

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Methodologically, this study is essentially based on an integrative research review. This method “[...] is a form of research that reviews, critiques, and synthesises representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated” (Torraco, 2005:356).

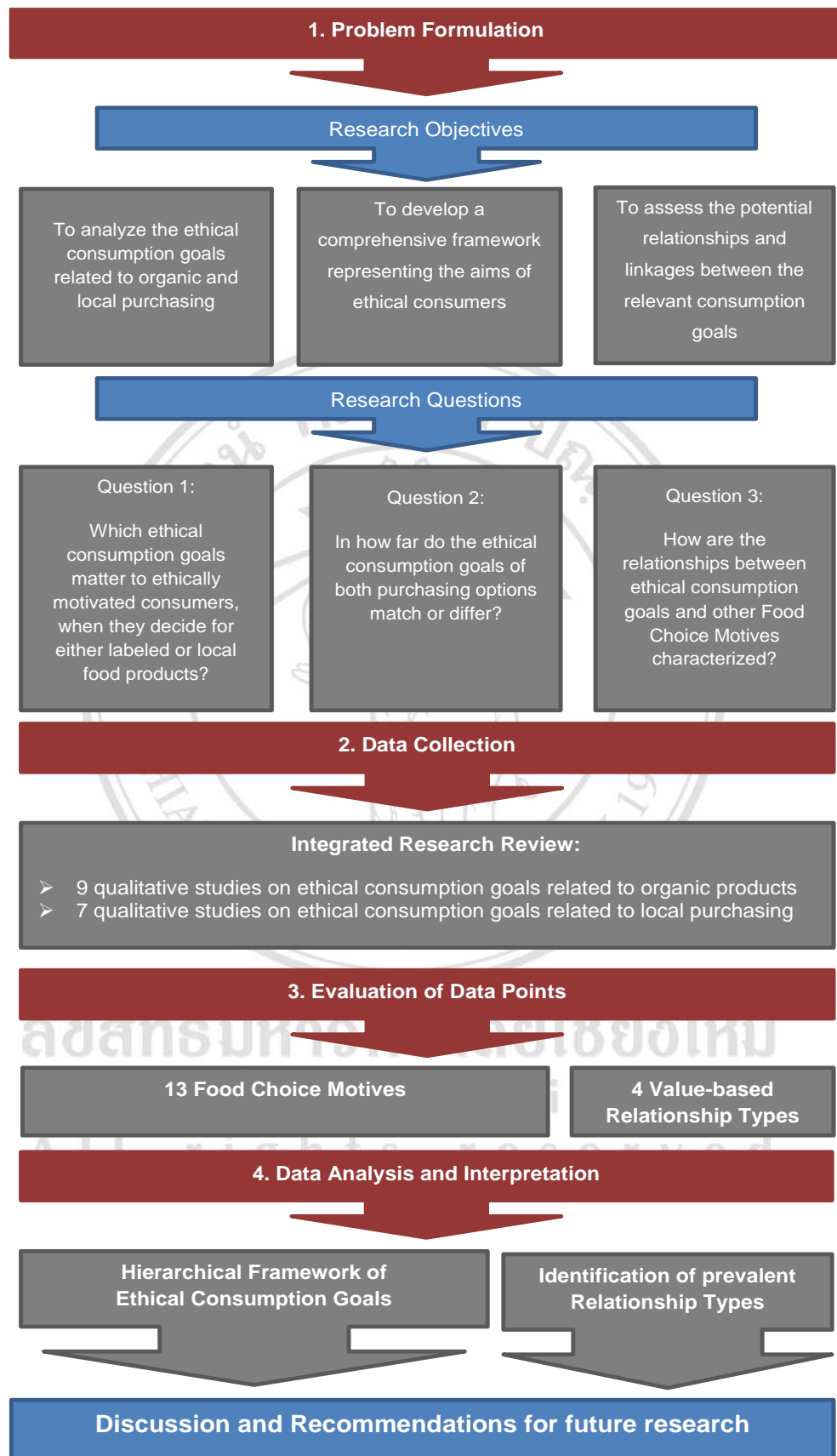
In order to facilitate an efficient and coherent data collection, the search for suitable articles is carried out on the basis of previous review work. The integrative research review focuses on gathering scientific articles that deal with the ethical goals and motives of local consumption or those of purchasing products labelled as organic. The selected review works accordingly deal with the one or the other aspect. The method is chosen due to the limited scope of this thesis paper. Instead of conducting a time consuming key word search, review articles are chosen that already provide a selection of suitable scientific works.

