace. Since the internal dimensions of CSR include activities within retailers’ workplace (Carrero & Valor, 2012), it might be interesting to analyze responsible assortment in chosen food retail stores. That is why all respondents were asked to explain which ecological and CSR products do they offer within the stores. The respondents were also asked to say how long have these products been offered to consumers within the stores.

Soft discounters - Willys stores

When it comes to Willys Hemma in Kristianstad the store team leader explained that this store puts a big focus on ecological products. He stated:

“Willys has the requirement that at least two products in every product group should be ecological or environmentally friendly.”

The store team leader from Willys hemma in Kristianstad

The respondent added that the totally amount of ecological products in assortment has increased 10-30% in the last two years. Willys Hemma has increased offerings of ecological milk because the consumers are willing to pay a higher price when buying this product. Also, the consumers’ survey has shown that the consumers are more interested to buy eco-products and that is why these products present the important aspect of this store’s assortment. Since the consumers’ interest for buying ecological and sustainable products has grown, the store has increased its marketing practices where the development of sustainable market is in focus. As mentioned in Schramm-Klein et al. (2015) the retailers are increasing their efforts on CSR activities because these activities have a positive impact on their reputation. In relation to that Wiese and Toporowski (2013) state that implementation of good management practices improves the success of the companies as well. This indicates that Willys Hemma could influence its reputation and success in a positive way because this store improve and increase marketing practices all the time. However, the team leader could not decide which product is the best sold ecological product in the store but he agreed that ecological fruits and vegetables are very popular choice of consumers. According to Dangelico & Pujari (2010) green or sustainable products are defined as important factors in achieving better life-quality. So that might be a reason why consumers buy ecological or sustainable fruits and vegetables most.
In relation to that, the food retail store manager who works at Willys in Olofström also stated that the amount of ecological products increased in the last 5-6 years. This store manager explained that there are many ecological and CSR food products in this store’s assortment. This respondent added that the consumers are aware about the benefits of these products. According to him, that is why the consumers’ demand for these products has increased. However, the ecological bananas are the most popular choice of the consumers in this store when it comes to the ecological and CSR products. He said:

“Bananas are ecological food products that we sell the most… we also sell ecological fruits and vegetables, from oranges to broccoli… So fruits and vegetables are best-selling ecological food products.”

The food retail store manager from Willys in Olofström

The store manager added that the store receives new food products all the time and that these products’ demand is good in this store. Nevertheless, ecological meat is still not so demanded by consumers. The store manager explained this by saying that the price of ecological meat, compared to non-ecological meat products is still too high. The respondent stated, however, that he believes that the ecological meat will become more popular consumers’ choice in the next few years. He also said that this store offers mainly Swedish meat.

**Hard discounters- Lidl stores**

The food retail store manager from Lidl in Höör explained that this store offers many ecological food products. This store manager also stated that the amount of CSR and ecological products increases all the time. According to him, this store started with ecological food products’ offerings few years ago. He added that these products were not popular at all in the beginning. He stated:

“In the beginning when the ecological products came it was just annoyed because nobody wanted to buy them. So, we just threw them away. It was more frustration then but we have discovered and developed these products more and more. Today we are selling these products much more than we sold in the beginning.”

The food retail store manager from Lidl in Höör

However, according to this store manager the most popular ecological food products in this store are fruits. He stated that the reason for this might be good quality of these food products.

Moreover, the food retail store manager from Lidl in Kristianstad explained that the ecological bananas are best sold in this food retail store. According to this store manager consumers choose ecological alternative even though this store offers both ecological and
non-ecological bananas. This is in line with Carrero and Valor (2012) food retailers’ corporate social responsibility is not only the way to become different than competitors but also to meet the demand from market and society. However, the store manager added:

“The consumers buy ecological products more when they are on campaigns or special offers.”
The food retail store manager from Lidl in Kristianstad

As Elg and Hultman (2016) state, the irresponsible behavior of retailers has negative effect on consumers. On the other hand, consumers do not always reward retailers’ CSR activates and initiatives (Elg & Hultman, 2016). So, even though the consumers demand and want ecological products, they are still not always willing to buy them if they need to pay high price. This is in line with Puopolo et al. (2015) who argue the consumers need more time to understand that the environmentally friendly products cost more than the other products because their price covers the additional environmental effort.

**Quality promoters- Ica stores**

The food retail store manager from Ica Supermarket in Höör stated that this store has been offering CSR and ecological products in many years. This store manager explained that the amount of these products increases continuously. He added:

“We are actively working with our assortment and having the ecological product alternatives is an important part of our assortment.”
The food store manager from Ica Supermarket in Höör

This respondent also said that bananas are most sold ecological products. According to him, this store offers non-ecological bananas as well. However, the store manager from this store explained that more consumers choose ecological alternative of these food products.

Furthermore, the store manager from Ica Maxi in Olofström explained that the amount of ecological and CSR food products has increased in the last few years. He gave example for this by saying:

“Few years ago we had 50-60 ecological products in store’s assortment. This number is increasing all the time. Today, we achieve 4 to 500 new ecological products. So, we are searching for ecological products all the time but it is hard to find them in the supply chain.”
The food retail store manager from Ica Maxi in Olofström
This store manager also explained that the fruits and vegetables are best-selling ecological food products. According to this respondent these ecological products are placed next to each other’s and their pieces are going up and down all the time.

Moreover, the store manager from Ica Maxi in Hässleholm stated that the supply and demand of ecological and CSR products have increased recently. His colleague, the department manager from the same store explained that the store has 170 ecological and CSR products in the assortment. However, the CSR and ecological products that are best sold in this store are organic peanut butter and the organic coconut oil. The store manager and the department manager from Ica Maxi in Hässleholm described that these products are best sold because the price difference between them and non-ecological alternatives is not big.

