

The cultivation of taste

An investigation into the cultivation of taste with special focus on the private retail store owner

Name Gina- Mary Ronquillo
Student No. 336575
Thesis Supervisor Professor Hans Abbing

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1 Introduction

Since being in Rotterdam I realized that during a relatively short period of time a number of private retail stores emerged in the city. This brought up the question in me how and why they emerged.

Most if these private retail stores focus on conspicuous consumption goods such as (branded) clothes, sneakers and (lifestyle-) products which could not be obtained from chain brand stores.

During a short period of time I realized that there were a number of private retail stores emerging in the city.

I have been very keen on trying to find a connection between stores that mostly sell conspicuous consumption goods such as fashion items and the cultivation of taste.

Under the cultivation of taste I mean the external sources that can have an impact on the formation of taste of the individual.

In this case, the field research focuses on individual retail store owners and their selection of (luxury) conspicuous consumption goods.

There is something interesting in the role of the store owners. The fact that the individual stores seem to have a more appealing store concept than the majority of the big chain brand stores.

The question attracted me whether the consumer gets his or her inspirations for the formation of taste with regard to clothes, as an example.

Additionally, I asked myself how they approach consumers and raise awareness of the existence of their store.

I questioned myself in general how our taste is being influenced by external factors and in what way.

The price and exclusivity of the products were also interesting factors to look at.

This thesis is divided into six chapters.

The first chapter is a general introduction into the topic.

The literary review forms the second chapter.

A description of the methodology and the conducted interviews appear in the third chapter.

The fourth chapter is the main part of this thesis which deals with the evaluation of the survey results and some general analysis.

Reflections on the found survey results are presented in the fifth chapter.

The final part ends with the conclusion.

2 Literary Review

This chapter deals with a selection of the most relevant academic articles, books and related literature that has been reviewed for the topic of the thesis: 'Influence of taste – An investigation into the influence of taste with special attention on private retail store owners'.

The literary reviews introduce the contributing elements of the articles for this thesis.

Academic articles

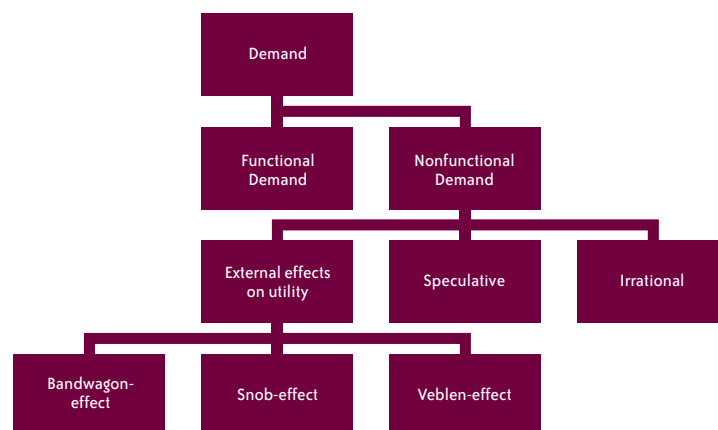
art. 1 Leibenstein, H. 1950. Bandwagon, Snob, and Veblen Effects in the Theory of Consumers' Demand, The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 64 (2), 183-207.

The main contribution of Leibenstein's academic article ' Bandwagon, Snob, and Veblen Effects in the Theory of Consumers' Demand' are the key terms indicated in the title of the article. During the research on academic literature for the thesis the terminologies of bandwagon-, snob-, and Veblen – effect proved to be interesting phenomena which could contribute to the interview investigation with the individual retail store owner. The importance of the article lies in its novelty factor of relating consumer behaviour with the three subordinated phenomena of the external effects on utility.

Leibenstein's academic article was published in the year 1950. The author emphasizes the fact that past academic articles on the theories of consumers' demand have not implemented several aspects of consumer consumption which Leibenstein regards as important. He identifies following important aspects with regard to the consumers' behaviour:

- Consumers want to be 'in style'
- Some consumers want to obtain exclusiveness
- The aspect of 'conspicuous consumption' itself

Furthermore, Leibenstein defines important terminologies which became central terms for this thesis: He refers to functional and non – functional demand and incorporates the terms Bandwagon, Snob and Veblen effects. Leibenstein relates them to each other. This can best be explained with this hierarchical graphic:



Consumer's demand can be of functional and non- functional nature.

Functional demand, according to Leibenstein is ' part of the demand for a commodity which is due to the qualities inherent in the commodity itself ' (Leibenstein, 1950).

The description of non – functional demand means that the portion of the demand for a consumers' good is due to factors other than the qualities inherent in the commodity' (Leibenstein, 1950).

While talking about the non – functional demand, Leibenstein focuses on the external effects on utility (see diagram). Following three effects are subordinated to the external effects on utility:

Bandwagon – effect

Leibenstein describes the Bandwagon – effect as a phenomenon where consumers buy a certain commodity for the main reason because the majority of the consumers buys it. The main incentive for the bandwagon – consumer is the urge and need to belong to the majority of the mass- consumer.

The bandwagon effect occurs when the consumer purchases a certain good due to the fact that the majority consumes the good. The main incentive for the consumer to buy the good is to be socially accepted by a certain group that, too, consumes the good. The behaviour is rather close to a herd behaviour. The need of belonging to a certain group by the purchase of a certain item, reflects the need of the bandwagon - consumer to

- be socially accepted by this certain group
- not to fall out of the norm, which is suggested and defined by the social group the consumer wants to belong to.

To sum up, the main motives of the bandwagon – effect are:

- Main incentive of purchase is the need to gain recognition of and to belong to a certain group who also purchases this good.
- The bandwagon – effect results in the rise of the demand of a commodity. This is being achieved because there are other consumers consuming the good.
- The bandwagon – effect shows motifs of a herd behaviour.

Snob–effect

In simple terms, the snob – effect is the reverse effect of the bandwagon – effect.

The demand for a certain commodity drops due to the fact that less consumers are purchasing the good.

- There is a disinterest of the snob-consumer to further consume the commodity as a certain group of other consumers starts to purchase the good, which was regarded as a good of exclusivity.
- The snob-consumer does not want to be related to the bandwagon – consumer, who buys products that the majority of the consumers buys (herd- behaviour).
- The snob consumer chooses to be exclusive.

Veblen–Effect

The Veblen – effect regards the price as strongest and most influential indicator on the quality and reputation of the product. A higher price would suggest a better quality and a more prestigious brand to the consumer purchasing goods according to the Veblen effect. The term has been made popular by sociologist and economist Thorstein Veblen¹, however, according to Leibenstein, it was already John Rae² that has written on the consumer behaviour with special attention on the price.