This study follows four out of five steps in the process for an integrative research review as suggested by Cooper (1982) in order to provide a clear and transparent approach. The last step of the process is not described as an independent part in the following section since it refers to the public presentation of results, which in this case is done through the presentation as thesis paper. Consequently, the research includes the four steps as depicted in Figure 2.

All research questions are addressed through the same method of data collection but Question 1 and 2 are approached differently from Question 3 when it comes to the Evaluation of Data Points and Data Analysis and Interpretation. Referring to Question 1 and 2 the relevant consumption goals are identified and analysed for commonalities and differences. For Question 3 the connections between the single target criteria are assessed as proposed by Bechmann (1978) in order to identify certain types of relationships among them. Also linkages with non-ethical FCMs are taken into account. Moreover trade-offs, barriers and synergetic effects are portrayed and described.

Figure 2 provides an overview on the methodological approach and the following two chapters describe the course of action in more detail.





**Figure 1: Methodological Framework** (Source: Own illustration)

## **Assessment of relevant ethical consumption goals**

### **1. Problem Formulation**

In accordance with the objectives of this study, it is intended to reveal the current state of the art regarding ethical consumption goals as they are associated by consumers with the purchase of organically labelled or locally produced food items. Furthermore, the integrative literature review aims on developing a conceptual framework that synthesizes aspects that have been widely researched as independent issues but which have until now not been intensely assessed from a holistic viewpoint. Commonalities and differences between the consumption goals that are associated with both purchasing options are therefore of interest. Moreover, the focus of attention is not on the purchasing options themselves but on the ethically motivated consumer and his individual consumption goals. Consequently, it is assumed that the consumer might regard either organic or local as best suitable option, depending on the personal ethical preferences.

### **2. Data Collection**

The starting point for the integrative research review looking for the motives related to purchasing organic labels is a review article of Rosa Schleenbecker and Ulrich Hamm, published in 2013 in the journal 'Appetite'. The article, titled 'Consumers' perception of organic product characteristics. A review' provides a selection of 10 qualitative studies that investigate organic consumption referring to the topic of product design. This can be understood as the "(c)onsumer demands concerning an organic product" (Schleenbecker & Hamm, 2013: 422). Out of these 10 studies, five are chosen for the purpose of this research project (Appendix I).

Besides the data collection through the integrative research review the so-called ancestry approach as described by Cooper (1982) is implemented in order to retrieve additional relevant articles. This is done by "[...] "tracking" citations from one study to another" (Cooper, 1982: 295). In this case, following the ancestry approach means to gather several research papers that are mentioned in the references of the basis article. These are read and selected, in order to find additional criteria that have not been explored in the previous papers. Once the results are saturated in a way that no new

information can be contributed, the search is terminated. A total of nine studies approaching the issue of organic consumption goals are subject to this research project.

As for the motives that underlie purchasing locally produced food items, the integrative literature review follows the same steps. The starting point is a review paper by Corinna Feldmann and Ulrich Hamm. It is published in the journal 'Food Quality and Preference' and has the title 'Consumers' perceptions and preferences for local food: A review'. In their work Feldmann & Hamm (2015) carried out a key word search in major databases (e.g. ScienceDirect, AgEcon Search and Web of Science). They chose 19 research works that apply qualitative or mixed methods investigating the motives driving local consumption. Thereof seven studies are selected for this study (Appendix I). Also in this case the search is extended with the ancestry approach in order to explore some more papers than the basis paper provided. Anyhow, no additional papers are included because the majority of research is working with quantitative methods. Therefore the availability of qualitative approaches is limited and those that were found did not add to the existing results.

Overall, only qualitative works find consideration in this work. Since this study is exploratory in describing the variety of ethical consumption goals, it does not aim on representativeness in terms of reflecting the preferences of an average consumer. Quantitative studies, such as e.g. consumer surveys usually provide a range of ethical motives that might be associated with the respective shopping option (e.g. Bravo et al., 2013; Denver and Jensen, 2014; Magnusson et al., 2003; etc.). The respondents are asked to rank statements or attributes, or they are expected to express their level of consent with specific propositions. Consequently, other motives than those provided through the questionnaire do not find consideration. Therefore, in this case qualitative studies are chosen where the applied research methods enable the consumers to express their consumption goals freely (e.g. focus groups or interviews with open questions; see Appendix I) and it is assumed that a wider range of statements can be collected.

