Getting power

-a study on consumers' actual power in relation to their assessments of their own consumer power.

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Abstract

Purpose: the purpose of this study is to navigate the correlation between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* amongst online consumers in the context of online purchase decisions that are made through the smartphone.

Design/Methodology/Approach: the study was conducted through a quantitative approach where primary data was collected through a web-survey that showed smartphone users' level of skills, knowledge and engagement concerned with online purchases as well as their perceived influence and resistance online in the relationship between firms and consumers. Primary data were then analyzed through a correlation analysis and compared with previous research.

Findings: The conclusion that can be made from this study is that *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* have a positive correlation with a high significance amongst online consumers in the context of online purchase decisions that are made through the smartphone.

Research limitations/Implications: This study only provides knowledge on whether or not the two variables are correlated. Further research is required to paint a more nuanced picture of the relationship between the two constructs and to conclude in which direction consumer power follows.

Originality/Value: This study is first to look at the correlation between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* in the online environment. It is also the first to study consumer power in this way within a new group of online consumers - the smartphone users.

Keywords: consumer power, consumer behavior, online consumption, actual power, perceived power.

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1. Introduction

This essay will aim to research the correlation between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* amongst online consumers in the context of online purchase decisions that are made through the smartphone. We will first introduce you to the subject in this section, followed by a presentation of our theoretical framework in the next chapter, thereafter, introducing our methodology. The essay will include a presentation and analysis of our results. Finally, presenting our most important conclusions and a discussion of limitations and future research.

The following chapter will present the reader with an introduction to our topic followed by a presentation of our theoretical background and research problem. After this, our purpose and research questions will be defined.

1.1 Background

Technological progress is empowering consumers to make informed decisions, however what can seem like a tailored experience is usually influenced by algorithmic constrictions on informational access through the platforms used and at the cost of personal privacy. Being able to decline specific offers and leverage knowledge from different sources to negotiate better deals is creating more empowered consumers (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Urban, 2005; Labrecque, Vor Dem Esche, Mathwick, Novak, & Hofacker, 2013; Wang & Wei, 2012; Edelman & Singer, 2015; Barcelos, Dantas, Sénécal, 2018; Akhavannasab, Dantas, Senecal & Grohmann , 2022). The internet enables possibilities for consumers to compare different products and services from a great variety and with little effort in comparison to the traditional ways of shopping from physical stores (Urban, 2005; Edelman & Singer, 2015; Labrecque, et al., 2013). This overload of choices might on the other hand also create increasing effort when it comes to judging what to choose, thus increasing time spent making decisions at a cost to the consumer (Dhar, 1997).

The internet gives consumers access to more sources than ever to aid their buying decisions, but do they also have control over the products they are exposed to in the first place? Resisting messages online can be difficult. Data collection and unrestricted avenues of influence create

an environment where efforts to assert control over consumers are successfully enhanced. Consumer data is commodified and used for targeted marketing (The Guardian, 2018). Data is sometimes described as "the new oil" due to its central place in online infrastructure, and is continuously used to manipulate consumers (Forbes, 2019; Wired, 2014). Most famously perhaps, Cambridge Analytica sold Facebook data to clients using it for election campaigns (The Guardian, 2018). According to employees at Cambridge Analytica speaking out in the documentary "The Great Hack", Facebook data helped their customers win multiple elections by identifying and targeting "persuadables", meaning voters who were on the fence or unsure. Cambridge Analytica spread content online through anonymous channels to persuade these voters (Netflix, 2019). Consumers feeling pressured online can take on a political as well as a personal nature. Some consumers may feel like they have to change things about themselves for example. The documentary, "Documents from within: The price we pay" discusses cosmetic surgery in Sweden. Throughout the documentary, various followers of social media influencers argue that they would not have considered going under the knife had they not seen the marketing advertisements for cosmetic surgery repeatedly on their smartphone (SVT, 2022). These examples illustrate the ways our smartphones enable contradictions. As we have access to the world the world, in turn, has access to us.

Online consumption and internet usage have grown immensely over the past years, and most users now spend around 40 hours, the equivalent of a full time-working week on their phones. Estimations of consumers' own online usage are also usually off. In one study, users estimated their screen time to be 3 hours and 42 minutes but in actuality users spent an average of 5 hours and 42 minutes daily on their smartphone. One in three smartphone users reported being unsuccessful in cutting back their phone usage despite their efforts in wanting to do so, even when experiencing tension in their relationships caused by their smartphone usage (Solitaired, 2021). Considering the fact that smartphone users cannot estimate their screen time correctly or limit their smartphone usage, the question remains if smartphone users really are able to accurately estimate or control how much they are influenced by marketing advertisements online. It could be argued that consumers have little control, and they need to be protected from firms when it comes to social media messaging (Michela, Massimo, Rossana & Rita, 2011).

Young people also have increasing access to online-shopping, resulting in an increased use of easily available credit options to buy products that they want. This is worrying to the Swedish

Financial Inspection, FI, as irresponsible shopping behaviour among youth could carry on in later ages, when this could lead to financial problems. Because of this, understanding basic financial concepts, like loans and interest rates are important to enable consumers to act on their own good (FI-analys 2021; FI 2022). With this in mind, it is evermore important to protect consumer rights.

The increasing financial vulnerability of many EU households is a particular concern at the present because of the financial crisis following Covid-19 as well as other factors (COM2020). Online consumers are also becoming weaker in relationship to companies, and more complaints are coming in to the Swedish financial inspection versus going through customer service in the first hand (FI, 2022) This could be because of efforts by firms to deflect complaining customers (Arbel & Shapira, 2020). In the relationship between consumers and firms, consumers are considered the weaker link in the marketplace (Michela et al., 2011) and therefore they need to be protected by laws and regulations to enhance consumer empowerment. The European Commission, for instance, has recently implemented two new legislations, the Digital Markets Act (DMA) as well as the Digital Services Act (DSA), to protect consumer rights and create fairness on the market level (European Commision, 2022). These regulations apply to all EU countries to protect EU consumers' right to be correctly informed and feel in control and protected when making purchase decisions offline and online (COM 2020; Michela et al., 2011). In their strategy, the commission also lays out a plan to increase education and knowledge on online issues, like false news, and online consumer manipulation (Michela et al., 2011). Consumers with these basic tools will be set out to define for themselves what power means to them.

1.2 Theoretical background

This subsection will discuss our point of departure for applying the concept of power, to subsequently present the conceptualizations used in this study.

1.2.1 Power in consumer research

As there are a multitude of issues facing consumers online, it seems hard to pinpoint what does make consumers empowered. Firstly, we must define what power means within the digital sphere. Is it consumers' possibilities to influence other actors inhabiting the same space

(Denegri-Knott; Zwick,Schroeder, 2006; Denegri-Knott, 2019), or possibly consumers' freedom of choice and access to information (Akhannavasab, Dantas & Senecal, 2018).

Power has fascinated scholars for centuries and it has been widely discussed within the field of sociology and psychology (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Russell (1938) claimed "The fundamental concept in social science is power, in the same sense that energy is the fundamental concept in physics." This translates into the notion that humans hold power over others as well as being subjected to the power of others in society, meaning that power enables both the rise of powerful individuals as well as their contributors. One example in the online sphere would be the mutual relationship between influencers being the ones in possession of power, and followers being their contributors.

Recent developments have brought more critical perceptions of power previously reserved for the field of sociology into marketing (Denegri-Knott, 2019). Here, one argument that can be made is the lack of a critical framework of power within consumer research, that includes perspectives beyond that of consumer experience, including the interests of firms as well as other stakeholders (Denegri-Knott, 2019). Within marketing literature, there is an assumption the market will always adapt to consumer needs, including the need for empowerment (Akhavannasab et al., 2022; Darmody & Zwick, 2020; Denegri-Knott, 2019), assuming a capitalist marketing logic (Denegri-Knott, 2019). Denegri-Knott calls this a "sovereign" perspective on power as it focuses on individual agency. Sovereign power is defined as that power which is asserted directly over others, usually from one person with more physical resources onto another with less. Power within the sovereign perspective is viewed as being asserted on an individual level, meaning even when discussing consumer relationships to firms, the power firms assert as a collective is asserted on to consumers individually (Denegri-Knott, 2019).

In her work on consumer power, Denegri-Knott (2019) identifies three trends within consumer research models of power. Most marketing research uses one of three perspectives on power, which are identified as the sovereign, hegemonic and discursive perspectives on power. The intention is to create more transparency within marketing research on what definitions of power are used. Hegemonic models of power understand power to have a relational and hierarchic origin. This means that power is understood to be asserted indirectly through

ideology as well as directly, meaning interpersonally or in consumer-firm relationships. Hegemonic models are pointed out to be underused within marketing research in favor of sovereign models. The potential of hegemonic models is to expose power as an underlying force influencing all interactions made between consumers and firms, as power is seen as something being imposed on consumers indirectly, "power inhibits the identification and realization of real needs and instead implants desires and thoughts which serve the long-term interests of a ruling class" (p. 294, Denegri-Knott, 2019). We will not go more into the third, discursive models of power, since this is rather a complex endeavor, but this model of power usually touches on subjects like co-creation, and linguistic influences in struggles between consumers and firms (Denegri-Knott, 2019).

1.2.2 Actual and perceived power

The belief that power is rooted in individual perceptions, meaning sovereign power, has been utilized within social and cognitive psychology. Former researchers have distinguished power into two types: personal power and social power (Overbeck & Park, 2001; Lammers, Stoker & Stapel, 2009; Akhavannasab et al., 2018). In marketing research *perceived personal power* is characterized by the individual's ability to resist the influence of people in their surroundings. In contrast, *perceived social power* is defined as the individual's ability to deliberately influence people in their surroundings (Overbeck & Park, 2001; Lammers et al., 2009; Akhavannasab et al., 2018). This categorization of power will be used in our study as we discuss *perceived consumer power*.

Sovereign power can also be researched from a political perspective, assessing consumer needs in relation to market offers (Michela et al., 2011). Combining these perspectives means bringing in a critical perspective, like the one that is usually present in the hegemonic models, into a sovereign view of power (Denegri-Knott, 2019). As we strive to figure out a definition for *actual consumer power,* contrasting *perceived consumer power*, we want to assume a critical lens on marketing literature focusing on factors beyond those of identity creation. Assessing *actual consumer power* hegemonically means understanding it through the lens of hierarchy. Power should be assumed to originate outside of the individual consumer (Denergi-Knott, 2019). One perspective on consumer power which both centers individual consumers, assuming a sovereign perspective on power, yet finds an external point of origin, is what we will call the consumer knowledge perspective. This perspective combines a sovereign

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perspective with hegemonic ideas, having individual agency as a goal yet assuming individuals have little control over their behaviour and subsequent empowerment. This definition identifies *actual consumer power* as consisting of *skills, awareness* and *engagement*, describing the principles through which knowledge is gained and then applied. Skills and awareness describe what consumers know when it comes to their rights and level of financial literacy, and engagement describes their ability and habits of applying this knowledge (Michela et al., 2011). This conceptualization will be used in combination with the construct of *perceived consumer power* to fully understand how real consumers' *perceived consumer power* is.

1.3 Research problem

The research problem identified is critical perspectives on power being under-researched (Denegri-Knott, 2019) , and a lack of mutual understanding between different perspectives on power. As conceptualizations of consumer power usually rest on either the hegemonic or sovereign models, we want to compare these to ultimately adapt the usefulness of these perspectives as representations of consumer power. This would mean understanding internal as well as external factors contributing to consumer power.

Consumer power in the context of online buying decisions made through smartphone use and online behaviour has not been researched through a critical lens previously, and we feel this would be of importance as this is the forum through which much of our lives are being lived through currently. Efforts to protect consumers online have been made, yet these have been long overdue and the possibilities to still create an egalitarian online space are slimming down (Michela et al, 2011, COM2020). Understanding how power is formed will aid future researchers watching this space, as well as policy makers and marketing strategists to pave roads ahead that work for everyone. It is especially important for marketers to understand consumers in the online sphere in order for marketers to create a positive experience for consumers when making purchase decisions online. Power is considered an important factor contributing to consumers behaviour patterns online (Labreque, 2013).

Previous research (Wathieu, Brenner, Carmon, Chattopadhyay, Wertenbroch, Drolet, Gourville, Muthukrishnan, Novemsky, Ratner & Wu, 2002; Hunter & Garnefeld, 2008; Pranić & Roehl, 2013) suggest that empowered consumers in the process of making buying decisions enable stronger consumer-firm relationships. Empowerment can increase consumer satisfaction and

consumers' relationship to firms (Hunter & Garnefeld, 2008), and more specifically, increase consumer satisfaction in the online sphere (Chang, 2008). This means that firms that seek out to enhance consumers empowerment will be more successful in creating better consumer experiences, assuming consumers want empowerment. However, for marketers to know how to enhance consumer empowerment the phenomenon of whether *actual consumer power* can indicate *perceived consumer power* has to be understood.