Speculative demand is shortly outlined. It implies that some consumers imply a rise in a price of a certain good and therefore buy higher amounts in order to stock the good in case of the assumed rise of price.

The irrational demand refers to consumers that purchase a good without having the initial intention to do so. The purchase of the good occurs due to ‘sudden urges’ (Leibenstein, 1950) as the author puts it. To bring it into a concrete context: It is widely advised not go food shopping when hungry, as the person will return with several items he bought because due to his hungry feeling, he finds many things appealing to eat and when resting his hunger realizes how superfluous several purchased items were.

¹ Veblen, T. 1994. The theory of the leisure class. New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Penguin Book (first edition 1899).

² Rae, J. 1905. The Sociological Theory of Capital. London: The Macmillan Co.

art. 2 Husic, M. & Cicic, M. 2009. Luxury consumption factors, Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, 13 (2), pp. 231-245.

The academic article 'Luxury consumption factors' published by Husic and Cicic for the Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management in 2009 has been a main motivator to undergo this research.

The authors focus on the determination of factors that motivate the consumption and purchase of consumers concerning luxury consumption goods.

Husic and Cicic have conducted interviews with consumers of luxury consumption goods in luxury brand stores. In order to select the authentic luxury consumer, the authors have handed out several questionnaires, which filtered the frequent luxury goods buyer out from the less frequent luxury consumption customer. Besides several consumer behavioural question, the selection was also made through the monthly income of the consumers.

The academic paper provides two hypotheses, among the most relevant for this thesis is:

'Luxury consumption is influenced by the following factors: image quality, fashion, store atmosphere and patron status' (Cicic, Husic, 2009).

Furthermore, the authors refer to a categorization concerning the five motivational factors of luxury consumption composed by Deeter-Schmelz et al. (2002)³

- 1 Image
- 2 Quality
- 3 Fashion
- 4 Store atmosphere
- 5 Patron status

These factors are being modified by Husic and Cicic by combining the first and second factor into one factor. The given reason were the identical test results for factor one: 'image' and factor two: 'quality'.

Furthermore, a focus was put on a division of the consumer according to their presented consumption behavior. With reference to past published papers by Vigneron and Johnson⁴ in 1999 in which they elucidate five decisive effects from which only the first three will be of general relevance for this paper:

'The Veblen effect – perceived conspicuous value. Veblenian consumers attach greater importance to price as an indicator of prestige, because their primary objective is to impress others.

The snob effect – perceived unique value. Snob consumers perceive price as an indicator of exclusivity, and avoid using popular brands to experiment with inner-directed consumption.

The bandwagon effect – perceived social value. Relative to snob consumers, bandwagon consumers attach less importance to price as an indicator of prestige, but will place greater emphasis on the effect they make on others while consuming prestige brands.

The hedonic effect - perceived emotional value. Hedonist consumers are more interested in their own thoughts and feelings, and thus will place less emphasis on price as an indicator of prestige.

The perfectionism effect – perceived quality value. Perfectionist consumers rely on their own perception of the product's quality, and may use price as further evidence of quality.' (Husic and Cicic, 2009)

Based on these effects enlisted, the authors do not only try to identify the factors of motivation concerning the consumption of luxury goods, but they also implement them in order to try to identify possible categories in which their interviewed consumers can be classified.

An extension of the effects defined by Vigneron and Johnson⁴ (1999) has been made by the authors.

Husic and Cicic come to interesting insights. For instance, the meaning of consuming a luxury good back then, when luxury goods were only affordable by the higher social class, has shifted. Considering the consumers of our present times, everyone is nowadays able to buy luxury consumption goods. It is just the frequency of purchase that still distinguishes the higher social stable income from those that want to purchase a luxury good for once in a while.

Due to the shift of the meaning of a luxury consumption good, Husic and Cicic extend the definition made by Vigneron and Johnson (1999) by adding a more specific characterization to the snob and bandwagon effect:

³Deeter-Schmelz, D., Moore, J. and Goebel, D. (2000), "Prestige clothing shopping by consumers: a confirmatory assessment and refinement of the PRECON scale with managerial implications", Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, Vol. 8, Fall, pp. 43-58.

⁴Vigneron, F. and Johnson, L. (1999), "A review and a conceptual framework of prestige-seeking consumer behavior", Academy of Marketing Science Review, available at: www.amsreview.org/articles/vigneron01-1999.pdf

The original snob consumer, namely the one that deliberately consumes luxury consumption goods, because they have the monetary means to purchase it and have always had the luxury good implemented in their every day life, co-exists with those consumers that do have the monetary means but rather than buying out of general habit, purchase luxury consumption goods primarily for affiliation rather than for differentiation.

Therefore, Husic and Cicic refer to the (real) snob consumer as 'old aristocracy' and name the bandwagon consumer 'new money'.

Considering the fact that Husic and Cicic focus on luxury consumption goods, it is an interesting observation they have made that within a consumption scene of luxury goods, there are more than just one possible group of people that buys out of completely different motivational factors rather than money and differentiation.

Another observation made by the authors is the fact that all consumers of luxury consumption goods have something in common: 'whether through differentiation or group affiliation, they want to enhance their self-image' (Husic and Cicic, 2009).

As suggesting remarks for further research, the authors Husic and Cicic state, that there should be more elements to be taken into consideration when focusing on factors of luxury consumption, for instance 'lifestyle and hedonic behavioural factors'. Furthermore, they explain: 'Lifestyle involves different psychographic characteristics among consumers... and would provide a better vantage for the examination of luxury consumption' (Husic and Cicic, 2009).

This thesis got inspired and influenced by the research of Husic and Cicic concerning the luxury consumption factors.

During the field research, I consider several findings made by Husic and Cicic. For instance, the bandwagon-, snob-, and Veblen-effect are being referred to.

Furthermore, in order to categorize the interview questions, slight reference was taken from Husic and Cicic concerning the division of the motivational factors into four different categories.

However, it is important to say that my field research differs in many points from their research concerning following points: The general difference is the research question. Husic and Cicic already consider image, quality, fashion store atmosphere and patron status as influencing factors concerning the consumption of luxury goods.

This research paper tries to investigate the function and influence of the privately owned retail store. A main concern is the question if it can contribute to the cultivation of taste of the people.

During their research, Husic and Cicic focus on shopping malls and '...different luxury stores' (Husic and Cicic, 2009). This thesis focuses on the private retail stores and their store owners in Rotterdam.