**Quality promoters- Coop stores**

The food retail store manager from Coop Konsum in Höör explained that Coop was first retail store chain that began to sell and promote ecological products. He also added that the Coop has been working with ecological products in the longest time period compared to its competitors in Sweden. However, the respondent said:

“There has been only a small amount of ecological products when the store started selling them.”

The food retail store manager from Coop Konsum in Höör

This respondent added that the amount of ecological products in Coop’s assortment has increased rapidly in the last few years. This is in line with Vukasovic (2013) who states that the food consumers are showing increased interests in safety and quality of purchased food products. In relation to that, Puopolo et al. (2015) highlight that the consumers expect companies to implement sustainable managerial practices even though they do not always choose eco-friendly products. He added that the best-selling ecological product in this store is milk. The respondent’s opinion is that this product is best sold because price difference between non-ecological and ecological milk is not big. He continued by saying that many consumers buy a liter or two liters milk for a whole week and if the price difference is not big than it is easier to choose the better product which is additionally produced in Sweden.

Additionally, the food store manager from Coop City in Kristianstad explained that the consumers ask more about ecological products and that their awareness about CSR and eco-products has increased. However, according to this store manager the ecological food products that are best sold in Coop City in Kristianstad are bananas. The respondent stated:
“We are selling only ecological bananas.”
The food retail store manager from Coop City in Kristianstad

This store manager explained that Coop City offers only ecological bananas because these ecological products cost the same as their non-ecological alternative. This respondent stated that many consumers want to buy ecological products but the price is still important factor which influences their buying decision. He also stated that the price level for some ecological products is still too high, so this food retail store almost does not sell them at all.

4.2.2 Private eco- brands and CSR and eco-labels

According to Chkanikova and Lehner (2015) the food retailers are increasing marketing activities that are beneficial for development of the green market. One of the tools is private eco-branding which is helpful in reaching higher market shares by having product differentiation based on sustainability attributes (Chkanikova & Lehner, 2015). That is why all respondents were asked about private eco-brands of chosen food retail chains: Willys, Lidl, Ica and Coop.

Furthermore, Carrero and Valor (2012) define CSR labeling as one tool that retailers use for creation of the responsible assortment. One criterion of CSR labels includes environmental (planet), social justice (people) and animal welfare (animals) aspects that are also called “the issue covered”. The other criterion is CSR labels’ quality which is determined by International Organization for Standardization (ISO). In relation to that, eco-labels belong to the first type of CSR labels (Carrero & Valor, 2012). For that reason the respondents were also asked about CSR and eco-labels and their importance.

Soft discounters- Willys stores

The respondent from Willys store in Kristianstad said that Willys has private ecological brand which is called Garant. This store team leader said that the assortment consists of 35-45% of Garant ecological products but the store is also offering ecological products that belong to other ecological brands such as: KRAV. According to him, the private eco-brand is important for the store because it enables lower prices on eco-products and the control of the supply chain. This is in line with Chkanikova and Lehner (2015) who highlight the branding as crucial for achieving higher profits by lowering manufacturing and promotion costs. Moreover, the store team leader from Willys Hemma further explained that private eco-brand is also important because it guarantees that the consumers receive the best possible ecological
products. This might be beneficial for Willys because, as Vukasovic (2013) states consumers are becoming more and more interested in the food production practices and the quality of food product. In relation to that, the store team leader from Willys Hemma in Kristianstad described marketing of the ecological products within the store like this:

“We have green and ecological labels that are helping consumers to easy find ecological products on the store’s shelves. We have also special offers where we try to put ecological products in focus. So that is what we do within the store.”

The store team leader, Willys Hemma in Kristianstad

This indicates that Willys Hemma uses eco-labels as marketing tools because they help this store to increase consumer attention. In relation to that, both Chkanikova and Lehner (2015) and Carrero and Valor (2012) highlight that consumers appreciate CSR and eco-labelled products. So it can be said that the CSR and eco-labelled products provide benefits to food retailers because these products are valued by consumers.

Moreover, the food retail store manager from Willys in Olofström stated that this store uses CSR and eco-labels in order to mark and promote CSR and ecological products that the store offers. In addition, this store manager described Garant as the private brand that consists of both ecological and non-ecological food products. According to this respondent the Willys does not have any private brand that offers only ecological products. Nevertheless, Willys also offers many others eco and environmentally friendly brands. This indicated that Willys tries to influence consumers to buy environmentally friendly food. According to Gunn and Mont (2014) the retailers try to influence consumers to make responsible choices because the food consumption has a negative impact to the environment.

**Hard discounters- Lidl stores**

The respondent from Lidl in Kristianstad stated that this food retail chain has its private eco-brand called, Biotrend. According to this store manager, Biotrend comprises mainly ecological fruits and vegetables. As Coelho do Vale and Matos (2017) stated private labels are helpful in reaching differentiation and consumers’ loyalty. So, Lidl could differentiate its assortment by having private brand Biotrend which offers environmentally friendly products. The store manager further explained that this store also offers other environmentally friendly products that are KRAV-labelled. However, the respondent stated that the store has most eco-labelled products in fruits and fridge products. He stated:
“…Eco and CSR labels comprise about 10% of this store’s assortment.”
The food retail manager from Lidl in Kristianstad

As Souza- Monteiro and Hooker (2017) state, the retailers have the opportunity to profit by harmonizing CSR and marketing strategies and manage them to meet consumers’ and shareholders’ interests. This indicates that the eco-labels enable Lidl to have win-win situation by increasing profits and creating the image of the good corporate citizen.