If consumers are proven to have awareness of how real their *actual consumer power* is in relation to their *perceived consumer power* online, this would mean consumers understand their power relationship to firms and thus consumers would be more difficult to manipulate. However, there is a lack of mutual understanding whether or not *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* are correlated amongst consumers in the context of online purchase decisions made through the smartphone and therefore no such connections can be made just yet. It is especially important to identify how real consumers' *perceived consumer power* is, as previous research (Michela et al., 2011) has noted that consumers are the weaker link in the relationship between firms and consumers. By understanding how real consumers' *perceived consumer power* is, we can then understand how well consumers understand manipulation by firms when making online buying decisions. How real consumers' *perceived consumer power* is, becomes particularly important to determine to make sure that consumers are not at risk of being manipulated. Hence ensuring that consumer rights online such as the Digital Markets Act (DMA) and the Digital Services Act (DSA) formulated in the European Commision (2022) are protected. Consumers must be protected from firms in the context of online marketing since what is being marketed is not always good for the consumers (Michela et al., 2011; SVT, 2022). Furthermore, consumers do not always have high awareness of their vulnerability to be manipulated (Arbel & Shapira, 2020) or knowledge of their consumption patterns (Solitaired, 2021) as mentioned previously.

1.4 Purpose and research questions

The case of consumers' online potential being fundamentally mismatched to actual possibilities created through digital platforms illustrates a disparity between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* on these platforms. The question becomes whether it is possible for consumers to be aware in situations where they are disempowered or manipulated, or if this is

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simply an invisible force. Therefore, we want to ground our research within a framework that acknowledges consumer rights, while exploring *perceived consumer power* in correlation to *actual consumer power* in the context of online buying decisions made through smartphones.

Taking consumer rights into consideration, knowledge and agency can be seen as factors contributing to empowerment regardless of consumers own perceptions (Michela et al., 2011). The fundamental part of most conceptualizations relating to consumer power online has some basis in information seeking and control over information flow (Akhavannasab et al., 2018; Akhavannasab et al., 2022).

As information becomes such an important commodity, knowledge and awareness of consumer rights and abilities to apply these becomes a central question to answer. Especially, considering the many different sources of influence online, our interest is evoked to find out more about the notion of 'consumer power' in the context of online buying decisions made through the smartphone. It is important to understand both how consumers understand their own power as consumers, as well as if they are able to apply relevant knowledge. Consumers' understanding of their own power is relevant as it relates to the concept that power is created through consumer sovereignty and measuring their *perceived consumer power* will allow us to understand this dimension of the concept of power (Akhavannasab et al., 2018). The ability to apply relevant knowledge in turn gives us the possibility to measure the more complex concept of a*ctual consumer power*. Since *perceived consumer power* is based on individual measurements, our definition of *actual consumer power* also uses individual measurements to be able to properly compare the two. This means looking at consumers' abilities to influence and resist firms based on internal factors, which we identify as their knowledge and ability to utilize this knowledge, which we define as *actual consumer power* (Michela et al., 2011). We want to apply these concepts to the online sphere and find a correlation between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* in the context of online buying decisions. Knowledge about this correlation benefits consumers because it encourages lawmakers and firms to protect their rights, by stronger regulations if a correlation is not found, or by mutual relationships with firms if *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* are deemed to usually exist simultaneously. We believe this knowledge would also be important to marketers as it would help them protect consumer rights and create better consumer experiences in the online sphere. Further, it is our conviction that understanding how

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consumers are empowered can also be of benefit to firms and understanding this correlation could help uncover strategic applications firms could use to enhance their relationships to consumers (Darmody & Zwick, 2020). Consumer empowerment could be beneficial to firms as it can enable co-creation by consumers (Karpen, Bove, Lukas & Zyphur, 2015) which in turn is shown to improve consumer satisfaction (Chang, 2008; Hunter & Garnefeld, 2008).

Our research question becomes as follows:

RQ: Can perceived consumer power indicate actual consumer power among online consumers?

We aim to formulate hypotheses grounded in our theory to help us answer this research question.

1.5 Delimitations

This study is strictly limited to only review online consumers' *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* in the online sphere, particularly smartphone users. As mentioned previously, online consumption has grown exceedingly over the past years along with the technological development of smartphones (Labrecque et al., 2013). Researchers have dabbled into the digital world, however, there is much more to explore.

When studying *perceived consumer power* among consumers online, we are exclusively referring to the power relationship between firms and consumers to influence behaviour and resist persuasive efforts in the context of purchase decisions that are made through the smartphone. The understanding of *perceived personal power* and *perceived social power* is limited to an individually perceived perspective, meaning our point of departure for collecting this knowledge is based on respondents' self-reports through online questionnaires. When discussing *actual consumer power* we are referring to online consumers' level of skills, knowledge and engagement concerned with online purchases made with online firms. In this understanding of *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* we will not include external perspectives such as those of firms but rather focus on reports from online consumers. The correlation between *perceived consumer power* and *actual consumer power* is reviewed in relation to online buying decisions. This study only provides an overall understanding of

possible similarities and differences between the two objects of study, as opposed to giving an in-depth understanding, since this concept is yet unestablished in the field of consumer research.

The correlation between the two variables is viewed by collecting primitive data from Swedish speaking online consumers through an online questionnaire. The outlets we use to spread the survey consists of a majority of Swedish speaking people, therefore the survey is in Swedish to widen the accessibility amongst potential respondents.

2. Theoretical framework

In this section, we will present the reference framework for this study as relevant models and theories are introduced and explained. These theories relate to the selected variables that the study deals with, namely *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power*. Finally, the hypotheses for this study are justified and presented in accordance with our chosen theories and previous research.

2.1 Actual consumer power

In this section, we will argue the importance of access to information as well as engagement and enforcement of that information as measurements for individual consumer power. We will also present the framework we will use to analyze *perceived consumer power.*

2.1.1 Online consumers and power

What could it mean to be an empowered consumer? There are different ideas of the limits of consumer power. Search algorithms hold the power to control what information consumers perceive, likewise do opinion leaders such as bloggers, advertisers and social media influencers through sharing product recommendations and reviews throughout social media, which ultimately has an impact on consumption decisions (Urban, 2005; Labrecque et al., 2013). Labrecque et al. (2013) argue that consumers can maintain power by adjusting browsing behaviors and blocking content that is unwanted and limiting how much of their personal information companies and stakeholders can access online. However, Yeung (2017) argues that "naïve faith in the market as a vehicle for securing algorithmic accountability seems completely misplaced, given the [lack of] opacity of the underlying algorithms." (p. 131). This relates to the idea of hegemonic power, as it centers an "elite" source of power (Denegri-Knott, 2019). Firms benefit from consumer attention, utilizing consumers' time to collect data that can then be monetized (Jhally & Livant, 1986; Smythe, 1981; COM2020). Big tech companies can use technical jargon, frequent updates and an assertion of relevance to instill trust in consumers (Bilic, 2016). However, this assertion of relevance does not necessarily reflect company control or understanding of algorithms used, affecting the possibilities for transparency toward consumers (Bilic, 2016; Yeung, 2017). Darmody & Zwick (2020) argue instead in their article that data collection and targeted marketing does not have to be problematic at all, and

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consumers can be empowered when the relationship to firms is developed as to make sure consumers are only targeted with marketing that is relevant to them through a control over the marketing process (Darmody & Zwick, 2020; Pires, Stanton & Rita, 2006).

2.1.2 Engagement and enforcement of consumer knowledge

The ability to sift through and assess knowledge online is subject to gatekeeping by digital platforms. This can keep consumers from fully enforcing knowledge that is technically available to them, suffering from an information overload (COM2020). Consumer engagement and active participation is often negated in marketing research, opting for models focusing on self-assessed power (Denegri-Knott, 2019). Online consumers are often themselves the "legitimizing agents" of content viewed online. This means that when using online platforms, like scrolling on Instagram, the user is ultimately responsible for determining what is legitimate content and what is false (Lillquist, Moisander & Firat, 2017). Digital platforms have rolled out systems for fact checking and marking content on their sites rather successfully (Krishnan et al, 2021). However, a system for marking "good" information is still lacking, and consumers must rely on their own judgment to decide what is reliable information. The consumers most likely to complain and enforce their rights are also usually identified through data collection and subsequently disarmed by companies, potentially making it harder for the greater public to defend their rights. This creates an even greater need for political and legal institutions to stand up and protect consumer rights (Arbel & Shapira, 2020). In conclusion, consumers' enforcement of their gained knowledge is dictated by institutional protection as well as individual cognition. Following this determination, in the next section we review consumer rights to information as another important aspect of institutional protection.

2.1.3 Access to reliable information

Consumers' right to accurate information is mainly a political goal, and an important part of EU-strategizing for sustainable development, digitalization, and international cooperation (COM2020). In the scientific literature, we find this access to information as an important indicator for *actual consumer power* online, as discussed earlier. Having information readily available online (Bickart, & Schindler, 2001; Urban, 2005; Labrecque et al., 2013; Edelman & Singer, 2015; Akhavannasab et al., 2022), and knowing how to identify proper sources as well as remembering correct knowledge (Michela et al., 2011; FI 2021, 2022) are both important

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factors of *actual consumer power*. Especially in online spaces, because of what is described in the EU Consumer Agenda 2020 as a covert influence by firms on consumers decisions through exploitations of unethically collected data on behavioural biases, access to reliable information is key. Almost all goals set out in the agenda incorporate increased access to accurate sources. Information online is often not correct, as a matter of fact 60% of websites on average did not comply with basic consumer rules when checked by enforcement authorities and had to be corrected (COM2020). Investments in teaching financial literacy is also crucial for young people existing online as they are particularly vulnerable (COM2020). The importance of financial literacy persists however, across any age group.

2.1.4 Framework for actual consumer power

For a definition of *actual consumer power*, we need a definition based on consumer rights, incorporating both access and use of information. As we discussed when we reviewed consumers' enforcement of their knowledge, this consists of two parts, individual learning, and legal protection. As we will focus our research on individual measurements, we will look at the learning aspect as well as consumer experiences in communicating with firms. We will use the definitions of *awareness* and *engagement* to describe these concepts. *Consumer awareness* is defined through their awareness of their rights as consumers, as it is deemed important that consumers can readily access and know information on their rights. *Consumer engagement* is defined as the application of these skills and knowledge, as it is deemed important that consumers are able to create and utilize mechanisms to advocate for their own rights (Michela et al., 2011). The concept of *consumer awareness* relates to both the concept of learning as well as access to information, as it tests whether consumers have knowledge on correct information regarding their rights. To complete our understanding of consumers' access to information we also test a few *consumer skills,* seeing if consumers can recognize brands and have basic financial skills. This is deemed important because these skills contribute to mindful buying decisions.

These measurements make up *actual consumer power* and are developed by researchers at the European Commission to reflect the political goals of the EU in their aim to protect consumer rights against the interests of firms. We consider the definition of *actual consumer power* as consisting of *skills, awareness,* and *engagement* to be consistent with the goals of the EU Consumer Agenda 2020 as they reflect both the learning aspect and the importance of the right

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to complain (COM2020). From this definition of consumer power, we reach our third hypothesis:

H1: The degree to which consumers possess perceived consumer power online has a positive correlation to actual consumer power.

2.2 Perceived consumer power

This section introduces perceived consumer resistance and perceived consumer influence which make up the concept of *perceived consumer power* that Akhavannasab et al. (2018) uses in his framework of the consumer empowerment process. Lastly, we will present the framework that will be used to understand *perceived consumer power.*

2.2.1 Perceived resistance

Personal power is the individual's ability to *resist* the influence of others, as well as, having the ability to independently make decisions. This implies that individuals are able to act with agency and independence if personal power is obtained (Brill, 1992; Overbeck & Park. 2001; Lammers et al., 2009). Akhavannasab et al. (2018). Within the field of consumer behaviour, *perceived personal power* refers to two things. Firstly, the consumer's perceived ability to decline or resist a firm's persuasive efforts to change the consumer's purchase decision (Urban, 2005; Akhavannasab et al., 2018). Secondly, the consumer's perceived ability to make informed and independent purchases by resisting marketers' influence and to feel in control over their own buying decisions (Niininen, Buhalis & March, 2007; Huang, Lots & Bon, 2014; Akhavannasab et al., 2018). The definition of perceived power proposed by Akhavannasab et al. (2018) is used in this study when discussing the notion of *Perceived personal power* online.

An individual possessing *perceived personal power* is suggested by Powers, Advincula, Austin, Graiko & Snyder (2012) as an indicator of an empowered individual. Empowerment in this context is the term used to reference what *perceived personal power* leads to when it is achieved by consumers in the relationship between firms and consumers online. A certain level of consumer resistance is required in order to resist online marketers' persuasive efforts to influence online buying decisions. This implies that consumers who feel like they have the power to resist and make buying decisions online, free from the influence of marketers', are considered having *perceived personal power*. Subsequently, the degree to which consumers'
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feel they have the ability to exercise consumer resistance online against online firms are hence empowered consumers (Powers et al., 2012).