Moreover, the authors Husic and Cicic focus on the general motivational factors concerning the consumption of luxury goods. This research paper also takes into consideration the factor of lifestyle. Questions such as: 'In how far does this store and the products represent a lifestyle to your consumers?'

Considering the remark made by Husic and Melic concerning the aspect of taking the lifestyle factor into consideration, the idea of concentrating on additional lifestyle goods such as sneakers came up.

art. 3 Yudelson, J. Adapting McCarthy's Four P's for the Twenty – First – Century, Journal of Marketing Education 21 (60), 60 – 67.

The article composed by Julian Yudelson provides many useful thoughts for my thesis. Primarily, the introduction of McCarthy's developed marketing – mix of the so called four P's (McCarthy, 1960) have been adapted and used within the thesis.

In his academic article Julian Yudelson reflects on the development of current marketing – mix trends and puts them into comparison with the marketing – mix of the four P's developed by McCarthy's in 1960. Yudelson questions the up – to – dateness of McCarthy's four P's consisting:

- Product
- Price
- Promotion
- Place

⁵ McCarthy, E.J. 1960. Basic marketing: A managerial approach. Hometown, IL: Irwin.

He investigates the questions whether this model, which was developed in the 1960's is still applicable forty years later in the twenty-first century.

According to a collective opinion of critics, the original meaning of the four P's lack in depth and are in need for further extension of the meaning. At some point McCarthy's four elements of the marketing-mix were could not grow with the ongoing changes and developments in marketing throughout the years.

By referring to other authors that have uttered criticism on McCarthy's marketing – mix of the four P's, Yudelson collected points of criticism in which the original marketing – mix formulated by McCarthy does not react to. from other academic articles criticizing McCarthy's original approach Yudelson enumerates six major problems that lack in McCarthy's marketing- mix approach:

- A focus on the consumer
- The broadening of marketing to include not-for profits, services, causes, and even politics
- Identification of the exchange transaction as the core of marketing
- The introduction of Total Quality Management with its emphasis on “customer satisfaction”
- The extension from transaction marketing to “relationship marketing”
- Identification of the firm as a member of a complete value chain.

Taking the criticism into consideration, Yudelson considers a reformulation of the four P's and introduces already made approaches of other authors to extend and modify the McCarthy's original marketing mix. He presents a table of approaches to rename and modify McCarthy's marketing – mix:

**TABLE 1
SUGGESTED NOMENCLATURES FOR THE ELEMENTS OF THE MARKETING MIX**

| | | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| McCarthy (1960) | Product | Price | Promotion | Place |
| Original source uncertain | Product | Price | Communication | Channel |
| Staudt and Taylor (1965) | Product and service mix | | Communications mix | Distribution mix |
| Lipson and Darling (1971) | Product component mix | Terms of sales mix | Communications mix | Distribution mix |
| Kotler (1972b) | Configuration | Valuation | Symbolization | Facilitation |
| Kelly and Lazer (1967) | Product/service mix (including price) | | Communications mix | Distribution mix |
| Bruner (1989) | Concept mix | Cost mix | Communications mix | Channels mix |
| Lauterborn (1990) | Consumer wants and needs | Cost to satisfy | Communications | Convenience |
| Small Business Administration (1998) (Web site) | Product | Price | Promotion | Provide |
| Nichols and Woods (1997) | Product development and differentiation | Valuation and pricing | Integrated marketing communications | Channel and value-chain management |
| Source uncertain | Gets | Gives | Information | Channel |

Yudelson suggests his own reformulation of McCarthy's four P's:

THE NEW DEFINITIONS OF THE FOUR P'S FOR THE NEXT MILLENNIUM

| | | | | |
|----------|---|--|---|---|
| Yudelson | Performance: The sum total of all the customer receives | Penalty: The sum total of all that the customer has to give up | Perception: All the information that affects the perception of either the buyer or seller | Process: All activities that add value between the point of origin and the point of final utilization |
|----------|---|--|---|---|

The author extends the meaning of Product by labeling it Performance: The focus does not lie on the mere product itself, but emphasizes the benefits that the purchaser gets from the exchange of buying this product.

Another new implied concept on the former Price is Penalty: here, a focus is put on everything that the purchaser gives up to buy the product. This may include for instance, the purchaser's time.

Yudelson replaces Promotion with Perception as the former is a manipulative way to convince the acquirer to obtain the good. The term Perception means the information made available that can be of any help to obtain the article.

The term Place is redefined with the term Process. With this term, the misleading assumption of a physical place is extended with all the existing things ' that facilitates the transaction' (Yudelson, 1999).

This includes not only physical space but also virtual space, for example. Furthermore, he proposes to add a fifth P labeled 'Partners'.

As concluding remarks, Yudelson evaluates the raised criticism on McCarthy's marketing-mix and comes to the

conclusion that after all the four P's Product, Price, Promotion and Place have managed to adjust to times. However, it is clear that all suggested fields on criticism cannot be satisfied with McCarthy's model. However, McCarthy's model remains firm and applicable enough to at least rely on it as a basic guide to marketing and throughout the years proved to be a robust framework after all.

art. 4 Heilbrun, J. & Gray, C.H. 2001. The mass media, public broadcasting, and the cultivation of taste. In: The Economics of Art and Culture. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 360 – 384.

The important contribution of this article for the thesis is the focus on the impact on the mass media on the cultivation of taste.

This article composed by Heilbrun and Gray elaborates on the impact, influence and role of the mass media such as TV and radio stations on the public cultivation of taste.

In the beginning the assumption is raised that 'art is said to be an "acquired" or "cultivated" taste. Further, they state that the influence of the mass media can be of enormous weight when it comes to the canonization of certain existing genres. In this essay, the authors draw an example with arts but also state that it can be any other consumer good.

Furthermore, Heilbrun and Gray elucidate that the "cultivation" of taste with their reference to art is not to be understood as "artificial or pretentious" cultivation. Rather, they emphasize that taste cultivation or formation is to be seen in relation with pleasure in the art. Moreover, they deal with the cultivation of taste with reference to exposure. In order to develop the feeling and affinity towards art or another consumer good, the authors refer to exposure as an important tool for the influence of taste. In order for the consumer to gain an insight into the art world, they need to invest something in it, such as time and money.

Even though there are different existing genres in art, such as pop art and high art, the mass media plays a crucial role with regard on promoting the dominance of one genre to the other one. This is being achieved by, for instance, providing a more extensive media coverage on pop art rather than high art. In this sense, people are more exposed to pop art and develop an affinity toward it more easily. The media produces more into the direction of pop art as the consumer raise the demand in that, because they are hardly exposed to anything else.