The basis review articles were both found in the database of ScienceDirect. The additional papers that are selected through the ancestry approach were found in different databases such as e.g. Scopus, ScienceDirect or AgEcon, and also directly on the websites of the publishing journals. Almost all publications are in English language

(one German publication is included) and they were all published between 2002 and 2011. In all cases the country of origin is an industrialized country with a mature market for organic products.

### 3. Evaluation of Data Points

All chosen articles are set out in Appendix I, where the authors, the year of the study, the explicit research purpose, the country of origin and the applied methodological approach are listed.

The findings or results section of all articles is specifically scanned for all motives for organic and local purchasing that match the FCQ items according to Steptoe et al. (1995) and Lindman and Väänänen (2000) (see Table 2 and Appendix I). Since it can be expected that the 11 items of the FCQ do not cover all existing motives, the list is extended with two additional categories. These are based on the preceding literature review. Thus, they refer to apparently relevant ethical motives that do not find consideration in the current version of the FCQ. One additional category is Local/regional production, representing items such as ‘Supporting the local economy’ or ‘Maintaining traditional values’. The other additional motive is Fairness and refers to e.g. ‘Fair working conditions’.

The collected articles are scanned for the 13 motives as summarized in Table 2. Hereby, the ethical FCMs, which are highlighted in the red frame, are of major interest. In the following analysis the remaining factors are referred to as non-ethical target criteria or non-ethical FCMs. Motives that do not fit into any category are in the first instance categorized as ‘Others’ (Appendix I).

In case a study classifies different consumer types, only those motives are gathered, that are relevant to the ethically motivated consumer (cf. chapter 2.4). If the original study does not distinguish any consumer types, all mentioned motives are collected. This is only in two studies the case.

**Table 1: Food Choice Motives and Example Items**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Food Choice Motives</b>	<b>Example Item</b>
Steptoe et al., 1995	Health Mood Convenience Sensory appeal Natural content Price Weight control Familiarity	Keeps me healthy Makes me feel good Is easily available in shops and supermarkets Tastes good Contains no artificial ingredients Is not expensive Is low in calories Is what I usually eat
Lindman & Väänänen, 2000	<b>Animal welfare</b> <b>Environmental protection</b> <b>Political values</b> <b>Religion</b>	Has been produced in a way that animals have not experienced pain Has been produced in a way which has not shaken the balance of nature Comes from- a country in which human rights are not violated Is not forbidden in my religion
This study	<b>Local/regional production</b> <b>Fairness</b>	Supports the local economy Has been produced under fair working conditions

Source: Own illustration based on Steptoe et al., 1995; Lindman & Väänänen, 2000

#### 4. Data analysis and interpretation

Different from Cooper's (1982) suggestion to quantify the results of the literature review in order to standardize the data, this dataset remains qualitative due to the explorative character of this study. Results are not intended to be statistically valid but to provide a basic dataset that might be utilized in a scoring model as it is suggested by Fetzer (2014). For this purpose the data needs to represent the various ethical consumption goals of consumers in their diversity and according to their individual preferences.

Consequently, the primary dataset (Appendix I) is analysed with respect to the ethical consumption goals. Therefore the respective consumer statements are matched with the corresponding ethical FCMs (Appendix II). Binomials are avoided and hence each statement is represented only once, no matter how many times it is mentioned by respondents. This step provides on the one hand an overview on differences and similarities between the two purchasing options and on the other hand enables an in-depth analysis of the data. The in-depth assessment involves the transfer of consumer statements into hierarchical levels as suggested by Schulte (2003). As Table 3 shows, the consumption goals are classified into three hierarchical levels of differentiation. Here the category titles are only inserted as examples and are extended and adjusted according to the results of the integrative literature review in chapter 4.