Akhavannasab et al. (2018) argues that an antecedent of feeling *perceived personal power* and to resist the influence of firms persuasive efforts relies on consumers self-confidence when making purchase decisions. Bearden, Hardesty & Rose (2001) suggests this entails a feeling consisting of an individual's feeling of assurance and capability of making an informed decision that results in a positive experience in the marketplace. When consumers feel they have the ability to make a good decision, this feeling increases their feeling of having the ability to make independent decisions, hence empowering the consumer in their decision making (Akhavannasab et al., 2022). Empowerment is believed to generate from a perceived sense of consumer satisfaction and the feeling of having control over buying decisions (Chang, 2008; Wathieu et al., 2002, Huang, et al., 2014) in line with what is previously mentioned as *perceived personal power* (Akhavannasab et al., 2022).

2.2.2 Perceived influence

Social power is the individual's ability to *influence* someone else despite their resistance, rather than being influenced themselves by someone else's persuasive efforts (Brill, 1992; Overbeck & Park, 2001; Van Dijke & Poppe, 2006; Lammers et al., 2009; Akhavannasab et al., 2018). Overbeck & Park (2001) states as follows "...social power is characterized by relationships between people or groups and the deliberate exercise of one's ability to influence. This approach is distinct from personal power, which involves one's ability to act for oneself, with agency." (p. 549). Akhavannasab et al. (2018) is in agreement with this statement and further elaborates that *perceived social power* in the marketing context refers to the degree to which consumers feel they have the ability to influence a firm's decisions, responses and actions. The definition of social power proposed by Akhavannasab et al. (2018) is used in this study when discussing the notion of *perceived social power* online.

Perceived social power generates a feeling of empowerment within consumers and this perceived influence can help navigate consumers in the online sphere to take action against firms online (Forbes, 2011) and offline (Akhavannasab et al., 2022). *Perceived social power* is believed to give the consumers a sense of being able to modify existing services (Harrison, Waite & Hunter, 2006) and co-create value (Karpen et al., 2015) in the marketplace. Moreover,

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perceived social power gives the illusion that consumers have the ability to influence brand meanings, change corporate practices and break or make a brand by exerting their consumer power (Cova & Pace, 2006; Forbes, 2011). Consequently, the sense of having *perceived social power* can therefore create a feeling of empowerment (Akhavannasab et al., 2022).

2.2.3 Akhavannasab framework for perceived consumer power

To define *perceived consumer power*, we need a framework that encompasses the behavioural aspects of consumer power. To navigate this, we have to understand the power relationship between firms and consumers online. Particularly, consumers perceived ability to *influence* online firm's behaviour and consumers perceived ability to *resist* firms' persuasive efforts online in the context of purchase decisions. This understanding will be achieved by applying Akhavannasab et al. (2018) conceptual framework to identify the power relationship between firms and consumers online by exploring *perceived social power* and *perceived personal power*. Akhavannasab et al. (2018) framework consists of the following;
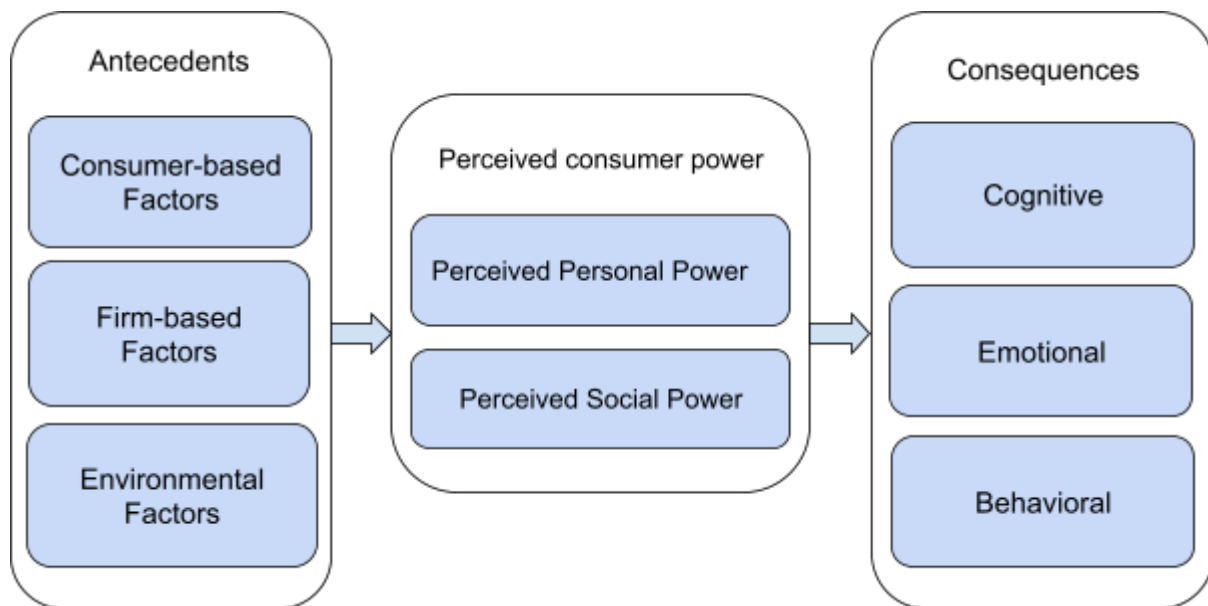
Fig 1. Akhavannasab et al. (2018) Conceptual framework of consumer empowerment process

When exploring online consumers *perceived consumer power* we will refrain from using Akhavannasab et al. (2018 conceptual framework of the consumer empowerment process in its entirety as all dimensions do not add value in our study when only exploring the correlation between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* at the level of only creating an overall understanding. Instead of using Akhavannasab et al. (2018) antecedents for empowerment, consisting of consumer-based factors, firm-based factors and environmental

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factors, we are using Michela et al. (2011) framework for *actual consumer power* consisting of skills, awareness and engagement. This is due to the fact that Michela et al. (2011) framework measures *actual consumer power* and not antecedents that lead to *perceived consumer power*, meaning a perceived sense of influence and resistance.

Perceived consumer power is defined by Akhavannasab as consisting of two components: *perceived social power* and *perceived personal power* , (Brill, 1992; Overbeck & Park, 2001; Lammers et al., 2009; Akhavannasab et al., 2018; Akhavannasab et al., 2022). Akhavannasab et al. (2018) state "[*perceived social power*] refers to the perception that a consumer can influence a given firm's decisions and responses. In contrast, [*perceived personal power*] refers to the perception that an individual can ignore or even resist a firm's persuasive efforts and thus make an independent final decision" (p. 1342). Akhavannasab et al. (2018) defines *perceived personal power* according to an individualistic perspective on power. Meaning within it, power is seen as originating from the consumer themselves. In his article, he implies *perceived personal power* leads to a form of *actual consumer power* which he describes as simply "empowerment". Yet, none of his indicators of empowerment describes actual consumer behaviour, still only relying on consumers' own perceptions. This lacks an external perspective on consumer relations to firms or any measurements of actual resistant behaviour, and thus follows an assumption that consumers will always choose the option that benefits them most within a free market. If this were true, perceived power and true power would be the same. Through an understanding of *perceived social power* and *perceived personal power*, the aim is therefore limited to understanding resistance and influence among consumers from an individually perceived perspective (Akhavannasab et al., 2022).

The dimensions of *perceived personal power* and *perceived social power* make up the definition of *perceived consumer power*, which refers to the power relationship between firms and consumers online. To navigate the correlation between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* amongst online consumers in the context of buying decisions that are made through the smartphone, we will look at the relation of *perceived personal power* and *perceived social power* to *actual consumer power* individually as they are not always (or usually) mutually exclusive. From this knowledge of *perceived consumer power*, we are lead to form the following two hypotheses:

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H2: The degree to which consumers possess perceived personal power has a positive correlation to actual consumer power.

H3: The degree to which consumers possess perceived social power has a positive correlation to actual consumer power.

2.3 Associated concepts and their definition

The following table provides an overall understanding of the important associated concepts in this essay. This aims at helping the reader navigate their understanding of the construct definitions and their original source. Our definition of *actual consumer power* rests on the framework developed by Michela et al. (2011) at the European Commission, in line with the EU consumer empowerment strategy, and our framework for *perceived consumer power* rests on Akhavannasab et al. (2018) framework which has been well-established within consumer research.

Referens	Construct	Construct definition
Michela et al., 2011	Actual consumer power	The concept is identified based on previous research. *Actual consumer power* consists of three constructs: consumer skills, consumer awareness of consumer legislations and consumer engagement.
Michela et al., 2011	Consumer skills	The concept is identified based on previous research. Consumer skills refers to consumers' level of knowledge and consumers' ability to recognize brands

		and have basic financial skills.
Michela et al., 2011	Consumer awareness	The concept is identified based on previous research. Consumer awareness refers to consumers' awareness of their *statutory rights* as consumers.
Michela et al., 2011	Consumer engagement	The concept is identified based on previous research. Consumer engagement refers to the application of consumer skills and knowledge obtained from consumer awareness.
Brill, 1992 Overbeck & Park, 2001 Lammers et al., 2009 Akhavannasab et al., 2018 Akhavannasab et al., 2022	Perceived consumer power	This concept is identified based on previous research. *perceived consumer power* consists of two components: *perceived personal power* and *perceived social power*
Brill, 1992 Overbeck & Park, 2001 Urban, 2005 Lammers et al,. 2009 Niininen et al,. 2007 Akhavannasab et al., 2018	Perceived personal power	This concept is identified based on previous research. *perceived personal power* refers to the degree to which consumers feel they have the ability to *resist* a firm's persuasive efforts and the feeling of having control over their final decision.

Brill, 1992 Overbeck & Park, 2001 Van Dijke & Poppe, 2006 Lammers et al. 2009 Akhavannasab et al., 2018	Perceived social power	The concept is identified based on previous research. *perceived social power* refers to the degree to which consumers feel they have the ability to *influence* a firm's decisions, responses and actions

Table 1. Definition of associated concepts.

3. Methodology

In this section, you will be introduced to our chosen methods, our reasons for choosing them and their implications for our study. The section will be structured according to the order in which we worked on respective parts of the study. The study started by collecting data, where our research object was primary data collected through a survey. We also collected literature to be used for analyzing our research object. Finally, after our data was collected, we conducted a statistical analysis of the collected data from the survey. Lastly, this section will conclude with a transparent discussion of research quality assurance.

3.1 Data collection

In this section, we will present the survey method as well as literature collection method, followed by a quality assessment of each respectively.

3.1.1 Survey studies

To navigate the correlation between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* a web-survey was conducted to measure consumer power amongst online consumers. Closed questions were mainly used, which means that the respondents were given established options instead of having to formulate their own answers. This was a conscious choice we made since it is easier to convert responses into statistics this way (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). The questionnaire was created in Qualtrics and consisted of 22 questions in total (view appendix 1), and it took an average of seven minutes to complete.

A link to the web-survey was distributed on online platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, where potential respondents were asked to take the survey. To recruit more respondents we printed out QR-codes linked to the questionnaire (view appendix 2) and distributed them physically by mailbox in different neighborhoods both in Gothenburg and Halmstad. To get a high response rate throughout the survey we created a contest where respondents got the chance to win a gift card for Filmstaden if they answered all questions. This announcement was displayed at the beginning of the survey as this is a good method for gaining higher participation according to Bryman & Bell (2017). We also informed all participants within the survey of the general purpose of the study, indicating that it was a research project on consumer

power and acknowledging that they would be anonymous when participating. By doing this, we ensure informed consent as well as confidentiality, which is in line with good research practice outlined by Vetenskapsrådet (2017) in their guidelines on research ethics.

The time for collecting data through the survey amounted to a total of seven days before it was closed due to lack of time. The first half of the survey aimed at collecting information about online consumers' level of skills, knowledge and engagement concerned with online purchases that are made through the smartphone by using parts of Michela et al. (2011) measurement. Measures described in Michela et al. (2011) are used as determinants of *actual consumer power*, these are considered to empower consumers and are therefore used in this study. Using parts of Akhavannasab et al. (2018) framework, the second half of the survey explores consumers' perceived influence and resistance meaning *perceived consumer power* online in the relationship between firms and consumers when making online buying decisions through the smartphone.

As the construct of *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* are human, social factors, there are really two ways which we would go about collecting this data. One would choose to do structured interviews or a survey (Bryman & Bell, 2017). However, the second option was chosen in this study for a few reasons:

a) A survey is more time efficient.
b) A survey is easier to distribute.
c) A survey enables possibilities of measuring and comparing quantifiable concepts.
d) Survey results are easier to convert into statistics.

To create an in-depth understanding of the correlation between the two objects of study a wider theoretical framework would be required through, perhaps, a qualitative research method and structured interviews. However, that was not possible to achieve due to our time restriction for conducting this survey. Therefore, a quantitative method through an online survey was deemed best suitable for data collection since the study is of a comparative nature and aimed at only giving an overall understanding of possible similarities and differences between the two objects of study, as opposed to giving a depth understanding. Since the correlation between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* was yet unestablished, it seemed of more

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value to establish these connections rather than trying to understand the full background just yet.