In general, the authors state that the mass media has a driving force in stimulating the likes of costumers to develop an affinity to certain things by exposure.

Moreover, they argue that there should be more 'public broadcasting channels' that do not target on the opinion of the masses but implements and contributes other cultural goods to the public. In this way, the consumer is also exposed to the less known genres and can develop a certain affinity into that direction.

art. 5 Rucker, D.D. & Galinsky, A.D. 2009. Conspicuous consumption versus utilitarian ideals: How different levels of power shape consumer behaviour, Journal of Experimental Social Psychology 45 (2009), 549 – 555.

Decker and Galinsky pioneer in their article by writing about the connection between high and low power on consumer behaviour and the influence of high and low power on consumer behaviour. The authors identify the connection of high power. In no other academic research papers has it been subject before.

The hypothesis of the authors deals with the question if high power is related to consumer behaviour. Major terminologies introduced by Decker and Galinsky (2009) are (among others):

- High power
- Low power
- Soft – sell
- Hard – sell

The terminologies soft – sell and hard – sell derive from the advertisement sector and are being referred to as '... historical advertising strategies' by the authors (Decker, Galinsky 2009).

The main advertising strategy of soft – sell puts an emphasis on suggesting a positive reputation of the consumer and rise of status when purchasing the good.

An example given, is Mercedes Benz' often soft – sell produced advertisement showing the car owner proudly posing in front of the car. This type of advertisement suggests an emphasis on the consumer's social status by consuming this good. The hard – sell strategy of advertisement works in a different way. The emphasis on product advertisement lies in the products' utility and function and does not put an emphasis on social status of the consumer.

In the research paper, the authors Decker and Galinsky prove in five undertaken experiments, that consumers showing a higher status in society or do show traits of high power tend to purchase goods that are advertised with an emphasis on the products' utility and function.

The authors assume that this consumer behaviour of low power tries to compensate the lower social status and lower power by the purchase of high class products.

Interesting about this article is the fact that the definition of low and high power are very open and not precisely defined. Terms of inferiority and superiority in relation to power are not mentioned but implicated.

Related literature

Vogel, S. 2007. Street Wear. London: Thames & Hudson.

Steven Vogel has written a book on compilations of Street Wear brands structured into three parts.



The first part is entitled 'design'. In this section, Vogel introduces forty- four major and influential street – art brands. The second part carries the title 'media' and concentrates on online – blogs, online – magazines and other forms of media in which people write and comment on their lifestyle-connected attitude. This part is an indicator that street wear originated from a combination of multiple things. These things are well connected and reported on in the presented blogs and magazines.

The last part enlists the stores and other sources where the presented brands can be obtained. The list presents international sources of 'street' and 'streetwear' items.

An important contribution of this book is the presentation of a distinct clothing style, namely 'street wear' in connection to lifestyle attitudes. The author indicates that he distances himself of defining the term 'street wear' as the implications within the term are too broad to concisely put into one definition.

The author does not give a precise definition of 'street' and 'street wear'. Instead, he aims to give the reader an insight of the whole idea and motivation of street wear by interviewing a number of influential people that have established a street wear brand. Questions on their motivation and influence add to portray the meaning of 'street' and 'street wear' of this people.

Summary on literary review

The selected academic articles and related literature for the literary review try to give an insight into the different fields this thesis is dealing with.

Presented were significant terminologies related to the thesis.

Important terms are the bandwagon-, snob- and Veblen- effect, as well as the focus on conspicuous goods and their effect on the consumer.

Moreover, the introduction of the four P's: Product, Price, Promotion and Place are introduced as the field research will be divided into these four parts for a better overview of the analysis.

The aspect of lifestyle is being introduced with the academic article by Husic and Cicic with special regard on conspicuous goods.

Furthermore, the related article by Steven Vogel puts emphasis on the impact on cultural movements such as music on the further perception of consumers on certain goods which form a part of their personal lifestyle.

3 Methodology

The master thesis is designed as a qualitative research. In this case, interviews with the owners of the privately owned retail stores were conducted.

On the research method

In the beginning, the thesis methodology was intended to be designed as a deductive research. However, several theories were not applicable at all or at least hardly applicable for this kind of research.

As a result, the research method primarily became an inductive research. I foremost intend to describe the sector from the perspective of taste. However, having read the literature and with reference on personal experience in that sector, I have formulated some expectations at the end of this chapter.

Participants

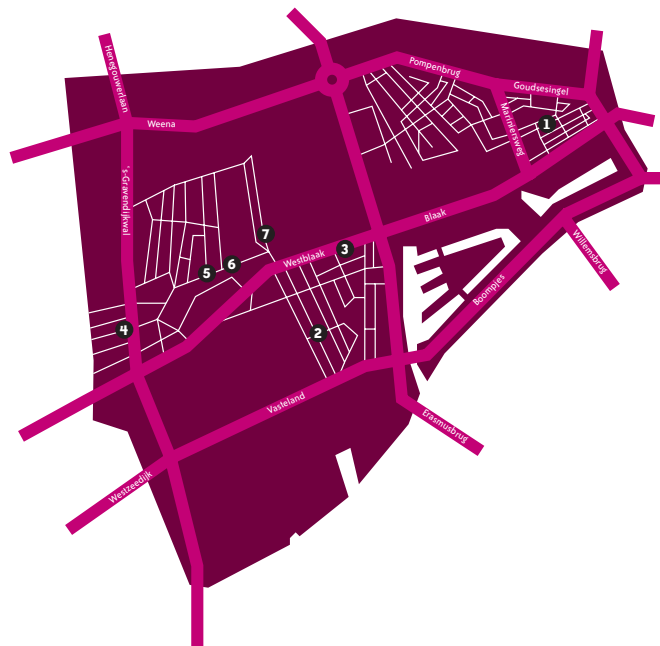
In order to conduct the interviews, it was necessary to find privately owned retail stores, which, at the same time, sold conspicuous (luxury) consumption goods. These conspicuous consumption goods should ideally also be products that show a certain lifestyle attitude. In this case, clothes and sneakers are regarded as items that are part of the lifestyle attitude of the consumers.

Choice of stores

The location of the selected privately owned retail stores is the city of Rotterdam. There are certain streets and districts, which are known for the privately owned retail stores. Additional tourist guides for younger people were also taken into consideration, as they were written from and for people that want to provide a certain lifestyle atmosphere of the city. The stores were selected with the knowledge of the store clients and their owners. Other stores have been recommended of other store owners that thought other stores are also adding up to the cultivation of taste and would like to support the other.