**Table 2: Example of a hierarchical Framework of Ethical Consumption Goals**

<b>Ethical Consumption Goal</b>		
<b>1. Level</b>	<b>2. Level</b>	<b>3. Level</b>
<b>1. Animal welfare</b>	1.1 Living conditions	1.1.1 Sufficient space (stable/cowshed etc.)
	1.2 Animal health	1.1.2 Sufficient space (grazing land etc.)
		1.1.3 Sufficient Drinking troughs
		1.2.1 No preventive (and large scale) use of antibiotics
		1.2.2 No dehorning

Source: Own illustration based on Fetzer, 2014; Schulte, 2003

Hence, the single studies and their respective results are synthesized through the hierarchical framework. Categories are developed according to the content of the collected consumer statements and consider both closeness and overlap in content and meaning. General FCMs, suitable sub-categories and very specific ethical consumption goals are distinguished and then fitted into this 3-level structure. For clarity reasons the developed hierarchical structure has a colour coding that shows if a consumption goal is relevant to both groups of consumers (white), or if it only finds consideration among the consumers of organic products (green) or the consumers of local products (blue). By this means the level of differentiation of each FCM according to the mode of



consumption (organic or local) is visualized. Anyhow, the colour coding must not be interpreted as a quantitative indicator but as a mode of visualizing similarities and differences, with respect to the consumers' preferences.

All FCMs that are set out in the described Framework will be regarded as relevant target criteria for the application in a scoring model.

### **3.1 Analysis of relationships between target criteria**

The previous step identifies the relevant ethical consumption goals, as described by consumers of organic or local food products. While this reveals an insight into possible target criteria for a scoring model that represents consumers of both products, the deeper assessment of relationships between the different goals is subject to the next step.

The integrated research review as presented before is also applied as fundamental structure for the assessment of Question 3. Consequently, the same four methodological steps as before are carried out once more.

#### **1. Problem Formulation**

Based on the idea that the target criteria of a scoring model are not necessarily regarded as independent factors, but that relationships between them might be relevant for consumers, it is intended to assess these potential linkages. Fetzer (2014) assumes in his paper that target criteria for a scoring model of ethical consumption goals can be treated as independent factors, but this assumption has not been verified yet. This study therefore aims on delivering insights on the characteristics of the perceived relationships between the target criteria and also on potential linkages with non-ethical FCMs. Thereby it shall be possible to decide if the relationships between ethical consumption goals need to be considered for the design of a viable scoring model.

#### **2. Data Collection**

The dataset is the same as described in chapter 3.1 (Appendix I). Respondents in the chosen qualitative studies express their opinions freely and consequently it is assumed that also statements on the perception of relationships between certain target criteria could have been made. Even though the chosen research papers do not explicitly

aim on the identification of relationships between target criteria, it is of interest which linkages are perceived and expressed by consumers as independent and autonomous thoughts. Since it is intended to gather insights into the perception of consumers, the exploratory approach of the chosen studies is also suitable for the achievement of this research goal.

### 3. Evaluation of Data Points

Aiming on the evaluation of relationships as perceived and valued by consumers the dataset is scanned for respective statements. The consumption goals as identified in section 3.1 are once again located in the texts and it is analysed if linkages or relationships between them are described. This is done under consideration of the specific relationships that are presented in Table 4.

The technological level as described by Bechmann (1978) is not assessed (cf. chapter 2.5). Instead, the focus is on the value level, which allows an insight into the subjective perception of relationships by consumers. Even though, according to Fetzer (2014) the value level only affects Level 1 and Level 2 of the hierarchical framework, all statements of consumers are collected that show the perception of a relationship. So, in order to preserve the exploratory character of this study also the target criteria that are described on Level 3 are collected. Thereby, it is possible to capture all prevalent relationships regardless of the theoretical restrictions of the model. The relationships that are expected to be observed are depicted in Table 4.

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**Table 3: Relationships between ethical consumption goals on value level**

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Value Level</b>
<b>Substitutability</b>	The achievement of target A can be replaced by the achievement of B
<b>Competition</b>	The value of target B is reduced if at the same time also target A is achieved
<b>Complementarity</b>	The value of the achievement of target B increases if also target A is achieved
<b>Indifference</b>	The values of target A and target B are independent from each other

Source: Own illustration based on Bechmann, 1978

The identified relationships are collected and assigned to the matching category. Additionally, also linkages between ethical FCMs and non-ethical FCMs that are mentioned are captured and categorized in order to include further factors that might affect ethical FCMs.

#### 4. Data analysis and Interpretation

For the analysis of the collected data, the relationships that consumers describe are sorted according to the type of relationship and according to the combined or interlinked factors. These can be linkages between all types of consumption goals, which includes ethical, non-ethical and other FCMs.

Furthermore, the compiled data is compared, in order to identify relationships that are repeatedly mentioned and that appear to be relevant to consumers of local and organic food items. Based on this comparison it is discussed if relationships between target criteria are crucial for the modified scoring model as described in the literature review.