3.1.2 Sampling and omissions

The sample group in this study consisted of a broad yet purposeful sample-group which is defined by consumers that have at some point in their life bought a product or service online through their smartphone. The sample group was determined through non-probability sampling, using a convenience sampling technique due to lack of time and the convenience of easily finding suitable and willing participants to partake in the study. The non-probability method was best suited in this study since most people online have bought a product or service online through their smartphone and this method is very effective in reaching a vast audience. Saunders et al. (2016) argues that a greater quantity of respondents is preferred in surveys as they produce generalisable results. A smaller sample group is rather considered increasing the chance of producing misleading results and those results can even sometimes only be representative of a small population (Saunders et al., 2016). Therefore, we aimed at obtaining as many respondents as our time restriction allowed. However, the sample group was further restricted due to the language used in the web-survey being Swedish. Ultimately, this constrains the generalizability of the results across other countries. Nevertheless, this decision was taken to widen the accessibility amongst potential respondents as the outlets we used to spread the link consisted of mainly Swedish speaking people. The web-survey generated 51 responses and a total of 17 omissions occurred due to insufficient information provided by the respondents.

3.1.3 Literature

Literature used in this study was mainly collected from scientific articles from Gothenburg University's library database. Google Scholar was also used to find articles and previous studies. The scientific articles used have touched on topics such as power, consumer power and empowerment. These words have also been search terms when looking for literature. The articles used as a basis for this study have been carefully selected and we have ensured that all articles used are peer-reviewed. This was to ensure that they are relevant, of good quality and credible.

3.1.4 Evaluation of sources

An important part of a study revolves around the reliability of information obtained. According to Saunders et al. (2016), a critical review needs to be carried out for the sources and the data used to ensure its quality. This can be checked against different criteria. For the study's collected sources, its validity, relevance and reliability are reviewed in accordance with Saunders et al. (2016), by checking for authenticity, simultaneity, dependency, and tendencies. For our study, authenticity was considered to be achieved as we predominantly used peer-reviewed articles. Articles used in the study were ensured to originate from well-respected scientific journals to the greatest extent possible. Finally, dependency relationships and tendencies are also considered, by checking whether the articles apply primary sources. Tendencies are managed by ensuring that research we use in our study sought objectivity and neutrality to reduce the risks of researchers' personal interests and values interfering with the research.

3.2 Analysis

The following sub-chapter will present our methods for analyzing collected material. Further discussion on quality will be kept to the next, separate chapter on quality assurance.

3.2.1 Correlation analysis

As we want to see how these different concepts connect, we conducted a bivariate analysis of *actual consumer power* and *perceived social power* and *perceived personal power* respectively, as well as comparing *actual consumer power* to the combined variable of *perceived consumer power*. When doing a bivariate analysis it is important to remember that variables that are not accounted for can and will skew the results. Other behavioural factors might play a part, or there could be unknown mediating variables within the decision-making process. As we tested the correlation between these variables, it was also not possible to determine causality using statistical tools like this (Bryman & Bell, 2017).

The questions in the web-survey are developed to find a correlation to three different items, *personal* and *social* consumer power as well as *actual* consumer power.
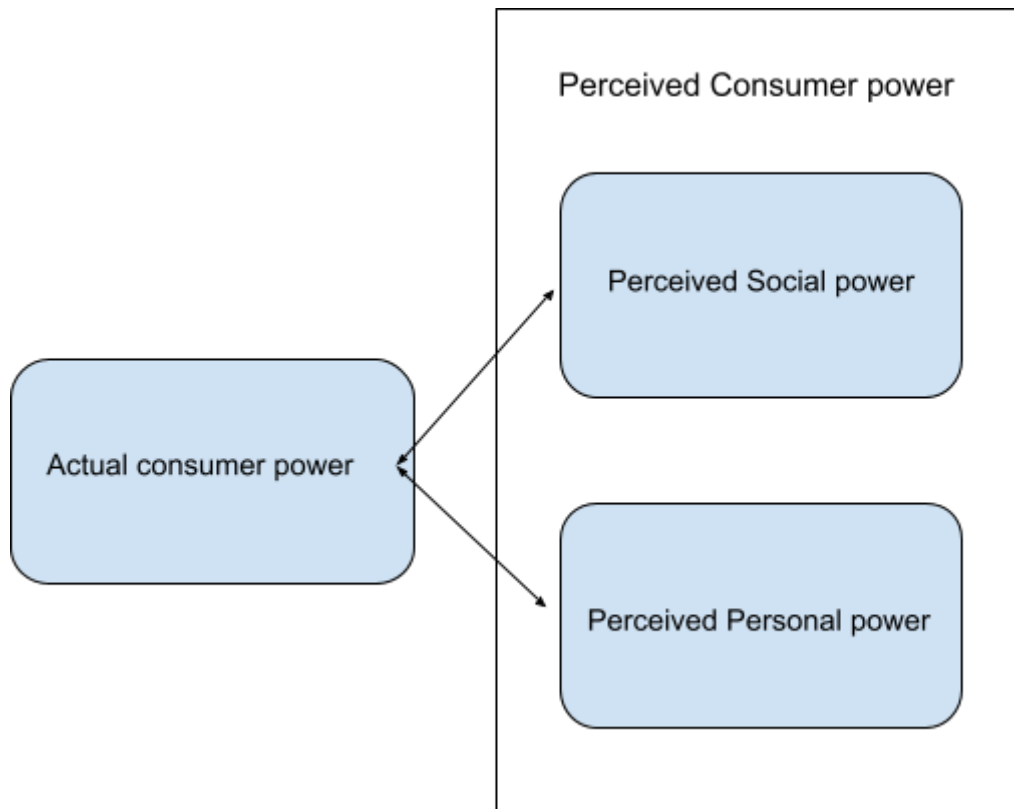
Figure 2. Research model.

3.2.2 Coding and scoring model

The survey results were grouped according to weighted measurements for each question. Every question had a possible high score of 1. Since most questions were yes or no questions (see Appendix 1 for full table), this means these questions were either given a value of 1 for a correct answer or 0 for an incorrect answer. The questions on a Likert scale were given values 0-1 divided into five equal sections. Some questions measuring engagement where participants could fill out a number themselves did not have a clear high score. For these questions we calculated where participants scored on a standard distribution curve after which the responses were again given scores from 0-5. This was done because it is likely that those that answered high values were outliers, therefore other responses should not be scored according to a continuous distribution using these values as a reference. One example of this from the questionnaire is when participants were asked to estimate the number of people, they had talked about a bad consumer experience. If one respondent answers 10 and everyone else has significantly lower responses, using a continuous scale would skew the results so that everyone

else got really low scores on the item. To avoid this, we instead opted for a simplified standard distribution curve as a basis for scoring.

A scoring model was used to determine the degree to which respondents possessed *actual consumer power* as well as *perceived consumer power*. Each item was given a value of 1, which was distributed among the questions in the survey according to their importance. Below is a breakdown of what this can look like. A full coding and scoring overview can be found in the operation table in appendix 3-4:

Item (value):	Categories within actual consumer power (value):	Categories within consumer skills (value):	Questions (value):
Actual Consumer Power (1)	Consumer skills (1/3)	Basic skills (1/6)	Q1 (1/12)
	Consumer awareness (1/3)		Q2 (1/12)
	Consumer engagement (1/3)	Logos and labels (1/6)	Q3 (1/18)
			Q4 (1/18)
			Q5 (1/18)

Table 2. coding and scoring table.

These values were then compared across the items to see if any correlations could be found.

3.2.3 Operationalisation

The questions were taken from the articles presenting our used frameworks and developed to fit our purpose (Michela et al., 2011; Akhavannasab et al., 2022). For *actual consumer power*, skills, awareness, and engagement are understood through a number of sub-items. These are intended to distinguish between consumers' basic knowledge like being able to read labels and recognize logos and understanding of subjects directly related to their rights like guarantees or

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recognizing unfair practices online. Engagement was meant to measure different avenues through which consumers can engage to make sure their rights are protected. For *perceived consumer power*, the survey questions all measure either influence (*perceived social power*) or resistance (*perceived personal power*), having been developed by Akhavannasab et al. (2018).
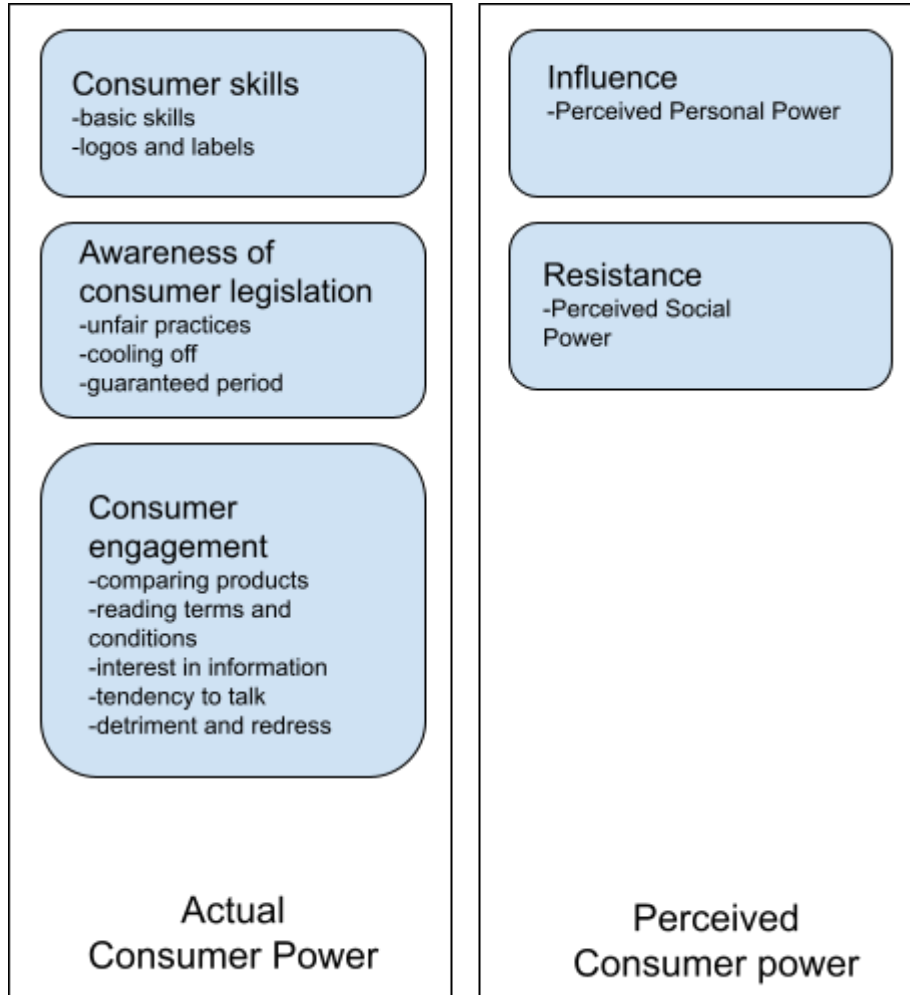
Figure 3. Overview of operationalization.

Full overview of our operationalizations can be found in the appendix. View the survey questions and answer options in appendix 1. For an operationalisation table of the survey questions concerned with *actual consumer power*, view appendix 3. For an operationalisation table of the survey questions concerned with *perceived consumer power*, view appendix 4. Finally, for an operationalisation of questions concerned with demographics, view appendix 5.

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3.3 Quality assurance

In this sub-chapter relevant quality criteria regarding this study will be discussed.

3.3.1 Validity

The general validity of the study measures whether a study fulfills the intended purpose which it has set out to achieve. Ensuring validity means assuring a few different types of validity. Most importantly, conceptual validity refers to how theories are operationalized (Bryman & Bell, 2017). In our study we used survey questions that had been previously tested and proven to work for the intended purpose, ensuring a high validity. There are a few ways in which our study differs from the original purposes of these questions, which should be noted as they affect the validity of this study. When it comes to *perceived consumer power*, in the original study Akhavannasab et al. (2022) measures *perceived consumer power* in relation to the consequences of *perceived consumer power* which are defined as cognitive, behavioural and emotional aspects of *perceived consumer power* in Akhavannasab et al. (2018). For our study, we only used the questions related to *perceived consumer power* specifically, rather than comparing *perceived consumer power* to its consequences, we instead focused on *actual consumer power* as a possible consequence of *perceived consumer power*. To make sure we had a more complete coverage of *perceived consumer power* in relation to *actual consumer power* we used questions specifically formulated to research *perceived consumer power* in online environment, as well as questions which were formulated and tested to research consumer power in situations where consumers find themselves negotiating with firms, like when buying a TV-plan or something similar. We adjusted these questions only very slightly to instead fit our described scenario of purchasing a product online through the smartphone. Accordingly, it needs to be noted that results might differ from the original study for scores achieved on *perceived consumer power*, as our participants were not asked to assess a situation of direct negotiation, which likely would impact perceptions of power in the given situation. This affects the validity of the study as formulated questions from the Akhavannasab et al. (2018) study was not intended specifically for our purpose. Despite this, using questions that have been previously tested seemed most natural for our study as we had the intention to understand previous theoretical applications of power, as well as practical implications. Using previously used questions enables more direct comparison, giving higher validity (Bryman & Bell, 2017).