Furthermore, the store manager from Lidl in Höör also stated that Lidl has private eco-brand which is called Biotrend. Additionally, the food retail manager from Lidl in Höör stated that this food retail store also has eco and CSR- labelled product. He gave example by stating:

“All fish is CSR- labelled in this store.”
The food retail store manager from Lidl, Höör

This store manager added that CSR and eco-labels exist most in the fridge products. This store offers environmentally food products and meat as well. The respondent added that the store increases ecological meat products’ offerings constantly.

**Quality promoters- Ica stores**

The food retail store manager from Ica Supermarket in Höör stated that Ica has the private eco-brand called *I love eco*. This respondent explained that the store receives new food products that are labelled with this eco brand every month. This respondent also stated that eco labels contribute to corporate social responsibility of this Ica store and motivate consumers to buy ecological food products. He stated:

“The CSR and eco-labels send clear and important messages to consumers. They are the signals that the products are ecological… So these labels are good and important.”
The food retail store manager from Ica Supermarket in Höör

This respondent further explained that Ica’s head office suggests the store to have 10% of the ecological products in store’s assortment. The store manager also stated that private eco-brand is important because it enables lower prices. He added that Ica has not been known as low-cost store and that is why it might be important to have the ecological products that are not so expensive. According to store manager this is beneficial for the store because it can increase profits.

In addition, the food retail store manager from Ica Maxi in Olofström also highlighted *I love eco* as Ica’s private-eco brand. This respondent said that *I Love eco* products comprise 5-10%
of the Ica’s assortment. He added that private eco-brand is important because it helps Ica to become stronger in the market. This is in line with, Chkanikova and Lehner (2015) who argue that private branding could be used in order to develop competitive market strategy. Additionally, the store manager stated that CSR and private eco-labels motivate consumers to buy ecological products. According to him, it is important to have CSR and eco-labels because they help consumers to find ecological products.

In addition, the store manager from Ica Maxi in Hässleholm stated that Ica has the private eco-brand called I love eco. This respondent describes the importance of having I love eco and other eco-brands in the assortment by saying:

“When consumers buy these products they can eat them without worries, so to speak. We are following Ica’s recommendations and guidelines and the recommendations from The Food Administration and other organizations what we trust.”
The food retail store manager at Ica Maxi in Hässleholm

Moreover, the department store manager explained that eco-labels influence consumers to buy ecological products. He stated that this Ica store has eco-themes sometimes which also have intention to promote eco-labelled products to consumers and motivate them to buy ecological products. However, the store manager added that the store designs these eco-themes periodically, because the store has to respect that there are consumers that do not want to buy eco-labelled products. In relation to that, De Chiara (2016) defines those eco-labelled products as the result of a sustainable differentiation strategy. Therefore, eco-labelled products are not addressed to the whole market (De Chiara, 2016). As the store manager from Ica Maxi in Hässleholm explained, this store offers eco-labelled food products but respect the choices of the consumers who do not prefer those products.

Quality promoters- Coop stores

According to the retail food store manager from Coop City in Kristianstad Coop also has private eco-brand which guarantees safety ecological products. This brand is called Änglamar. In relation to that, Bodur et al. (2016) state that consumers appreciate private labelled brands which include ethical attributes, like for example: environmentally friendly products and natural ingredients. The respondent said, however, that all eco-products are clearly eco-labelled within this store. He said:

“Eco labels are used as the marketing activity within the store which helps consumers to find ecological products.”
The food retail store manager from Coop City in Kristianstad
Since the eco labels are used as marketing activity which should help consumers to find them, it can be concluded that these products increase consumers’ attention within this store. This is in line with Schramm-Klein et al. (2015) who state that product offers that include eco-private labels increase consumers’ attention and show that the retailers behave in socially responsible way (Schramm-Klein et al., 2015).

The store manager of Coop Konsum in Höör stated that this store promotes Coop’s private eco-brand, Ånglamark. This respondent described that 70% of store’s assortment consists of ecological products that are both the products from Ånglamark and other ecological products which are, for example, KRAV-labelled. However, he illustrated Ånglamark by saying:

“Ånglamark is the brand which is well known by consumers and it guarantees the quality of eco-products.”

The food retail store manager from Coop Konsum in Höör

This might indicate that this eco-brand is important for this store because it ensures the products’ quality to consumers. The store manager further explained that using eco-labels and showing them on the store shelves present the primary marketing and promotion activity within this store. According to this respondent fruit and vegetables section has green marks and eco-labels which show that the marked products are green or ecological.

4.3 Stimulation of the green market development

This study aims to explore how food retail store managers engage to adopt CSR in their assortment and how private eco-brands contribute to green-market development in food retail. As showed in the Figure 1, the responsible assortment which is discussed above has a positive impact on the green market development. In order to analyze the green market development within the food retail stores, this section is divided in two parts: Food store managers’ promotion of sustainability and Retail store managers’ perceptions on consumers’ attitudes toward CSR and eco-products.

4.3.1 Food store managers’ promotion of sustainability

According to Chkanikova and Lehner (2015) the development of the sustainable market presents a challenge for food retailers. That is why, the retailers increase the promotion of sustainability in production and consumer practices (Chkanikova & Lehner, 2015). Since, the supermarkets have the power to encourage sustainability within the stores (Jones et al., 2011), all participators were asked the questions related to their engagement in the green market
development within the stores. Furthermore, Zairis (2013) states that the store managers’ primary activities depend on the areas of responsibility and the authority that managers have to accomplish their work. In order to achieve a deeper understanding about the respondents’ authority and ability to stimulate the promotion of green market development, the store managers were also asked if they have the freedom to actually make changes in the promotion practices and the store’s assortment. The questions: “Is the store’s assortment previously determined by the head office or can you as a manager make some changes?” and “The private labels belong to the central strategy, but what do you do to promote the private labelled products in the store?, were asked in order to understand how able are the store managers actually to stimulate the green market development.