The selection of the stores is based on self-estimation. General motif for the choice of the enlisted stores is the expectation that it represents a certain feel of lifestyle. Here, the terminology 'lifestyle' is understood as something that is part of the way of living.

Participating stores and their classification



1 Woei

Sneaker store that was established around 2006

2 Nen Xavier

presents designer brands along side fashionable and affordable brands. Furthermore, he represents local and national Dutch designers

3 Bon Bon on the Block

The store sells clothes for children

4 Hub Shop

Is a Concept store for private entrepreneurs. Sell fair trade goods and ecologically conscious products.

5 Sister Moon

Was the first store in Rotterdam to sell second hand clothes. The store now sells clothes inspired from the sixties.

6 Urban Unit

Sneaker store that was established around 1994

7 ANSH46

clothes store

Characterization of the stores

Nen Xavier

Nen Xavier started his store in 2007. He joined his friend Wendy, who opened a hair salon. The hair salon of Wendy is integrated into Nen Xavier's shop.

Being the owner, Nen is mostly present in his store, however, he sometimes employs one person for further support or for his substitute when he is away.

Sister Moon

Sister Moon was opened in 1996 by Ron Wood and his former girlfriend. The store was the first second hand store in Rotterdam.

The owner is mostly personally present in his store and takes care of the business.

(ANSH46, informal interview)

is a new store in Rotterdam that opened in 2010.

The concept of selling Scandinavian designers for female clientele in a stylishly designed store atmosphere gives it a unique appeal. The store owner Wouter employs one further store support.

Bon Bon on the Block

The store owners Marieke and Lenny launched their store in 2009. Focusing on children's wear, they represent modern brands for children.

Moreover, they are keen on organizing activities for children, such as drawing competitions in order to extend the character of the store philosophy.

The owners Lenny and Marieke sell clothes for children. They are one of the few children stores in Rotterdam that represent a rather modern collection.

Hub Shop

Opened their store in 2009 with a focus on fair trade and private artistic craft work.

Their store concept is a novelty in Rotterdam. The novelty factor of the Hub shop is the concept with renting out boxes to private entrepreneurs to sell their own products. The majority of represented goods are ecologically friendly.

Woei

Is an influential sneakers store in Rotterdam that opened in 2006. Woei is known for being a 'sneaker freak'.

His collection of shoes, representation of brands and collaboration with artists make him locally and nationally popular.

Urban Unit (Informal interview)

Launched their store in 1994. The store was the first one to combine sneakers, skate wear and imported magazines and DVD's and artistic goods.

Interviews

The qualitative research is based on interviews. First, as the main person in focus was the store owner himself, it was important to make an appointment for an interview.

The appointments were made by directly approaching the store owner or by e-mailing them.

I interviewed a total of seven private retail store owners from which I filmed five.

While approaching these store owners first to introduce the thesis and ask for an interview appointment two shop owners suggested an immediate interview.

For this reason the interview was of informal character and could not be filmed.

Questions and answers were written down as the film recorder was not brought with me.

The location of the interviews took place in the stores of the store owners.

As it is difficult for the store owner to participate at the interview and be present for the customer at the same time, the interviews had to be interrupted while customers were inside of the store. Therefore, a concise structure of questions was important.

Having conducted the first interviews, the questions could soon be narrowed down. There were repeating patterns being made visible with the interviews. In this case, it was easier to reformulate questions and aim at a certain topic direction during the interview.

Time limitation of an interview was set at 30' minutes. However, as some potential participants thought of it as too long, they were being asked to participate by answering several selected questions via e-mail. Some replied and others did not. Even though the time limitation was set at 30' minutes, in some cases the interview developed into a longer conversation ranging between 2 and 3 hours.

Validity

Validity of the field research and thesis:

The importance of the validity of the master thesis can have an important impact on future research the field dealt with in the thesis.

For this reason it is important to introduce the validity and reliability of this thesis and the undergone field research.

With reference to Bryman's ' Social Research Methods' following three criteria's of the evaluation of the research will be elaborated on:

- External reliability
- External validity
- Internal validity

External reliability

The extent in which a field research can be replicated is subject of the external reliability. In the case of the field research of interviewing individual retail store owners that do sell conspicuous consumption goods could be replicated among comparable retail store owners in Rotterdam. It could also be replicated among comparable retail store owners in other cities and countries.

However, the results might differ, as individual retail store owners are located in different places than those that I have interviewed.

Besides, in different cities and countries factors such as the number of the inhabitants, the gentrification, the educational level, the governmental support for entrepreneurs, the local creative scene, the demand of the people can also have an influence in the findings.

The external validity (see below) would anyway be lower.

External validity

External validity describes the extent of which the results and findings of the undergone field research can be applied throughout other social settings in a more general way.

The external validity of this field research has none of such character.

As I have only interviewed individual retail store owners in one city, it is doubtful that the collected findings can be applied and generalized in other social settings in a different city. What makes it difficult to generalize the results and apply them to other cities is the fact that every city has certain characteristics that do and do not comply with the characteristics of the city of Rotterdam.

Besides, as Rotterdam has a rather smaller representation of individual retail store owners compared to Amsterdam, factors such as competition play a less interesting role.

Internal validity

The observations made during the field research were partly dealing with the theories presented in the literary review. However, new findings were the outcome and form a big part of the results.

Connections could not explicitly be made with the bandwagon-snob- and Veblen- effect as the knowledge and awareness of the interviewed participant was rather limited concerning the terminology.

The field research undertaken for this thesis was subject to limitations.

For further research it is advisable to gather more individual retail store owners to participate in the field research.

Even though the number of the participating stores is not that representative, it manages to gather numerous important information from the individual store owners and their opinion on the cultivation of taste.

Moreover, the diversity of the selected participants was also crucial for the collected findings in the thesis. Furthermore, the selection of interview questions also helped to provide a more complex and informative insight into the topic.

Difficulties

The language has been a main source of difficulty. Due to the limited knowledge of the researcher in Dutch language, the interviews had to be undertaken in English language. All participating interview partners were very cooperative and willing to respond in English. However, there were at some points visible barriers recognizable when it came to the more complex and detailed explanation of certain topics that required professional terminology. Nonetheless, all interview participants took enough time to express themselves and were not rushing in order to terminate the conversation. Another difficulty during the interviews was the time. Since the store owners were interviewed during their working time, the interview was sometimes interrupted for customer care. However, those store owners that I could interview for over an hour have set their interviews either at early times during a holiday, or they had employees taking care of the business while inviting me to their office for the interview.