The more important factor when determining conceptual validity for our study comes when discussing *actual consumer power*. In creating our measurement for *actual consumer power*, we used a very specific definition of consumer power, not necessarily rooted in scientific tradition but rather a politically defined measurement. The intended purpose for this measurement is to enable consumers to be empowered, which is also a goal for our study. The differences when it comes to application of this measurement chart is mostly a larger dependency on formulating our own questions as they relate to more contemporary and online-based issues then those created for the original framework. This is increasing the validity in that it increases the relevancy to our intended purpose. However, using a measurement not previously tested increases possibilities for formulations of questions to be inexact. Still, most of the issues with validity here rather stem from the narrow conceptual definition of power. In this, we disregard many dimensions which inform what could be considered direct and indirect influence on consumers. Our judgment led us to conclude that having a broader definition of power would mean using multiple different methods to make any legitimate conclusions. An analysis like this would mean both observing many different actors and require a more qualitative research approach. Our correlation analysis will show a correlation between *perceived consumer power* and *actual consumer power*, the second being defined through consumer skills, awareness and engagement. Many more possible aspects of *actual consumer power* do exist. These other aspects, i.e., the ideological aspect, could only be measured by communicating with the consumers themselves. However, we believe our definition of *actual consumer power* does support our validity in another way. Bryman & Bell (2017) also describe ecological validity as one of the main types of validity. This aims to show whether a study can be applied in practice. In our case, the study can be useful in the sense that it can create value for consumers, marketers, researchers, firms as well as political institutions, since we support a politically motivated vision of consumer empowerment. We will discuss all these aspects more specifically when discussing the implications of the study in a future section. All of this increases the practical applications and usefulness, thus the ecological validity. The validity is therefore considered to maintain a good level for the study in line with Saunders et al. (2016) measures.

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3.3.2 Reliability & Replicability

Reliability is an important consideration to provide reliable and stable results (Bryman & Bell, 2017). Reliability is relevant when conducting quantitative studies to find out if the results are affected by random or temporary causes. One aspect of reliability is the internal reliability according to Bryman & Bell (2017). We believe that the internal reliability is high as the indicators that have been applied are well-founded concepts that are operationalised in several research studies including Akhavannasab et al. (2022) and Michela et al. (2011). According to Saunders et al. (2016) something that can threaten to reduce the reliability of the study could be that a respondent chooses to take the web-survey at a time when they are not in the right state of mind. This can make the respondent want to speed up their participation in the survey and answer without reading the questions properly. Another threat can also be that the respondents do not understand or interpret the survey questions in the way we intend for the question to be interpreted. By testing the questionnaire with a pilot survey, the risk of this happening would be minimized. However, as we were limited on time due to delays in meeting deadlines, this was simply not possible. A lot of thought was also given to the length of the questionnaire since in some cases, time consuming surveys mean that the respondent gets tired when answering the questionnaire or does not answer it at all. Consequently, this resulted in the survey being designed to be quick to answer in order to minimize these threats. We also chose to eliminate certain dimensions that are accounted for in the studies we were inspired by originally to shorten the length of the survey. Since we aimed at only providing an overall understanding of the correlation between *perceived consumer power* and *actual consumer power*, this transition was not deemed to be in interference with the results.

As Bryman & Bell (2017) explain, it is generally desired that results in research are influenced as little as possible by the researcher's values and self-interests to make the study as objective as possible, which facilitates replicability. The replicability is thus managed by explaining the procedures in detail. In our study, this was achieved by explaining the methodology thoroughly. In this method chapter, all aspects of the study necessary for replication are justified and explained. Reproducibility is closely linked to reliability as it deals with the extent to which a new study can produce equivalent results, as Bryman & Bell (2017) also describe. In our opinion, the study is conducted and explained in such a way that replication can be carried out. However, we consider it more appropriate to carry out the study on a more comprehensive

level, both survey respondents in number and with more concepts included to investigate the connections.

3.4 Methodology criticism

Using a quantitative method felt natural to us, and we managed to collect survey responses from a variety of different consumers in terms of gender, age, and class. This helps to create more generalized results, enabled by the quantitative method. The number of responses were enough to draw conclusions about the correlation between the two variables. A more elaborate discussion of the results would be possible had we received more responses. Since the scope for our sample group is wide, ranging from all ages, every gender, and all incomes, this increases the risk of connections between these background variables going undetected, due to the small amount of collected responses. As mentioned previously, this correlation has not been researched before, therefore it is most convenient to look at a broad sample group as we are interested in laying out the foundation of this concept rather than creating an in-depth understanding of a specific population of consumers.

When it comes to the survey method, it is never possible to control possible unintended interpretations of questions within the survey as we have no direct connection to the people answering the survey. Making sure the intention of the question matches the interpretation was particularly hard using our measurements of *actual consumer power* since certain questions regarding knowledge could not be too leading. The intention was to test if respondents had the needed skills to answer correctly without interfering with the answers of respondents by giving subtle clues to the correct answer. This could have been complemented with a pre-study where respondents would have been interviewed on their interpretation of questions, as to make sure that their interpretations matched our intentions.

Furthermore, the survey was web-based, which gave respondents the opportunity to take the survey on their smartphone or other devices that have access to the online sphere. This often creates greater omissions, since consumers can feel less responsible and more distracted when filling something out online, meaning more respondents might have abandoned the survey halfway then what would have happened otherwise (Bryman & Bell, 2017).

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Due to technological difficulties with the Qualtrics website, answering the Likert scale questions was difficult and therefore a lot of respondents skipped past those questions. This could have been prevented if the question type was altered if we had carried out a pilot survey to detect this error sooner. Despite our wishes, conducting a pilot survey was not possible due to our time restriction.

4. Results and analysis

In this section we will present our results in the form of tables, followed by analysis of the results grounded in our hypotheses.

4.1 Respondents scores

Most of the respondents scored between 40-80% on *actual consumer power* and *personal consumer power*, while the scores for *actual consumer power* and *social consumer power* were lower among all respondents, most ranging from 17-60 %. In the graph below, it is shown what each respondent has answered, with 30 valid responses being recorded where it was possible to score each variable. When sorted from the lowest to highest scores, all three have a similar pattern.
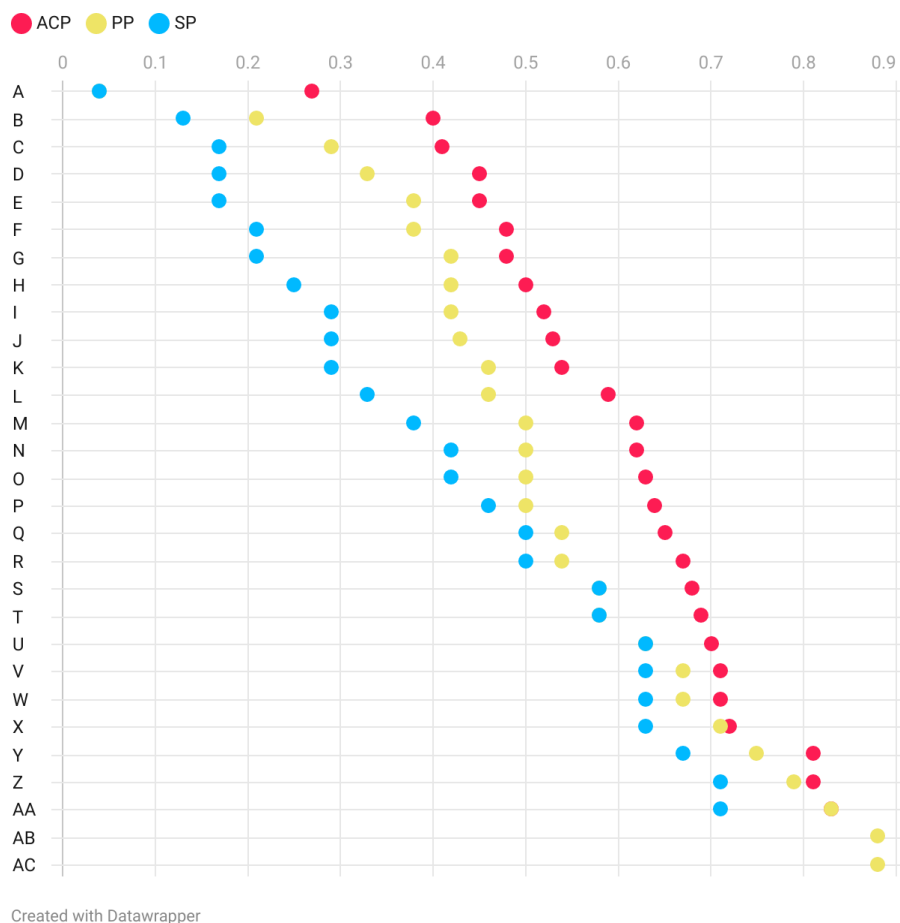

Figure 4. Scored values on actual consumer power (ACP), perceived personal power (PP), and perceived social power (SP). These values are sorted from high to low individually.

Most respondents had a low income, half reporting earnings lower than 150 000 SEK a year. Most of these were under 26, only 2 of the respondents above this age reporting a similar income. 20 of 34 of the respondents were under 26 years old, with 6 of them reporting an income above 150 000. Of the 14 respondents above 26, 5 reported an income between 250-500 000 SEK and 5 reported an income of above 500 000 SEK.

More men than women answered the survey, with about 60% women and 40% men. Men on average estimated their *personal consumer power* higher than women, while these differences were negligible *for social consumer power* as well as *actual consumer power*. Men scored an average of 63% on *personal consumer power*, while women scored an average of 48%.

4.2 Correlation between actual consumer power and perceived consumer power

After looking at the scores individually, we look to understand each respondents scores on respective variables, and the relations between these. When looking at individual responses and their correlation, we can see *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* do correlate, confirming our first hypothesis:

H1: The degree to which consumers possess perceived consumer power online has a positive correlation to actual consumer power.

Scatter Plot of ACP by PCP
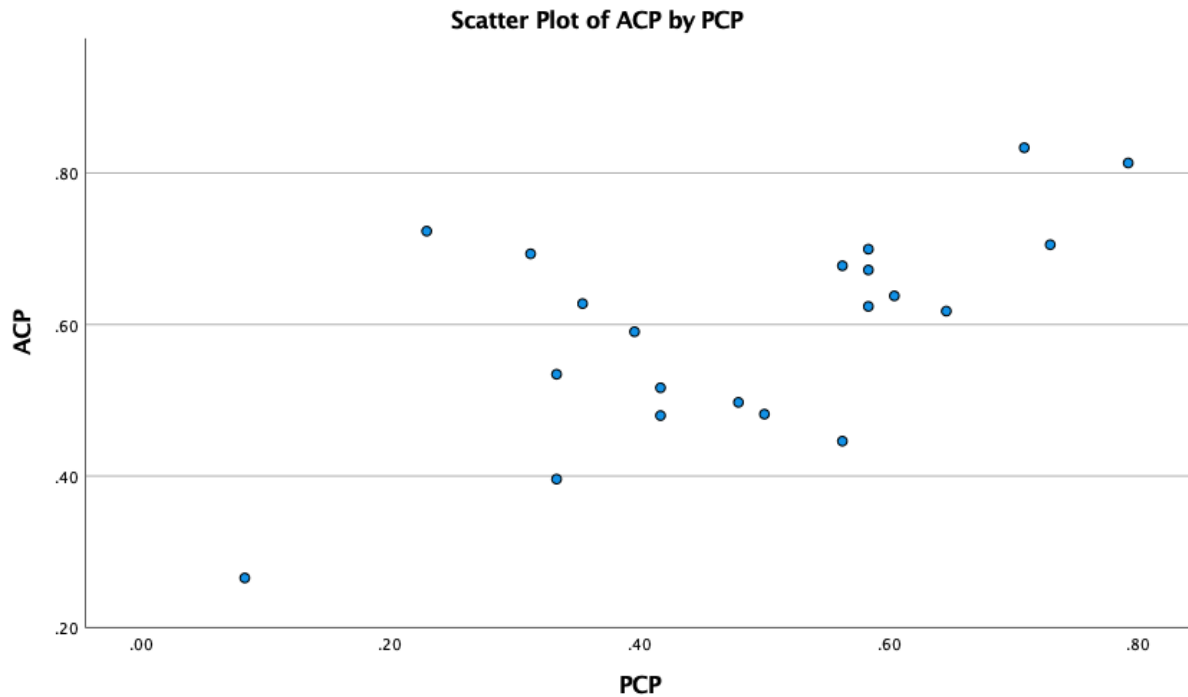
Figure 5. Relationship between actual consumer power (ACP) and perceived consumer power (PCP). Both values are scored according to a possible score of 100%, 1.00. Values showing 1.00 show a maximum score, while 0.00 indicates a minimum. Here, the relation is shown based on scores by individual respondents.