**Soft discounters- Willys stores**

The team leader from Willys Hemma in Kristianstad explained that there are CSR and eco-labels within this store which are used as marketing practices. This participator has also mentioned that the employees try to highlight the ecological products on the store shelves and to have special offers on them. According to this respondent, the store’s assortment and marketing practices are directly decided by frontline managers. The respondent also explained that the store manager and other employees cannot fully make decisions about the promotion and offerings of the sustainable products.

Moreover, the food retail store manager from Willys in Olofström stated that the ecological products are promoted by making them more visible on the store shelves. This respondent also explained that Willys from Olofström offered the possibility to consumers to taste these products in the store some time ago, but these offers do not exist anymore. However, the food retailer store manager added that all ecological products are marked with green labels and that the marketing of these products is also done with flyers. This respondent also explained that he needs to follow decisions about the promotions of CSR and eco-labeled products that are previously made by retail chain’s front managers. So, the store manager does not have a freedom to decide about sustainable assortment or the promotion of sustainable products. He can, however make some small changes and slightly adopt the product offerings to consumers’ needs.
**Hard discounters- Lidl stores**

The food retail store manager from Lidl in Kristianstad stated that he listens to the Lidl’s head office which determinates all marketing practices. So, according to this respondent he does not have a freedom to decide about marketing activities within the stores. He explained, however, that the eco-labelling is mostly used as the marketing tool within the store. He stated:

“In the store consumers can receive ecological and Swedish food products. The eco-labels are used in order to show these products to consumers. The marketing of these products is done by social media as well.”

The food retail store manager from Lidl in Kristianstad

The store manager also stated that Lidl’s private eco-brand is already well known by consumers. According to the respondent that is the reason why Lidl has decreased its marketing activities. However, Hooker and Souza Monteiro (2013) state that retailers have the possibility to adopt their marketing tactics by communication messages. The fact that Lidl has decreased its marketing activities might indicate that this food retail chain does not utilize this possibility. Additionally all promotion practices and the decisions about locally produced and CSR products are made by Lidl’s head office in Stockholm. The store managers doesn’t have the freedom to make any decisions or suggestions about the promotion of the green market development.

On the other hand, the food retail store manager from Lidl in Höör stated that this store does not have special marketing activities that promote ecological products. According to this respondent all ecological fruit has the same sale-place which is marked with ecological labels. According to the store manager these labels are helpful for consumers to easy find ecological products. This indicated that the eco-labelling is mostly used marketing tool within this store. The respondent added that all promotional and marketing practices are decided at the head office as well at the assortment and private eco-labels. The store manager concluded that he only follows the instructions without further suggestions or recommendations.

**Quality promoters- Ica stores**

The store manager from Ica Supermarket in Höör stated that it is important that ecological products are seen in the store. According to this respondent this store’s employees are actively planning where to place ecological products. He said:
“We are planning where to place ecological products within the store. Some of them should have a low price; some of them should inspire consumers so that they think it is interesting... But we will place and promote the ecological food products and increase the consumers’ attention.”

The food retail store manager from Ica Supermarket in Höör

This respondent also said that the eco-labels are also used in order to help consumers to easy find ecological products. According to this respondent, it is also crucial that these well planned sell places of eco-products increase consumers’ attention and motivate them to by these food products. The store manager explained that he has the ability to change the assortment and store’s promotional practices but he is, however, following Ica’s recommendations. This food chain enables support and cost savings because the store does not need additional employees that plan the assortment and promotional practices.

However, the food retail store manager from Ica Maxi in Olofström explained that eco-labels are green and visible for consumers. This respondent stated that the eco-labels are used as the way to motivate consumers to buy the ecological products. The store manager explained that he has the freedom to decide about CSR and locally produced products and the promotion of them but he is, however, required by Ica to ensure that those products fulfill Ica’s food quality requirements.

The marketing and promotion of the sustainable products in Ica Maxi in Hässleholm is done in different ways, according to the food retail store manager from this store. This respondent stated that this store has the activity called “Maxi Kitchen” 4 times a week. According to the store manager this activity enables consumers to try the sustainable and ecological products. Furthermore, the store manager of Ica Maxi in Hässleholm added that the store has other activity called “Farmers’ days” which is focused on promotion of food products from the local supply. The store manager stated that he can partly influence the store assortment and the promotion of the sustainable products but this Ica store is mainly following determents from Ica’s head office.

**Quality promoters- Coop stores**

The food retail store manager from Coop Konsum in Höör explained that the head office has the responsibility to determinate base assortment but the food store manager has also freedom to decide and order some products that are demanded from consumers. In relation to that, the store manager from Coop Konsum in Höör disclosed:
“We have the special offers on ecological products every week.”

The food retail store manager from Coop Konsum in Höör

According to this store manager, discounts should stimulate ecological consumption and motivate consumers to buy eco-products. Moreover, this respondent stated that ecological and socially responsible products exist in almost all product categories. According to Dangelico & Pujari (2010) the green market is rapidly growing. Since the sustainable products are seen as important for reaching sustainability and a better life-quality (Dangelico & Pujari, 2010), the consumers’ demand for these products is continuously increased (Clark et al., 2014). This might indicate that Coop Konsum promotes sustainability and tries to meet the consumers’ demand by offering ecological and sustainable products. Additionally, this participator described that there is a big difference in ecological product offering today compared to time when Coop started to promote and sell ecological products. The store manager further explained that the Coop had a problem with ecological product offerings because there have been copies of ecological products which do not exist anymore.