The interview was most of the time seen as a promotion for their own store.

Several owners were really honest concerning the marketing mix and did not falsify the resonance of the consumer concerning the price, for instance.

Pilot interview

The pilot-interview was undertaken with the owners of Bon Bon on the Block, Marieke and Lenny.

An interview protocol was prepared in order to have an overview of the questions that were to be covered. The list became quite long as the questions served as a guideline for the interview.

During the interview it became obvious that not all questions could be covered. The interview proceeded in a fluent yet spontaneous way.

After the first interview was conducted, I narrowed down the questions and tried to define important themes that could be used for the upcoming interviews.

Reactions

The interviewed private retail store owners were mostly very supportive concerning the participation for an interview. A major interest in the research results was uttered. Requests were made to get the final version of the research paper. Furthermore, the store owners were generally interested in the performance of the other private retail stores that participated in the interview.

Beginning of the thesis - beginning with the interviews

The first interviews were difficult to lead as the research topic on the cultivation of taste was still too broad for precise questions.

Another difficulty for the interview and interview questions proved to be the selected theory. As mentioned before, in the beginning of the thesis development, a more deductive approach of the research was planned. In order to do so, it was necessary to first gather theories upon which the hypothesis could be based. The process of either confirming or disconfirming the hypothesis in relation to the theories would have resulted after the observations collected from the interview. The preparation took a slightly wrong turn. As soon as more information could be gathered from the undertaken interviews, I realized the notion towards a more inductive research design.

Preparation

The majority of the interviews were voice recorded. The selection of interview questions was mainly based on already done interviews. In the end, the interview questions were showing patterns based on the four P's of marketing: product, price, promotion and place.

Expectations:

Based on the literature I have read, I expect:

- E1** With their selection of conspicuous goods, the store owners have an influence on the potential customer, with reference on their formation of taste.
- E2** Privately owned retail stores attract a certain group of consumers. The group of consumers show Veblen-, bandwagon- and snob-behaviour with the purchase of certain goods.
- E3** The cultivation of taste is an extension of the cultivation of lifestyle and vice versa.
- E4** The store owners are aware of snob-and bandwagon consumers.
- E5** The consumers mostly get their initial exposure of the sold conspicuous consumption good at the individual retail stores.

4 Survey results and some analysis

This section is subdivided into four major parts enumerated from section 1 until 4 with sub-sections.

The first section is directed to the individual store owner and presents their point of view. Questions concerning the motivation of starting up their stores are being focused on.

Furthermore, an attempt of gathering information on the cultivation of taste of the consumers from the perspective of the private retail store owner is being made.

A general focus is being put on the possible implementation of the consumption goods into their consumer's 'lifestyles'. Sub-sections also present a general overview of concepts of some participating private retail stores.

The last part of the first section is entitled 'contribution'.

In this sub-section, the store owners are asked what they think they contribute to the consumer and the city with their store and their store concept.

The second section concentrates on the store owner's opinion on their target group. Questions and estimations concerning their consumer's acquisition of taste are being made.

The third section deals with a more marketing-oriented view of the private retail stores and their concepts.

Themes cover the marketing strategies that the store owners apply in order to draw more attention to their store, the relevance of the choice of location is also subject of interest.

The last sub-section of the third chapter deals with the relevance of being situated in the city of Rotterdam.

The last section concentrates on the store owners' prognosis and estimation whether there are more private retail stores emerging or if the opposite is going to occur.

4.1 The store owner's perspective

4.1.1 Motivation to start the store

How do the store owners developed their interest in starting up their own stores?

All interview participants must have a strong motivation to start up their own retail store. Starting up their own business is combined with more limitations as stores that belong to a bigger retail chain.

However, the desire must have been big enough to start it in any way. I asked the store owners for their personal own motivation:

The answer which united all of them was: passion.

Woei, owner of a sneaker store, explains how he started his shop:

'... it was a hobby. Before I got the store I already sold sneakers, on the internet, like two years. And then I wanted to start a store.'

Nen Xavier, owner of the self-named fashion store, stated that he 'always had interest for design.'

The owners of Bon Bon on the Block, Marieke and Lennie, represent children's wear, do have a high identification motive with their own store: 'You freaking care if your kid looks terrible. You don't want your kids to look horrible. You want them to look cool!'

Among all the interviewed store owners, the notion of personal conviction of their concept and basic motivation were the main reasons for starting their own stores.

The stores including their individual store concept are an extension of the owner's personal lifestyle and life-style attitude. A special thing about the privately owned retail store compared to a big chain brand store is for instance the limitation of money, lack of support and yet unknown brand image. This may at first be regarded as a hard start to establish a business even though the business concept may be very promising and innovative. On the other hand, limitations do make people creative and influence their choice on certain things. During the interviews, the store location proved to be very dependent on the rent.

Stores built up on passion

An interesting fact about the privately owned stores is that they are built up upon individual ideas. To emphasize the importance of an individual idea, the potential store owner must be aware of the fact that his idea should be feasible, realistic and ideally long-lasting. It is easy to start up more clothing stores, it is easy to establish more shoe retailers, but the most important question for these potential store owners is how long the store will last. Furthermore, thoughts on the presentation of the store will also play an important role. Therefore, it is a safe thought to start a store in which the people do already have an existing knowledge base. All the interviewed store owners state that they have a lot of their personal interest in this store.

An interesting observation is the connection of lifestyle to the concept of the store. As said, the store is an extension of the store owners themselves and their way of living. The field of interest that occupies them the most is also present in their private life and it is likely to say that it simply became a part of life, of which the store owners could already draw from a lot of existing information, that it is a rather safe ground to build the store concept on.

For that reason, the notion of the fact that the store is an extension of the individual's personality could well be applied: Woei- owner of the self-named sneaker store in Rotterdam states: '...everybody knows I am a sneakers freak'

Another remark comes from Nen: All of my soul is here. It is really my baby...I also wanted the store to grow with me, with my knowledge of what I am doing. And that's why you see the changes every time, because I change and the store changes as well, I really like this process. You learn more and you slowly add stuff to the building then you think of it more and it unites.'

4.1.2 Concept and competition with chain stores

It is noticeable, that all the private retail store owners are aware of the competition of the bigger chain brands. These chain brands have the ability to attract more people with their broader choice of clothes, their variety of different brands and most of the time their pricing politics.

For that reason, their new to be established store has to have something significantly different about it, which the chain brands cannot offer.