The positive correlation between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* is significant at over 95%, and follows a weak correlation pattern of 0.615. This means that *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* are connected, but are not clear indicators of one another.

		Actual Consumer Power	Perceived Consumer Power
Actual Consumer Power	Pearson corr.	1	0.615
	Significance		0.003
	N.o valid responses	27	21

Perceived Consumer Power	Pearson corr.	0.615	1
	Significance	0.003	
	N.o. valid responses	21	26

Table 3. Correlation between actual consumer power and perceived consumer power.

Seeing this correlation, we want to argue that consumers' perceptions of their own consumer power is often connected to their *actual consumer power.* but consumers do usually estimate their own power correctly. However, they do not usually estimate their own power with precision. We also see higher values scored on *actual consumer power* showing greater variance in *perceived consumer power* scores, possibly hinting that the disparity is bigger among skilled consumers than among those who don't have as much applied knowledge. Our results also include a skew towards the age-group 25-29 year old, which in Sweden was one of the lowest scoring groups (Michela et al., 2011). Our results do share similar scores on *actual consumer power*, being slightly lower. This could be influenced by a choice to code engagement differently than has been done by Michela et al. (2011) or because these results have changed over time. In general, this means according to our study, consumers in general have relatively little knowledge concerning online purchase and how to apply their consumer rights. Consumers online likely have little access to information, as well as few avenues to enforce their rights. They also don't perceive themselves as being very powerful, but rather have a moderate approach to their rights and perceived influence and resistance as a whole. Consumers online do however seem to be able to assess their *actual consumer power* to the degree that they are likely to understand when they are being manipulated.

4.3 Actual Consumer Power in relation to Perceived Social and Personal Consumer Power

Analyzing our data through the separated values of *perceived personal power* and *perceived social power* we can confirm our other two hypotheses.

*H2: The degree to which consumers possess personal consumer power has a positive correlation to actual consumer power*

H3: The degree to which consumers possess social consumer power has a positive correlation to actual consumer power.

In the following graph, the correlation between actual consumer power and personal consumer power is shown, where we see a general trend of higher personal power scores correlating with higher actual power scores for individual respondents. Each dot represents one respondent's respective scores.
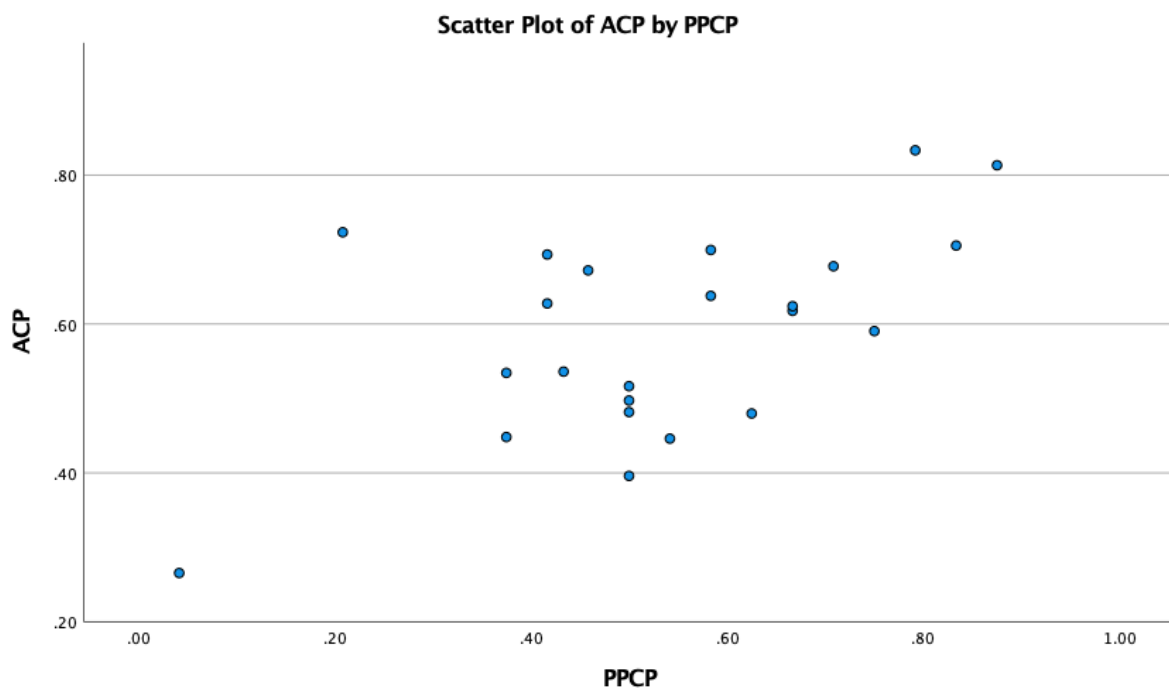
Figure 6. Relationship between actual consumer power (ACP) and perceived personal power (PPCP). Both values are scored according to a possible score of 100%, 1.00. Values showing 1.00 show a maximum score, while 0.00 indicates a minimum.

We see a similar pattern for social consumer power, with some more variance across the board than with personal power.
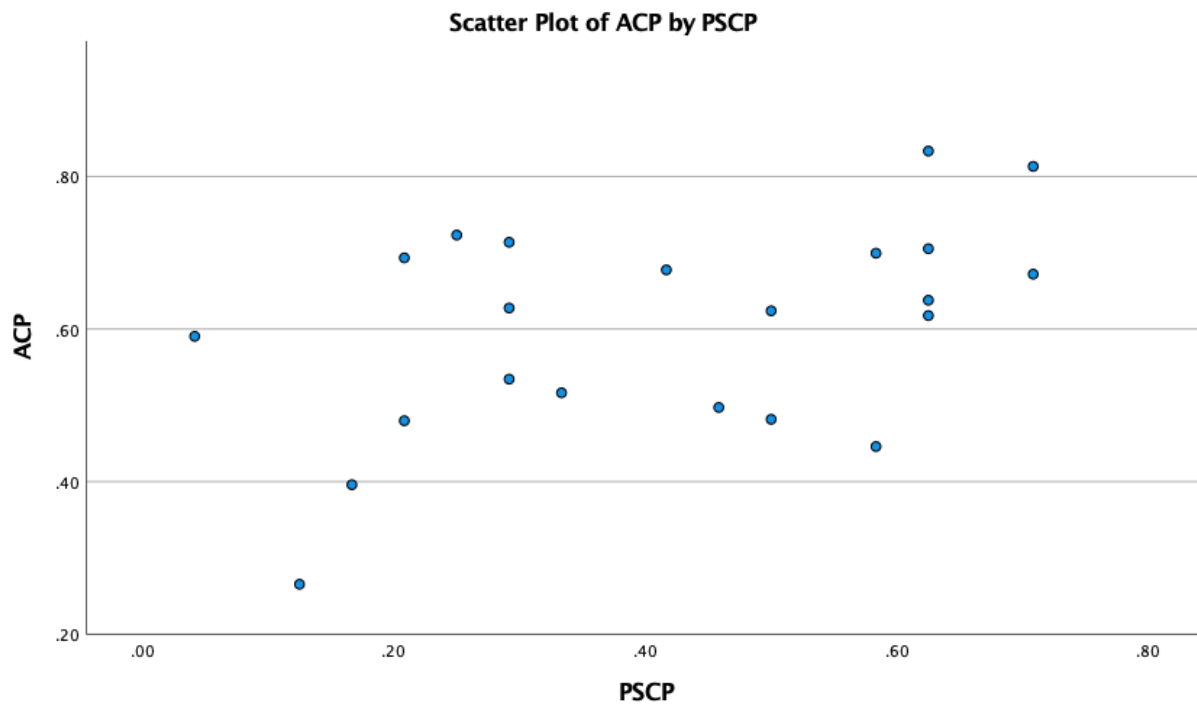
Figure 7. Relationship between actual consumer power (ACP) and perceived social consumer power (PSCP). Both values are scored according to a possible score of 100%, 1.00. Values showing 1.00 show a maximum score, while 0.00 indicates a minimum.

The correlation between actual consumer power and social and personal perceived consumer power is weaker than the correlation between actual consumer power and perceived consumer power when generalized, at 0,578 and 0,472 respectively.

		Actual Consumer Power	Perceived Personal power	Perceived social power
Actual Consumer Power	Pearson corr.	1	0.578	0.472
	Significance		0.004	0.026
	N.o. valid responses	27	23	22

Table 4. Correlation between actual consumer power and perceived personal power and perceived social power respectively.

We can see a stronger correlation between *perceived personal power and actual consumer power* than between *perceived social power* and *actual consumer power*. This means that consumers are likely better at estimating their own abilities to *resist* messaging and marketing efforts, but not as good at estimating their own *influence* on firms. It has to be noted that since we saw a difference in mens and womens scores here, it is likely that men's scores are skewing the results somewhat. This correlation does confirm Akhavannasabs et al. (2018) idea that perceived influence and resistance do lead to empowerment as we do see *actual consumer power* springing from both of these. Consumers that feel empowered do become engaged and likely seek and identify correct knowledge. This relationship however, is of course not causal, but merely correlational. Meaning, we do not know if consumers that have knowledge of their rights will develop confidence in their knowledge. We also cannot conclude whether confident consumers know how to seek out correct information. It is also here, again, relevant to note the difference found between the male and the female participants, where scores differed somewhat on *perceived personal power*.

Considering the limitations of our measurement as well for *actual consumer power*, this indicates that consumers possessing basic financial skills as well as the ability and motivation to apply them usually do feel more powerful when in communication with firms. As it pertains to our research question, this means *perceived consumer power* can indicate the level of *actual consumer power* consumers maintain online using our measurements.

5. Discussion

In this section we will broaden the perspective of our results, relating them to concepts discussed in our theoretical and extra-disciplinary background. We will discuss possible implications of the study, attempting to understand our results from a broader view.

5.1 Consumer ability to identify manipulation

The findings of this study support the notion that consumers have power over their own purchase decisions online. As previously discussed, a study conducted by Solitaired (2021) showed that smartphone users were unaware of their screen time consumption and therefore we conducted this study to see if the same phenomenon occurred amongst smartphone users in the context of consumer power online. However, our results show otherwise. Consumers are generally aware of their *actual consumer power* in the online sphere as their sense of *perceived consumer power* matches their level of *actual consumer power*. Our results of to which degree consumers exert *perceived personal power* and *perceived social power* matches Akhavannasab et al. (2022) study results, meaning that the correlation between *perceived personal power* and *actual consumer power* is stronger than the correlation between *perceived social power* and *actual consumer power*. This translates into the notion that consumers are better at estimating their resistance to marketing, and not equally able to estimate their influence on firms.

Moreover, the knowledge that is generated from this study is in line with previous research that indicates technological progress is enabling online consumers to make informed purchase decisions (Bickart, & Schindler, 2001; Urban, 2005; Labrecque et al., 2013; Barcelos et al., 2018; Akhavannasab et al., 2022). The findings of our study confirms the notion that when consumers' level of knowledge and awareness increases, the degree to which consumers feel they have power to influence firms and resist their persuasive efforts online also increases. However, the correlation analysis of the survey does not provide any detail of whether or not *actual consumer power* leads to *perceived consumer power* or the other way around as it only manifests that there is a correlation between the two variables of study.

As Michela et al. (2011) refers to *actual consumer power* as consisting of consumer skills, knowledge and engagement. This is the definition of knowledge applied in our study, leading

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us to the result that this type of knowledge (Michela et al., 2011) has an increasing effect on consumers' sense of power (Akhavannasab et al., 2022). Ultimately this translates into the belief that when consumers' level of knowledge concerned with online purchases is increased, this increases consumers' perceived feeling of having power over their own buying decisions online.

A close connection between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* could mean consumers know when they are being manipulated and know how and when to resist social media messaging. As social media does expose users to an information overload (Dhar, 1997), a knowledge of consumer rights and the good understanding of one's own power shown in our research could mean consumers recognize their own ability within the online sphere. Like the social media users discussing how their exposure to social media has influenced their self-image (SVT, 2022), consumers know when they are being rendered powerless and subject to influence. Just as well, they recognize when they do have the ability to influence firms.

5.2 Obstacles to consumer power

Consumers can still be manipulated because of addictions, technological advances such as photoshopped material that can be made impossible to detect or perhaps that the information given online is incorrect or incomplete. For instance, if someone pretends on social media that they have not had cosmetic surgery, it is very difficult to determine that this person is lying even when you are aware and have knowledge that such things are common on Instagram, beginning the cycle of manipulations as indicated by SVT (2022). In a perfect world, marketers and influencers are obedient to the law and do not indulge in misleading advertisements or even incorrect or insufficient advertisements. However, this is not the case. There will always be people who provide incorrect or incomplete information, so it is difficult to make an assessment of consumers' *actual consumer power* based on the information available to consumers online. It should still, again, be noted here that the correlation between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* found in our study does not answer if *actual consumer power* leads to *perceived consumer power* but rather begs the question whether the knowledge available to consumers online is adequate to determine *actual consumer power*. However, since our research aims at only looking at the correlation of *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power*, we are confident that this assessment of consumers' level of *actual consumer power* is good enough to indicate a correlation between the variables.