However, the respondent from Coop City in Kristianstad disclosed that the marketing of ecological products within this store is not developed enough. He also said that the store has advertising campaigns for eco-products sometimes and that the ecological products are clearly eco-labelled. This retail store manager has the freedom to decide which ecological products should be ordered as well. Nevertheless, he said that he thinks mostly about price when determining what ecological products to order.

4.3.2 Retail store managers’ perceptions on consumers attitudes toward CSR and eco-products

One of the questions directly related to the purpose of this study was: “Do you inform consumers about eco-products and their meaning for the environment and individual health in some way?” All respondents were also asked about consumers attitudes towards ecological products. These questions might be relevant because Gunn and Mont (2014) state that the retailers have an opportunity to improve the green image and affect consumer attitudes in a positive way. Furthermore, Elg and Hultman (2016) highlight that the retailers who show their responsible behavior have an opportunity to influence consumers’ attitudes and trust in a positive way.
**Soft discounters - Willys stores**

The team leader from Willys Hemma in Kristianstad explained that the consumers are showing more interest for ecological and CSR products. However, he stated that there are some groups of consumers that are showing more interest than the other consumers groups that are still not always willing to buy eco- and CSR products. He said:

“There are consumers that buy nothing but ecological products while the others buy ecological food products if they taste better than their non-ecological alternatives.”

The store team leader from Willys Hemma in Kristianstad

The respondent added that this store constructed a consumer survey which showed that ecological product offers are important for consumers. The store team leader explained that Willys Hemma informs consumers about ecological products by using CSR and eco-labels within the store. According to this respondent, the consumers can also receive information about these products on the store’s homepage.

The store manager from Willys in Olofström stated that there are more and more younger consumers who are asking and seeking ecological products. According to this respondent, the consumers’ attitudes have changed in the last few years. He stated:

“Some years ago there were only few consumers that were asking about ecological bananas, for example... Today the consumers are buying ecological bananas very much and the price difference is not so high. Fruits and vegetables are very popular and that is cool!”

The food retail store manager from Willys in Olofström

The respondent also stated that the demand for ecological products has increased in the last few years. However he added that the consumers do not receive information about the importance of ecological products for the health and environment within this store. He said that Willys informs consumers by sending flyers with information about the products to them. According to the store manager this store is informing consumers about ecological products by marking eco-products clearly on the store’s shelves.

**Hard discounters - Lidl stores**

The store manager from Lidl in Kristianstad stated that that the interest for ecological products has increased drastically in the last 10 years. He stated:
“I cannot remember that I received question about ecological products 10 years ago.”
The food retail store manager from Lidl in Kristianstad

This respondent added that he can receive the questions about ecological products every week nowadays. He said that consumers find non ecological products and ask for their ecological alternative. He store manager also stated that the ecological food products offerings can influence consumers in a positive way.

On the other hand, the store manager from Lidl in Höör stated that consumes’ attitudes have not changed that much in the last few years. However, he added that the consumers demand for ecological products has increased. According to the respondent this is a positive change. The store manager further explained that the price is still important factor. He said that if the price of the eco-alternative is high then they choose a non-eco-alternative instead. Nevertheless, the respondent describes that consumers do not receive the information about ecological and CSR products within the store. The store manager also stated that the information about these products exist in the week products’ flyers constantly.

**Quality promoters- Ica stores**

The store manager from Ica Supermarket in Höör explained that this store informs consumers about CSR labelled and ecological products by using the flyers. The respondent added that they do not do anything actively to inform consumers about the benefits of these products. According to this respondent Ica Supermarket is organizing consumers’ night, where the employees discuss store’s assortment with consumers. The ecological and CSR labelled products are discussed on these meeting with consumers as well. According to the respondent, these meetings with the consumers are done twice a year. When it comes to consumers’ attitudes toward CSR labelled and ecological food products, the store manager explained that the consumers seek these products more and more. In relation to that, this respondent stated:

“The consumers use to ask us to receive new ecological alternatives. So, we receive the requests from consumers about new ecological products often.”
The store manager from Ica Supermarket in Höör

This respondent added that consumers who are interesting in buying only ecological products are very informed about the importance of these products. The respondent added that these consumers know which ecological products are new and actual. According to this store manager, these consumers also give suggestions to the store when it comes to improvement of their ecological assortment.
The store manager from Ica Maxi in Olofström said that this store does not inform consumers that much about the benefits of ecological products. However, the store manager described that the store uses direct marketing activities and informs consumers about the importance about CSR labelled and ecological products with the flyers. The respondent added that consumers ask about new ecological products almost every week. In relation to that, the store manager stated:

“If there is some new ecological product, it has to be on the store shelf direct. So the consumers not need to ask and seek them.”

The store manager from Ica Maxi in Olofström

Nevertheless, this respondent stated that the store should do more in order to inform consumers about the benefits of these products. The respondent added that there are many marketing activities and programs that could be established. The store manager also explained that consumer relate ecological products with animal welfare. This might indicate that consumers are, however, not informed enough about the ecological products and their importance.

The store manager from Ica Maxi in Hässleholm stated that the already mentioned dietitian inform consumers about ecological products to some extent. The respondent added that consumers’ interest about ecological products is increasing all the time. The department manager agreed by stating:

“There is a big difference in consumers’ attitudes toward ecological products today compared to the time when the Ica Maxi started to promote them. The price is lower which increases the demand of ecological products.”