This starts with the selection of products: the private store owners mostly focuses on luxury consumption good which are not mass produced for the general bandwagon consumer. An exclusive choice of products combined with a unique design of the store offers the customer an immediate different shopping experience.

The privately owned retail store has to co-exist next to the big companies.

It is not a question of preference of a store, rather than to find a mix and balance between mass-produced goods and (luxury) conspicuous consumption goods: 'Stores like H&M and Zara, they sell t-shirts for 5 euros. And I see a lot of people coming in to buy nice sneakers. They don't buy shirts, you see them in cheaper shirts because sneakers are quite expensive, they want to balance the expenses. H&M t-shirts for five euros and mine are thirty-five, it's a big difference.' (Woei, 2010).

This statement also makes clear, that it is not the intention of the store owners to eliminate these stores, because they are in a way necessary and important with regard to their own business.

As the interviewed store owners are aware of their more exclusive selection of items, the price factor is a decisive element. If a consumer intends to buy a luxury consumption good and does not have an unlimited budget, he should be able to balance the costs.

Concerning another comparison of the co-existence of a chain brand store and a privately owned retail store Nen states: 'I think that people really combine. Because a lot of people got to H&M and Zara to get their basics. But for more special things they get from more specialized shops. Most of the people do it.'

The quality versus the quantity factor is being referred to by the owners of Bon Bon on the Block as following: 'I don't go to the H&M anymore, sure, still for some basic stuff, but you go for quality not quantity when you get older.' (Lennie)

'When we were younger, we went to the H&M every week and bought five shirts every week. Now you go to a qualitative better store and buy one shirt or one item every month that you keep for five years' (Marieke).

The selection of products is only one part of the store concept.

A very decisive part of the concept is the store design. Different perceptions and voices are uttered when asked about the store owner's store design. The majority preferred to play music in their stores. During the interviews, it was often asked, if it would be possible to keep the music on in the meantime as clients prefer it. Music adds to the store atmosphere and invites people to come in, look around and feel comfortable. According to the store description of Sister Moon:

'After fashion, music plays an important role at Sister Moon. In our store there is a party atmosphere five days a week. Organizers, dj's, dancers, promoters and dancers come and go.'

However, music is not the decisive factor for the store concept and design.

Asking about their store design, especially the store owners with a newly established store (from 2005) had a rather concise concept in mind, compared to those stores that already exist over ten years.

With a strong affinity to this city, Woei intended to implement as many elements of the harbour city of Rotterdam.

His t-shirts are hanging on steel wires held by those typical hooks that you can see on the harbor, attached to the ceiling. The Shoe rack is designed from a former ship container. Everything stays minimalist, as he let everything paint white. It takes two times to realize the fine, yet significant elements that of the store.

Nen indicates that he tries to let his store '... look more comfortable and at ease as well. But also to really have an experience. With the high ceilings. Yes, you really want to give them that. Not as much as a museum feeling, or something, but I really want people to be relaxed and that your eyes are stroked from what you see.'

Meanwhile, the store owners of Bon Bon on the Block stated that they wanted to look their store like a gallery.

The importance of the choice of furniture was also an important element for the store design of ANSH46. Having friends that graduated from a design academy, he approached them to ask if they could design the interior of the store.

Longer existing stores such as Sister Moon and Urban Unit pay little attention to their store design. There are no special created elements that should draw attention to the store design.

4.1.3 The store and the city

One of my interview questions was: 'Do you think people were in need of this store with this store concept?' the store owners were stating the scarcity of conceptually interesting and good private retail stores.

Therefore, having started such a business has given them positive feedback. Nen Xavier states: 'There is enough interest. People want this. There aren't too many shops like this. So it is a good initiative'.

Taking the cultural and social contribution into account important statements by the store owners signalizes their belief in their own store and the importance of keeping up their store concept and make it visible to others: 'The trade press says that these individual stores add to more character of the streets. So there will be more focused on that' (Lennie).

Nen adds: 'It does add up to the culture of Rotterdam and also this neighborhood and obviously, this is my shop and I select the stuff and sell it.'

Marieke and Lennie from the Bon Bon on the Block refer to an interesting project which they were originally taking part in: the Hofbogen project. It is an initiative that provides and rents out space for artists, young entrepreneurs and creative people. The space available is directly situated under Rotterdam's Hofbogen.

Lenny and Marieke: 'This Project is going to be done underneath the old train station called 'Hoofplein'.

However, this aspect of giving young entrepreneurs a creative place to set up their studios, businesses and other projects is well appreciated among the young self-employed entrepreneurs.

With special reference to the lifestyle stores, such as the interviewed sneakers stores Woei and Urban Unit, it is clear to see that the contribution of these stores is a more visible lifestyle factor than other interviewed private retail stores.

A possible reason for this is the fact that conspicuous goods such as collectors-items in form of sneakers, lifestyle goods such as skateboards, represent more of the feel of a lifestyle than clothes, for example. Sneakers,

boards and spray cans are more closely connected with movement and activity. Rather than passive usage such as clothes that are worn. There has been a certain scene of sneakers emerging.

Place and timing

Being asked about the timing of opening a store of sneakers, Woei admits that he has been there at the perfect place, which is Rotterdam, at the perfect time, which dates back almost four years ago. The contribution of stores like Woei, Urban Unit and Oqium, all sneaker stores, is the fact that they (mainly) sell selected quality models of certain sneaker brands.

The unique thing about Urban Unit is the fact that they were one of the first stores to emerge that would combine several creativity fields and skills: 'We were the first store to combine the purchase of shoes, crafts good such as paint and other creative elements. We imported magazines and DVDs' to the kids here. Things have changed a lot since then. Not many people buy DVDs anymore. People know of our store, because we have been one of the first to start such a store'.

Woei states that he contributes much to the scene of sneaker fans in Rotterdam:

'The scene is pretty big, because I sell a lot of sneakers. Amsterdam is famous. Because it is Amsterdam. And the sneaker scene there is pretty big and Rotterdam scene isn't smaller at all. It is quite big. I think it is even as big as in Amsterdam'. Woei talks about his clients and the reputation of his store: 'I got locals but I also got people from whole Holland. Last week there was a boy, I think he was twelve years old and he came all the way from far away... it's a two and a half hour drive with his grandma just to come by and pick up a Woei shirt. And he said: 'Woei, you are so famous in our town'. 'How come?' I asked. It's so far far away and I don't even know the town.' This statement emphasizes the dimension in which Woei's store has gained a certain reputation. A more thorough insight will be given in this chapter under the heading 'marketing'.