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Although this is true for our study, a wider theoretical framework is required to create an in-depth understanding of *actual consumer power* where more dimensions are taken into consideration in future research to further discuss this topic.

Algorithms as a tool of subliminal control may not be as powerful as some literature suggests (Bilic, 2016; Yeung 2017). As *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* do correlate, this would mean that while companies might be able to manipulate consumers, consumers have the ability to be aware of this manipulation. Since consumers do seem to be able to decode relevant messaging, the platforms can be assumed to make available what consumers consider a good product. This is in agreement with Darmody & Zwick (2020) who assert that for marketers to adhere to standards pertaining to consumer rights, firms should strive to act in symbiosis with consumers, and focus on creating algorithms and relations of increasing relevance to consumers, as the obstacle to consumer empowerment is irrelevant content (Darmody & Zwick, 2020). Tech-platforms do still have a gate-keeping role, but the question that arises from this is whether this influences consumers' decisions, rather than restricting them in smaller ways. Using the idea of relevance as a lens through which to see our results, the goal of marketers could be to increase relevance as suggested by Darmody & Zwick (2020). Consumers do seem to have a grasp of their weaknesses and strengths in relation to firms, meaning the main obstacle would be the information overload online, which could be helped by considering relevance. However, as we have discussed earlier we also have to acknowledge again the individual nature of our measurement of *actual consumer power*. As the connection established is only based on acquired skills, we cannot fully answer questions of whether consumers do influence firms, only that they have the ability and motivation to do so. There could be obstacles in place, like those discussed by previous research, in the form of data mining to identify difficult customers, preventing them from issuing complaints (Arbel & Shapira, 2020).

5.3 Protection of consumer rights

As Denegri-Knott (2019) suggests, we also need to see power as a multidimensional concept, with both covert as well as direct influence being maintained among many different actors. As we have researched power from a sovereign perspective, meaning focusing our research on individual perceptions and agency, we can show that online consumers do understand their own agency online, yet missing is still the hegemonic perspective of external sources of influence.

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A sovereign perspective possibly benefits marketers, as it focuses on consumers' felt empowerment and satisfaction. We want to argue that a hegemonic perspective on power can be of benefit to marketers. Our understanding of *actual consumer power* can be considered inspired by a hegemonic research tradition since it assumes consumers need to be protected against manipulation by firms. Still, our application of it does focus on sovereignty as we relate it to *perceived consumer power*. Understanding power from a hegemonic perspective, means consumers as well as marketers benefit not only in the short term, but also in the long term when consumers' interests are protected. Making sure that consumers as a group benefit from consumption is needed to keep the market alive, as this is only possible through consumption. Protecting consumers' interests means sometimes firms need to prioritize the interests of everyone possibly affected by their business, as "power inhibits the identification and realization of real needs and instead implants desires and thoughts which serve the long-term interests of a ruling class" (p. 294, Denegri-Knott, 2019). Firms need to protect the interests of everyone they are involved with, or that is affected by their business, to secure long term survival of the consumer market. So, what does protection mean in relation to consumers' awareness of their own weakness to be manipulated or power to influence? Likely, firms can trust consumers who are satisfied with services or products provided, as our results would indicate consumer satisfaction being correlated to a real need.

Our results also support the importance of government programs to increase knowledge among consumers, as we do not know whether it is the perception of power that motivates skill acquisition, or if learned skills creates confidence in perceived power.

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6. Conclusions

In this section you will be introduced to the main results of our study, the implications, limitations and lastly, followed by a discussion of further research.

6.1 Correlation between *perceived consumer power* and *actual consumer power*

The study intended to investigate whether there is any connection between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer powe*r. Subsequently, this provides knowledge whether perceived consumer power can indicate *actual consumer power* among online consumers. The study was based on previous construct definitions for *actual consumer power* (Michela et al., 2011) and *perceived consumer power* (Akhavannasab et al., 2022). Delimitations have been made to the dimensions we chose to look at when measuring the different constructs as some dimensions that originally are accounted for when measuring *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* are not accounted for in our study in order for the study to be feasible. The research question was formulated as follows:

RQ: Can perceived consumer power indicate actual consumer power among online consumers?

To answer the purpose of the study, the collected data was analyzed, and the data underwent statistical tests. Based on the results of the study, it was concluded that the results indicate a positive correlation between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* in the online sphere amongst online consumers in relation to online buying decisions that are made through the smartphone. Online consumers who obtained a high level of *actual consumer power* during purchase decisions online also obtained a high level of *perceived consumer power*. Likewise, decreased levels of *actual consumer power* showed decreased levels of *perceived consumer power.* This data indicates that online consumers' perceived sense of being able to resist persuasive efforts, as well as independent online decision-making, matches the degree to which consumers possess consumer skills, consumer awareness and consumer

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engagement. This means that even if a disparity does exist between consumers *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power*, consumers are more able to resist and identify manipulation than previously assumed. This could indicate that research focusing on hegemonic as well as sovereign perspectives might be helped by understanding consumers' individual needs and assessments. We would also argue that this correlation strengthens the motivation for firms to protect consumer rights, as consumers do seem to be aware of their limitations and possibilities. The conclusion is drawn that the main purpose has been achieved as we have presented data that constitutes the notion that there is a positive correlation between *perceived consumer power* and *actual consumer power* among online consumers in the context of online buying decisions that are made through the smartphone. The broader purpose has also been achieved since these results indicate implications for firms, researchers and consumers themselves.

6.2 Implications

This study has investigated the correlation between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power*. Previous research has focused on either examining *perceived consumer power* or *actual consumer power*. Hence, we chose to look at the correlation between these variables as previous studies have indicated that online consumers' perception can differ from reality (i.e. Solitaired, 2021). This study has contributed to a greater understanding within the field of consumer research regarding the correlation between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* concerned with online buying decisions that are made through the smartphone. This correlation has been unvisited previously, therefore this study creates many possibilities for researchers to fill in the research gap that currently prevails ever since we identified this void.

As we present knowledge about consumer power, this creates possibilities for marketers to understand this construct and, perhaps, create better consumer experiences by intentionally increasing consumers *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* in the online sphere. For firms this could mean implementing strategies ensuring that consumer rights are being protected as well as perceived consumer empowerment strengthened through opportunities for consumer-firm communication. One strategy that could be implemented is that proposed by Darmody & Zwick (2020), who argue that firms can ensure consumer empowerment through making sure that consumers are only exposed to content that is relevant

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to them. This is in line with our research as this strategy could enhance *perceived consumer power* if consumers feel they can influence what content is presented to them. Since *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* are connected, this would aid in strengthening both. It is also a strategy that benefits *actual consumer power* as it nullifies the intention to manipulate consumers. This would be mutually beneficial for firms as well as consumers.

Other scholars also argue that the degree to which consumers feel empowered leads to satisfaction and confidence with buying decisions (Wathieu et al., 2002; Hunter & Garnefeld, 2008; Pranić & Roehl, 2013) in the relationship with firms in the online sphere (Chang, 2008). Consumer satisfaction could be considered being in firms' best interest to create. This is due to the fact that it determines a firm's destiny when it comes to sales and brand reputation as discussed previously by strategic consultant Simon Mainwaring in (Forbes, 2011).

On the other hand, consumers also stand to gain from this study by leveraging knowledge about their own consumer power. Perhaps, by learning more about the construct of *actual consumer power* from this study. Consumers can increase their level of *actual consumer power* to subsequently fuel the degree to which they are empowered in the context of online buying decisions (Michela et al., 2011). We believe that when consumers are equipped with more knowledge about their own *actual consumer power*, this then protects consumers' from being manipulated by insufficient marketing advertisements online and thus protects their statutory rights online in accordance with the goal of the European Commission (COM 2020). Consumer empowerment is especially important to achieve as it helps consumers to navigate their consumer experiences online (Cova & Pace, 2006). Meaning, when consumers are made aware of how to become empowered online and strive to achieve that, they become more in charge of their online buying decisions. For instance, empowered consumers are enabled to act against firms in case of inconvenience Harrison et al., 2006; and to co-create value (Karpen et al., 2015), which in turn relates back to consumer satisfaction (Chang, 2008; Hunter & Garnefeld, 2008).

When viewed in this way, it solidifies what the knowledge provided by this study implicates for marketers and consumers as we identify whether *perceived consumer power* can indicate *actual consumer power* among online consumers.

6.3 Limitations and future research

We consider the lack of time as a limitation of this study. The lack of time meant that the number of respondents in the survey was limited. More respondents could have participated in the survey had there been more time than seven days to collect data. Nonetheless, we are still satisfied with the number of people that chose to participate and we consider the results to be satisfactory. However, the advantage of a bigger timeframe to collect data would allow us to delve into the survey questions even more and initiate interviews with randomly selected respondents to make sure the messaging of the questions is received correctly and confirm if respondents' answers are accurate to their beliefs. This would have contributed to a deeper understanding of the correlation had there been an opportunity to ask follow-up questions additionally to the survey questions. By asking follow-up questions, the respondents would have the opportunity to justify and defend why they answered as they did, as well as justify other aspects that are not included in this survey.

Another limitation is the choice of conducting a survey. By making the survey available on online platforms and randomly distributing it in different neighborhoods, it allows completely random people to participate. Some respondents may, for instance, choose to answer as someone else because they do not want to be embarrassed in front of someone sitting next to them since the subject of knowledge, influence and resistance can be sensitive to some people. Another issue might be imposters who aim to sabotage the results by clicking randomly on different answers that don't really match. Hopefully, this did not occur in our study, however we cannot say for certain that this did not happen. Consequently, this matter becomes a limitation in our study since it is impossible to know. Hence, it is of great importance to be critical of the result even though the correlation is of significance.

As we chose to conduct a survey, another limitation becomes the individual focus of the study. Future studies could take broader perspectives on *actual consumer power* specifically, possibly using more qualitative aspects to understand the role firms play in influencing consumers. As there are many different actors in the online sphere, future research could focus more on government agencies, tech firms, or marketing agencies and their role in forming *actual consumer power*. Many more dimensions of *actual consumer power* exist and would add to creating a comprehensive view of consumer possibilities to act empowered online.

Since we only looked at the correlation between *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power*, we can only speculate that *actual consumer power* leads to *perceived consumer power*, and vice versa. The matter of which direction consumer power flows, whether the consequence of obtaining *actual consumer power* results in *perceived consumer power* is nothing that can be confirmed with this study. Meaning that consumers' level of consumer skills, consumer awareness of statutory rights and consumer engagement do not necessarily mean that this increases online consumers' perceived sense of having influence over firms online. This study also does not indicate that *actual consumer power* generates a perceived feeling of online consumers' ability to maintain resistance as well as forming purchase decisions independently, free from the influence of online Firm's persuasive efforts. This leads us to propose the idea that further research on the topic of consumer power online could investigate this matter as it would provide more knowledge of how consumer power in the online sphere is developed. This could possibly be done by researching more specific scenarios, where it will be possible to understand the process of empowerment and the directionality between *perceived consumer power* and *actual consumer power*.

The knowledge of this correlation can possibly help marketers create better consumer experiences as information of what determines consumer power online is further developed by understanding this relationship on a deeper level. Furthermore, future research could investigate other populations other than swedes as we chose to do, to see if the findings of our study can be generalisable across other nations. Information access online looks different in other countries, therefore it would be of value to investigate how this affects *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power*, since knowledge is an important determinant of *actual consumer power*. Future research could even investigate the relationship between *actual consumer power* and *perceived social power* as well as *actual consumer power* and *perceived personal power* separately to navigate the relationship between the variables more thoroughly than it has been executed in this study. This is due to the fact that our biggest focus in this study was to look at *actual consumer power* and *perceived consumer power* where the two variables (*perceived personal power* and *perceived social power*) that make up *perceived consumer power* were conjoined.

What can be concluded from this chapter is that there are many limitations in our study and many possibilities for future researchers to develop more knowledge about this subject.

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8. Appendix

8.1 Appendix 1, Survey

Hej! Tack för att du vill medverka i vår undersökning! Vi är två studenter på Handelshögskolan i Göteborg som skriver en kandidatuppsats inom området konsumentmakt. Ditt deltagande är anonymt och svaren kommer endast att användas i forskningssyfte. Undersökningen tar ungefär 10 min att genomföra och vi ser gärna till att du svarar på frågorna så intuitivt som möjligt.

Du har också en chans att vinna en biobiljett om du svarar på alla frågor!