The department manager from Ica Maxi in Hässleholm

In relation to that, the store manager added that the consumers are more curious about ecological products now. This respondent stated that some consumers come to the store with the information about new products and suggest Ica Maxi to receive and promote them in the store assortment.

**Quality promoters- Coop stores**

The food retail manager from Coop Konsum in Höör answered this question about informing consumers by saying:

“It is often done through our flyers or with our magazine that we send to our members and so on. There you can receive a lot of information about products, news, why we sell some products and so on. And then we have some advertising here in the store as well. However, consumers receive most information in this way.”

The food retail store manager from Coop Konsum in Höör
This respondent added that the consumers’ interest for ecological products is increasing. However, this respondent said that the consumers’ attitudes can be negatively affected by the price. The store manager described that the ecological products are still perceived as expensive by consumers. The respondent stated further that if the consumers compare prices of ecological and non-ecological products they will see that there is not so big difference between them anymore.

The store manager from Coop City in Kristianstad explained that the consumers are most informed by media and newspapers nowadays. The respondent stated that the consumers’ attitudes changed in the last few years because the consumers’ awareness increased. The store manager added that the store does not inform consumers about CSR labelled and ecological products. In relation to that, this respondent stated:

“We are not doing very much in the store….But there are many information about ecological products on our homepage”

The store manager from Coop City in Kristianstad

The store manager added that it is, however, important to help the consumers to make a right choice. This respondent highlighted that the consumers could receive more information in this store. Nevertheless, according to the store manager the consumers are asking about ecological products. The respondent explained that the consumers that prefer to buy ecological products ask more often about them.

4.4 Summary

The section is summarized by comparing different food retail stores and the findings about two main categories: CSR in food retail, Responsible assortment and the Stimulation of the green development.

The respondents from Willys stores from both Kristianstad and Olofström stated that Willys works actively with the adaptation of the sustainable activities within the store. However, Willys in Olofström has a near relationship with locally suppliers. This enables the store to control the production practices of the supply chain. The control of the supply chain is expected of the governments, NGOs and academia. That is why the retailers should influence the suppliers to behave in a social responsible manner (Chkanikova & Lehner, 2015). The respondent from Willys Hemma explained that this tore is engaging in the control of the supply chain as well. However, this store does not have a near relationship to the locally
suppliers. This could depend on the size of this store which is smaller than the Willys in Olofström. So, this store’s possibility to influence supply chain might be limited.

When it comes to Lidl stores, both respondents stated that this food chain is becoming more and more involved in the CSR and ecological product offerings in the last few years. However, the respondent from Lidl in Höör said that the Lidl’s head office has an overall responsibility to improve CSR marketing activities and the store employees only follow its guidelines. In relation to that, the respondents from Lidl in Kristianstad explained that Lidl has the intention to strengthen its reputation in the Swedish market and that is why this retail chain increases CSR activities constantly.

In addition, the respondents from Ica stores explained that Ica puts special efforts on the sustainable practices within the stores. For example, the respondent from Ica Maxi in Olofström explained that Ica engages in motivating suppliers to produce ecological products. The reason for this is increased demand for ecological products. The respondents from Ica stores in Höör and Hässleholm also stated that Ica works very much with the development of CSR practices in stores’ assortment and the control of the suppliers. This indicates that Ica puts a big focus on food security and food safety. This might be beneficial for Ica because, as Wiese et al. (2012) state, the focus on the food safety send a positive massage to consumers.

Moreover, all respondents from Coop stores stated that the amount of ecological products in Coop’s assortment has increased rapidly in the last few years. This quality promoter was, according to the respondent from Höör, the first store in Sweden which promoted sustainability and the ecological products.

Furthermore, all chosen food retail chains promote eco-private brands in order to achieve the consumers’ loyalty and to motivate consumers to buy ecological products. The difference between soft discounters, hard discounters and quality promoters has not been identified because all stores have various assortments of the CSR labelled and ecological products. However, there is a difference in informing consumers. Ica Maxi in Hässleholm is informing consumers by having a dietitian who gives the information direct in the store. Since the dietitian recommends the products from Ica’s assortment, this activity can be seen as beneficial for both consumers who have the possibility to achieve suggestions for free and the store which sells private-labelled products and increase customer loyalty in that way.
Since this thesis focuses on the store managers the question about their ability to make changes in the store assortment and promotion practices was analyzed as well. By comparing the answers it can be concluded that almost all store managers follow the instructions from the head office and they are not able to influence the decisions about store assortments or the promotion of CSR and private eco-labels within the store. Nevertheless, the store manager from Ica Maxi in Olofström explained that he has the freedom to decide about the assortment but it has, however, to be controlled by Ica through quality requirements. On the other hand, the store manager from Coop City in Kristianstad stated that he has the freedom to make changes in the assortment and promotional practices but he follows Coop’s recommendations as well. Moreover, the store manager from Ica Supermarket in Höör said that he also has a freedom to make changes in the assortment and explained that Ica’s head office recommends the products and the promotion practices with intention to support the Ica stores.
5. Conclusion

This section presents the summary of this study followed by the theoretical and managerial implications. The section is concluded with the suggestion for future research related to this research topic.

5.1 Concluding remarks

As Carrero and Valor (2012) state the retailers present a large sector of the world economy and that is why they have the capacity to influence consumers attitudes which can also influence the demand for responsible behavior within the industry. However, this illustrates the phenomena called “the retailing paradox” which is based on the question: how to meet business targets while establishing a commitment to sustainability? (Carrero & Valor, 2012). The previous studies about this topic were mainly focusing on organic and fair trade labelled brands in assortments of retailers and the CSR activities that affect the firm performance (Carrero and Valor, 2012; Schramm-Klein et al., 2015). Thus, this study aimed to explore how food retail store managers engage to adopt CSR in the store assortment and how private eco-brands contribute to the green-market development in food retail. In order to fulfil the purpose of this thesis, a research question has been designed: How food retail store managers work to embrace CSR labelled products and private eco-brand products in store assortment to stimulate green market development?