Lägg in din mejl här om du vill delta i lottningen för en biobiljett! (frivilligt)
- Ange din mejl här:

Q1 Nedan ser du samma skärbräda på rea på två olika hemsidor. På vilken av dessa har skärbrädan mest prisvärd?

Välj ett av alternativen:
- Alternativ 1
- Alternativ 2
- Osäker/Vill inte svara

Q2 Vilken är den bästa räntan på ditt spar- eller inbetalningskonto?

- 0,3%
- 2%
- 3%
- Osäker/Vill inte svara

Q3 Hur många gram fett innehåller paketet?

Näringsvärde per 100g:

Energi	2789 kJ/678 kcal
Fett	75 g
varav mättat fett	33 g
varav enkelomättat fett	28 g
varav fleromättat fett	8,7 g
Kolhydrat	0,4 g
varav sockerarter	0,4 g
Protein	0,4 g
Salt	1,2 g
Vitamin A	950 µg (119% av DRI*)
Vitamin D	20 µg (400% av DRI*)

*Dagligt referensintag

- Fyll i med siffror:
- Osäker/Vill inte svara

Q4 När går produkten ut?

- Fyll i enligt DD-MM-ÅÅ:
- Osäker/Vill inte svara

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Q5 Vilken av dessa statements matchar dessa logotyper?
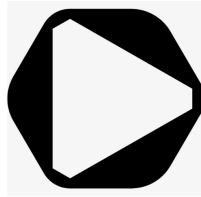
Sortera följande statements så att de stämmer överens med siffrorna intill logotyperna ovan.

1. Hemelektronik till bästa pris

2. Kläder, skor och accessoarer online

3. Brett sortiment, låga priser

Q6 Du får upp reklam för en streamingtjänst som anger att du får en gratis provperiod på 60 dagar om du är ny kund. När du går in på hemsidan upptäcker du att du behöver betala en låg medlemsavgift för tillgång till rabatten. Är denna reklam laglig eller olaglig?

● Laglig

● Olaglig

● Osäker/Vill inte svara

Q7 Vilka av reglerna gäller vid reklam på sociala medier? (Markera alla alternativ som stämmer)

● Är det reklam kan du markera att det är i samarbete med ett företag för att visa att det är ett sponsrat inlägg.

● Du måste ange att det är reklam i början av inlägget eller på ett annat sätt göra en tydlig distinktion till annat innehåll.

● Det är ditt ansvar att se till att information du delar i marknadsföringssyfte stämmer.

● Osäker/Vill inte svara.

Q8 Du har beställt en vara online, tror du att du har rätt att göra en retur på varan fyra dagar efter att du fått den och få pengarna tillbaka utan att ge en anledning?

● Ja

● Nej

● Osäker/Vill inte svara

Q9 Du har tecknat en bilförsäkring online som börjar gälla 25 dagar efter att du tecknat denna. Om du hittar ett bättre erbjudande 6 dagar efter att du signerat avtalet, kan du fortfarande byta avtal?

- Ja
- Nej
- Osäker/Vill inte svara

Q10 Du har köpt en ny kyl för 18 månader sen och den går sönder. Du har inte köpt till någon garanti. Har du rätt att få den reparerad eller utbytt utan kostnad?

- Ja
- Nej
- Osäker/Vill inte svara

Q11 Senaste gången du köpt en produkt, som exempelvis en hushållsapparat eller elektronik av något slag. Vilka av följande använde du för att kunna utvärdera köpet? Ange alla som stämmer.

- Hemsidor för att jämföra pris (tex. pricerunner, prisjakt)
- Hemsidor som samlar recensioner (tex trustpilot, yelp)
- Råd från vänner eller familj.
- Recensioner på hemsidan där du köper produkten.

Q12 Under de senaste 12 månaderna, har du jämfört produktpriser utifrån pris per enhet, det vill säga kilo eller literpris tex?

- Ja
- Nej
- Osäker/Vill inte svara

Q13 Senaste gången du signerade ett köp av en tjänst online som exempelvis ett elavtal eller ett mobilabonnemang. Läste du igenom villkoren i avtalet?

- Ja
- Nej
- Osäker/Vill inte svara

Q14 Hur ofta söker du information kring vad du kan göra efter att du köpt en felaktig produkt online?

- Ofta
- Ibland
- Sällan
- Aldrig
- Osäker/Vill inte svara

Q15 Senast du hade ett problem som konsument i form av exempelvis dålig service, en felaktig produkt, kontakt med ett företag eller något annat kopplat till ett onlineköp. Till hur många personer i din närhet berättade du om detta problem för?

- Fyll i med siffror:
- Osäker/Vill inte svara

Q16 Senast du hade en positiv upplevelse som konsument. Till hur många personer i din närhet berättade du om denna upplevelse för?

- Fyll i med siffror:
- Osäker/Vill inte svara

Q17 Under de senaste 12 månaderna, har du haft några problem online där du av någon anledning överklagat till den som tillhandahållit produkten eller tjänsten?

- Ja
- Nej
- Osäker/Vill inte svara

Q18 Du har köpt en produkt online men inte blivit nöjd och därför tagit kontakt med företaget via deras hemsida för att reda ut hur ni ska gå vidare som exempelvis då du fått en felaktig produkt. (Frågorna nedan refererar till kontakten mellan dig och företaget på nätet)

Jag kunde självständighet välja vad jag ville göra

Jag var helt fri att forma åsikter kring företagets lösningsförslag

Mellan mig och företaget hade jag kontroll över mitt beslut

Företagets rekommendationer påverkade mig.

Jag anpassade mina förväntningar till företagets lösningsförslag

Jag påverkade företagets lösningsförslag

Jag fick företaget att överväga mina intressen

Min åsikt vägde mycket hos företaget

Jag kände att jag hade makt över företaget

Jag hade litet inflytande över företagets slutgiltiga lösningsförslag

Q19 Tänker på samma situation som föregående fråga där du var i konflikt med ett företag efter ett produktköp och anger följande:

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	Inte alls		Delvis		Mycket
	1	2	3	4	5
I vilken utsträckning du känner att du hade förmågan att göra motstånd mot företaget och fatta det slutliga beslutet självständigt.					
I vilken utsträckning du känner att du har haft möjlighet att påverka företaget.					

Q20 Vilket kön identifierar du dig med

- Kvinna

- Man

- Annat / Vill inte svara

Q21 Hur gammal är du?

- Fyll i med siffror:

- Vill inte svara.

Q22 Vilken årsinkomst före skatt beskriver bäst din?

- Under 150 000 kr

- 150 000 kr - 200 000 kr

- 200 000 kr - 250 0000 kr

- 250 000 kr - 500 000 kr

- 500 000 kr+

- Vill inte svara.

8.2 Appendix 2, survey QR-code

Hej! Vill du bidra till forskning? Vi är två studenter på handels som skriver vår kandidatuppsats. Har du tio minuter så hinner du svara på vår enkät och är till stor hjälp! Det är bara att scanna QR-koden så kommer du till våra frågor . Du har också en chans att vinna en biobiljett om du svarar på alla frågor! Tack så mycket!

8.3 Appendix 3, Operationalisation table for *actual consumer power*

Nr	Scoring (Value)	Question	Construct	Reference
Q1	1/12	Below you see the same cutting board on sale on two different websites. On which of these does the cutting board have the most value?	(*Actual Consumer Power*) Consumer skills > basic skills	Michela et al., 2011
Q2	1/12	What is the best interest rate on your savings or deposit account?	(*Actual Consumer Power*) Consumer skills >	Michela et al., 2011

			basic skills	
Q3	1/18	How many grams of fat does the package contain?	(*Actual Consumer Power*) Consumer skills > logos and labels	Michela et al., 2011
Q4	1/18	When does the product expire?	(*Actual Consumer Power*) Consumer skills > logos and labels	Michela et al., 2011
Q5	1/18	Which of these statements matches these logos?	(*Actual Consumer Power*) Consumer skills > logos and labels	Michela et al., 2011
Q6	1/18	You see an advertisement for a streaming service stating that you get a free 60-day trial if you are a new customer. When you enter the website, you discover that you need to pay a low membership fee to access the discount. Is this	(*Actual Consumer Power*) Awareness of consumer legislation) > unfair practices	Michela et al., 2011

		advertisement legal or illegal?		
Q7	1/18	Which of the rules apply to advertising on social media? (Mark all options that apply)	(*Actual Consumer Power*) Awareness of consumer legislation >unfair practices	Michela et al., 2011
Q8	1/18	You ordered an item online, do you think you have the right to return the item four days after receiving it and get your money back without giving a reason?	(*Actual Consumer Power*) Awareness of consumer legislation >cooling off	Michela et al., 2011
Q9	1/18	You have taken out car insurance online which starts to apply 25 days after you took it out. If you find a better offer 6 days after signing the contract, can you still change the contract?	(*Actual Consumer Power*) Awareness of consumer legislation >cooling off	Michela et al., 2011

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Q10	1/9	You bought a new fridge 18 months ago and it breaks. You have not purchased it under any warranty. Are you entitled to have it repaired or replaced free of charge?	(*Actual Consumer Power*) Awareness of consumer legislation) >guaranteed period	Michela et al., 2011
Q11	1/10	The last time you bought a product, such as a household appliance or electronics of some kind. Which of the following did you use to evaluate the purchase? (Mark all options that apply).	(*Actual Consumer Power*) Consumer engagement) >comparing products	Michela et al., 2011
Q12	1/10	During the last 12 months, have you compared product prices based on price per unit, i.e. kilo or liter price for example?	(*Actual Consumer Power*) Consumer engagement >comparing products	Michela et al., 2011
Q13	1/5	The last time you signed a purchase	(*Actual Consumer*	Michela et al., 2011

		of a service online such as an electricity contract or a mobile subscription. Did you read the terms of the agreement?	(*Power*) Consumer engagement >reading terms and conditions	
Q14	1/5	How often do you search for information about what you can do after you buy a faulty product online?	(*Actual Consumer Power*) Consumer engagement >interest in information	Michela et al., 2011
Q15	1/10	The last time you had a problem as a consumer in the form of, for example, bad service, a faulty product, contact with a company or something else connected to an online purchase. How many people close to you did you tell about this problem?	(*Actual Consumer Power*) Consumer engagement >tendency to talk	Michela et al., 2011

Q16	1/10	The last time you had a positive experience as a consumer. How many people close to you did you tell about this experience to?	(*Actual consumer power*) Consumer engagement) >tendency to talk	Michela et al., 2011
Q17	1/5	In the last 12 months, have you had any problems online were you complained to the provider of the product or service for any reason?	(*Actual Consumer Power*) Consumer engagement >detriment and redress	Michela et al., 2011

8.4 Appendix 4, Operationalisation table for Perceived Consumer Power

Nr	Soring (Weight)	Question	Construct	Reference
Q18 a.	1/12	I could independently choose what I wanted to do.	Consumer power items > (*Perceived Personal Power*) Consumer resistance	Akhavannasab et al., 2022
Q18 b.	1/12	I was completely free to form	Consumer power items >	Akhavannasab et al., 2022

		opinions about the company's proposed solutions	(*Perceived Personal Power*) Consumer resistance	
Q18 c.	1/12	Between me and the company, I was in control of my decision.	Consumer power items > (*Perceived Personal Power*) Consumer resistance	Akhavannasab et al., 2022
Q18 d.	1/12	The company's recommendations influenced me.	Consumer power items > (*Perceived Personal Power*) Consumer resistance	Akhavannasab et al., 2022
Q18 e.	1/12	I adjusted my expectations to the company's proposed solution.	Consumer power items > (*Perceived Personal Power*) Consumer resistance	Akhavannasab et al, 2022)

Q18 f.	1/12	I influenced the company's proposed solution	Consumer power items > (*Perceived Social Power*) Consumer influence	Akhavannasab et al., 2022
Q18 g.	1/12	I made the company consider my interests	Consumer power items > (*Perceived Social Power*) Consumer influence	Akhavannasab et al., 2022
Q18 h.	1/12	My opinion carried a lot of weight with the company	Consumer power items > (*Perceived Social Power*) Consumer influence	Akhavannasab et al., 2022
Q18 i.	1/12	I felt I had power over the company	Consumer power items > (*Perceived Social Power*) Consumer influence	Akhavannasab et al, 2022)
Q18 j.	1/12	I had little influence over the	Consumer power items >	Akhavannasab et al., 2022

		company's final solution proposal	(*Perceived Social Power*) Consumer influence	
Q19 a.	1/12	The extent to which you feel you had the ability to stand up to the company and make the final decision independently.	Consumer power items > (*Perceived Personal Power*) Consumer resistance	Akhavannasab et al., 2022
Q19 b.	1/12	To what extent do you feel that you have had the opportunity to influence the company.	Consumer power items > (*Perceived Social Power*) Consumer influence	Akhavannasab et al., 2022

8.5 Appendix 5, Operationalisation table for consumer demographics

Nr	Question	Construct
Q22	What gender do you identify with?	Demographics
Q23	How old are you?	Demographics
Q24	Which annual income before tax best describes yours?	Demographics