The results of the qualitative research have shown that all explored food retail store chains work actively with the CSR activities. All respondents highlighted that the food retailers examined in this study try to influence the consumers and the supplies to adopt sustainable practices and behave in the socially responsible way. This indicates that all food retail chains that were explored in this study meet the expectations of the governments, NGOs and academia as stated and suggested in Chkanikova and Lehner (2015).

As stated in the theories the responsible assortment is important marketing tool in the food retail. In relation to that, all respondents explained that the amount of eco-products offering has increased in the last few years. The consumers are seeking CSR labelled and ecological products but they are still not willing to pay a higher price for them. The reason for this might be lack of information about the benefits of these products within the stores. All respondents stated that the consumers receive information from stores’ flyers and that there are information about the ecological products on the stores’ homepages. This indicates that the
consumers need to visit the store’s homepage in order to receive the information about the benefits of CSR labelled and ecological products. Furthermore, almost all store managers examined in this study highlighted that they do not receive enough information about these products as well. Most of respondents’ also agreed that the head office decides about the assortment ad the promotion practices within the store. So, most of the store managers do not have the authority to fully decide about the stimulation of the green-market development within the store. Therefore, it can be said that the engagement of these store managers is limited by the instructions and recommendations from the head office. However, those of the store managers who to some extend have a freedom to decide and make changes within the store have shown increased motivation to engage in CSR and private-eco labels issues. That is why it can be concluded that the level of store managers’ engagement depends on freedom to make changes within the store. For example, both managers from Lidl stores examined in this study did not have much information about CSR and eco-labelled products because the head office make the decisions about them. Both store managers can, however, suggest some CSR or locally produced product but only in case of a high consumer demand.

When it comes to private eco-brands, the findings indicate that they help the store to increase consumer loyalty and motivate consumers to buy them. For example, the food retail store manager from Lidl in Kristianstad explained that there are consumers who only visit this store in order to buy Biotrend products. This in in line with Elg and Hultman (2016) who state that retailers’ CSR activities have an important role in building a satisfied consumer base. Moreover, retailers’ activities related to the CSR can influence consumers’ trust and attitudes in a positive way (Elg & Hultman, 2016). In fact CSR and eco-labels are most used marketing tolls within the stores. They are helping consumers to easily find CSR labelled and ecological products; which can increase consumers’ motivation to buy these products. However, when it comes to retailer’s engagement it can be concluded that the store managers examined in this study could be more informed about ecological products in order to inform consumers about the importance of them. Furthermore, the fact that the retail chains’ head offices control and guide the store managers might be explained with “the retailing paradox”. Limiting food retail store managers in their actions, when it comes to promotion and stimulation of the green-market development, might enable cost controlling and savings. On the other hand, increasing the freedom of the store managers might advance the costs because of adopting promotional practices to meet consumers’ needs and making changes in the assortment or in the supply chain.
5.2 Theoretical implications

The theoretical implication of this study is that CSR and eco-labels help consumers to easily find CSR labelled and ecological product which somewhat supports Carrero and Valor (2012) when they state that retailers use CSR labeling as a tool to create the responsible assortment and show their socially responsible behavior to consumers. This study illustrates, however, that retailers use CSR labeling in order to motivate consumers to buy CSR labelled and ecological product and stimulate the green market development as well. When it comes to the retail store managers previous studies has mainly focused on the autonomy of the store managers related to the job satisfaction. For example, Zairis (2013) states that higher level of autonomy leads to increased job satisfaction of the retail store managers. This study demonstrates that the store managers with higher level of autonomy show increased motivation to engage in CSR and private- eco labels issues. Also, the level of store managers’ engagement to stimulate green market development depends on the level of freedom that they have to make changes within the store.

5.3 Managerial implications

As already mentioned, consumers are seeking CSR labelled and ecological products but they are still not willing to pay a higher price for them. The main reason for this might be lack of information about these products within the stores. The store managers need to be better informed about CSR labelled and ecological products in order to promote them within the stores and motivate consumers to make the buying decisions. That is why the head office could organize employee trainings where the information about CSR labelled and ecological products would be provided to store managers and employees. Also, decreasing the level of control might lead to increased willingness of store managers to promote and stimulate the green-market development within the stores. New ideas and promotional practices of the store managers might lead to higher costs but the consumers would be more informed and probably more willing to buy CSR labelled and ecological products which might be beneficial in a long term.

5.4 Limitations and Future research

The main limitation of this study is the investigation of the specific retail sector. All these issues could be analyzed using additional sectors and/or international data. Therefore, the future research could be done with the larger number of food retail stores managers from the different parts of Sweden. Moreover, the practices of food retail stores managers from
different countries could be analyzed and compared as well, in order to investigate the cultural differences in the stimulation of the green market development. Another limitation could be that all interviewed store managers were men. That is why, the future research focusing on both male and female food retail store managers could be done. It might be interesting to explore if heterogeneity has an influence on store managers’ engagement and the stimulation of green market development. Furthermore, store managers’ motives for engaging in the stimulation of the green development could be explored as well.
References


Appendix 1- Respondents

Respondent from Coop Konsum, Höör has been interviewed in 35 minutes, 2017-05-09. Audio recorded.

Respondent from Willys Hemma, Kristianstad has been interviewed in 38 minutes, 2017-05-11. Audio recorded.

Respondents from Ica Maxi, Hässleholm have been interviewed in 39 minutes, 2017-05-11. Audio recorded.

Respondent from Coop City, Kristianstad has been interviewed in 42 minutes, 2017-05-11. Audio recorded.

Respondent from Ica Supermarket, Höör has been interviewed in 37 minutes, 2017-05-17. Audio recorded.

Respondent from Lidl, Höör has been interviewed in 30 minutes, 2017-05-17. Audio recorded.

Respondent from Willys, Olofström has been interviewed in 36 minutes, 2017-05-17. Audio recorded.

Respondent from Lidl, Kristianstad has been interviewed in 40 minutes, 2017-05-18. Audio recorded.

Respondent from Ica Maxi, Olofström has been interviewed in 41 minutes, 2017-05-19. Audio recorded.
Appendix 2- Interview guide (Swedish)

Frågor om affären och kedjan:
1. Hur länge har du arbetat i den här butiken?
2. Hur länge har du varit butikschef?
3. Hur länge har du arbetat inom handeln?
4. När öppnades den här affären?
5. Hur stor är den här affären i kvadratmeter och hur många anställda har ni?
6. Hur skulle du beskriva butikens arbete med CSR sortiment (T.ex. ekologiskt, närodlat, djuromsorg?)

Ekologiska matprodukter:
1. Hur ser du på kedjans sociala ansvarstagande när det gäller butikens sortiment t.ex. aspekter som svenskt kött, ekologiskt, närodlade produkter lokala leverantörer?
2. Hur länge har ni arbetat med ekologiska produkter i butikens sortiment?
3. Upplever du att antalet ekologiska produkter har ökat under de senaste åren? Hur skulle du beskriva ökningen?
4. Är det någon skillnad på konsumenternas attityd till ekologiska produkter nu och då när ni började sälja ekologiskt?
5. Kan du ge något exempel på ekologiska produkter ni säljer mest?
6. Varför tror du att just de produktarna säljs mest?
7. Brukar ni informera konsumenter om ekologiska produkter och deras betydelse för hälsa och miljö?
8. Om ja, hur gör ni detta?
9. Frågar kunden efter ekologiska produkter?
10. I vilka produktkategorier har ni ekologiska produkter?
11. Hur var det tidigare?
12. Vad har förändrats?
13. Säljer ni ekologiskt kött?
14. Säljer ni ekologiska närodlade produkter?

Egna ekologiska varumärke:
1. Har den här butikskedjan sitt eget eko-varumärke?
2. Om ja, vilket/vilka varumärke är det? Om nej, vilka andra ekologiska varumärke erbjuder ni?
3. Erbjuder ni också andra ekologiska produkter, t.ex. KRAV märkta produkter?
4. Hur stor del av produktarna märkta med det/de här varumärke omfattar butikskedjans centralt styrda sortiment?
5. Tycker du att eget varumärke är viktigt? Om ja, varför?
6. Bestäms sortiment centralt?
7. Kan du som butikschef själv bestämma vilka produkter du tar in i sortiment?
8. Om ja, hur tänker du då när du beställer dessa produkter? Om nej, vem bestämmer om detta och brukar ni pratar med varandra i så fall?

9. Har ni lokala leverantörer av CSR produkter?

10. Vem bestämmer om lokala produkter då?

11. Hur är det med närodla, närproducerade produkter och gård produktion?

12. Hur ser kunder på ekologiska produkter? Är ekologiska produkter detsamma som djurensorg för dem?

13. Hur uppskattar konsumenterna ert eget ekologiskt varumärke?

14. Egna varumärken är en central strategi men hur marknadsför du i butiken?

15. Hur tycker du att egna ekologiska produkter bidrar till CSR(Företags samhällsansvar) i butikens sortiment och motivera kunden att handla CSR och ekologiska produkter?

16. Har detta varumärke någon speciell betydelse för dig och i så fall vilken?

17. Får du som butikschef information om hur ekologiska produkter är viktiga om ja av vem?

18. Vad brukar ni göra för att påverka konsumenterna att köpa ekologiska produkter?

19. Har ekologiska produkter någon inverkan på hur konsumenter ser på övriga produkter i butikens sortiment som inte är ekologiska?

20. Tror du att ekologiska produkter kan ha en negativ inverkan på icke ekologiska produkter som icke miljövänliga
Appendix 3- Images from Willys Hemma, Kristianstad

Eco-Labels and marketing of eco-products and private brands within the store
Appendix 4- Images from Willys, Olofström

Eco-Labels and marketing of eco-products and private brands within the store
Appendix 5 – Images from Lidl, Kristianstad

Eco-Labels and marketing of eco-products and private brands within the store

![Images from Lidl, Kristianstad](image1)

![Images from Lidl, Kristianstad](image2)

![Images from Lidl, Kristianstad](image3)
Appendix 6- Images from Lidl, Höör

Eco-Labels and marketing of eco-products and private brands within the store
Appendix 7 – Images from Ica Supermarket, Höör

*Eco-Labels and marketing of eco-products and private brands within the store*
Appendix 8- Images from Ica Maxi Hässleholm

Eco-Labels and marketing of eco-products and private brands within the store
Appendix 9- Images from Ica Maxi, Olofström

Eco-Labels and marketing of eco-products and private brands within the store
Appendix 10- Images from Coop Konsum, Höör

Eco-Labels and marketing of eco-products and private brands within the store
Appendix 11 - Images from Coop City, Kristianstad

Eco-Labels and marketing of eco-products and private brands within the store