Furthermore, the product line made available through these sneakers store seems to have found a gap in the supply chain. Having conducted interviews with the store owners of Urban Unit and Woei have clearly showed, that their tendency on selling sneakers is rising.

Woei was by far the most active and successful store with the strongest store concept.

During the interview I asked him to look back from the time when he started his own store until how it developed today: 'I started three years ago. That's the time when sneakers were really going up. The high point. When I started it is getting higher. And there are other sneaker stores but I think I am more well known because everybody knows I am a sneakers freak.' Other voices such as that from Urban Unit state that even though the business with selling skate DVD's has declined, the demand for shoes has been going up since around 2004. Comparing Woei, who has started at around 2007 with Urban Unit, it is surely the sneakers that make the sale invoice rise. Other products, such as T-shirts are still in demand, however do not form the main income of the store:

'For example, if you want to sell street clothing like I do and if I open a store and sell clothing alone I will be gone in half a year. I sell a lot of clothes but I only make money with my own stuff and one or two other brands. All the other brands don't sell at all. I tried it for three years, this brand and that brand, but it doesn't work. Stores like H&M and Zara, they sell t-shirts for 5 euros.' (Woei)

Urban Unit started around sixteen years ago, in 1994. At that time they were the first sneaker store in Rotterdam. Furthermore, the imported articles such as magazines and music were at that time also a novelty for the city and for the people. Urban Unit states that 'the market for this [sneakers] is getting higher.'

Woei and Urban Unit are aware on their effect on the consumer. Especially Urban Unit made international brands such as 'Stüssy' available to their national costumers. It was a revelation at that time and a big step forward.

Nowadays, they brands are all known to the kids, however, the demand is still high as there are not too many individual retail stores that provide the supply for that niche group.

Focusing more on the children's garments store 'Bon Bon on the Block' Marieke and Lenny stated that the costumers and consumers have partly seen the brands in their showrooms and were asking a lot about where to buy them. The demand proved as realistically high enough for the two friends to consider about starting a store which would also represent brands that were not so commonly available in store in Rotterdam: '... we have sample sales, in a show room in a different location first, (Marieke)

L: '...and everybody asked: 'Where can I buy it? Where can I buy it? People were going crazy on some brands.' (Lenny)

'So we thought we should start our own shop.' (Marieke).

Sister Moon, who already exists since 1993, was well aware of the novelty factor he has brought into the city. In fact, when he and his former girlfriend started back then, Sister Moon was the first second hand store that would

made stylish clothes also appealing to the youth. The selection of second hand goods and other first hand items in the style of the funk generation still prove the exclusive taste of the store. It is specialized in its own way, but the store's specialization is known for the constant product line of Sister Moon.

4.2 Target group, lifestyle, taste

4.2.1 Target group

In this chapter, the focus is set on the target group of the interviewed store owners. Lifestyle stores such as Woei and Urban Unit attract all sorts of people.

Woei, for instance, mentions that his store is directed to those that are interested in finding 'exclusive Nikes'. Meanwhile Urban Unit says that they appeal more to 'streetkids' and that their clients are 'definitely more male than female'. Other stores which are more specialized on luxury apparel state that there are no clear and definite target costumers that purchase at their stores. Nen admits that there is no limitation concerning the age of people that come to his store. Even the children's store 'Bon Bon on the Block' agrees that all ages are represented in their clientele: 'It is so diverse. It has surprised us as well. We also see grannies. They go to the movies at Cinerama and since we are located right next to them they pass by our store after the program and come in. We never thought that would happen. Because our focus was on people like ourselves. But there is so much more. That felt good.'

As many stores sell luxury apparel, a basic understanding for the sense of fashion is needed: 'I think it is really difficult to just point at one type of person, but usually they are really cultural and open-minded, good-hearted people, who have an interest in fashion. Some may have more than the other one, but I think the most important thing is that most of the people that come here probably just want to make their lives nice in a way. Just like wearing stuff where they feel comfortable in and that just makes every day a bit nicer. That's what it's all about.' (Nen)

Snob-, Bandwagon- and Veblen-effect.

It proved to be rather hard to communicate with the terms of Snob-, Bandwagon- and Veblen-effect to the interview partners. These terms are very theoretical and are not in the mindset of the store owners in the way as theory refers to it.

The term 'Snob-effect' has had a rather negative connotation to it and store owners would feel slightly offended being asked if there are clients that show the explained 'snob-effect-motifs'. The answer was most likely a 'no'. Other terms such as bandwagon-effect and Veblen-effect had to be described in more simple terms. In that way, it was easier to come to the same understanding of the basic meanings of the words.

The bandwagon-effect was then described as a group behavior: people buy certain products, that are being liked by this large group. They buy it out of influential reasons such as being accepted by the majority of the society that wears these items. The owner of Sister Moon refers to it as the 'Uggs-behavior'.

Uggs are very famous shoes made in Australia. The special thing about these shoes are their replication of the Inuit winter shoe. Filled with lambs wool inside and covered with genuine leather, it has proved as a longer lasting fashion trend among the female.

However, these shoes are not liked by many of the store owners. Even the owners of Bon Bon on the Block roll their eyes and wondered why the trend can last so long and especially with these kinds of shoes?

It is a basic statement and felt common sense during the interviews that most of the interviewed store owners do have a different store concept that already differentiates them from the bigger chain brands. In that sense, they already target, willingly or unwillingly a different clientele. One, that is not completely defined by the terms of snob-, bandwagon- and Veblen-effect. They are more directed to clients that already have a defined taste, which has not been mostly formed by the masses. Thinking about the concepts of the bigger chain brand stores such as H&M or Zara, it is the strategy of these stores to copy potential popular fashion trends from big designers. The only difference of these borrowed ideas for the collection is the quality and price relation. Less qualitative materials are used, the means of productions are cheaper, the quantity of the production is higher and the price is much lower: 'if you know fashion and you know how things are produced, the fashion industry is an extremely ugly industry. Then, you think twice about buying at H&M because a T-shirt for 4 Euros is not possible. Even if you produce million pieces, there is still something wrong. That's why we also want to show in our store a lot of collections have eco tags. We don't put it big on the store and the collection, but it is something that we go for.' (Marieke)

Target groups are also individuals that do try to choose for themselves. It is not a complete herd behavior that defines their purchasing habits. Neither does it define and set a selection of certain stores that are adding up to

the certain categorization of the consumer.

Due to the fact that collecting shoes is not a hobby and a shared passion for the majority of the people, it shows a certain exclusivity. People that are not informed enough of the sneakers scene are outsiders in a way. For those that possess a more profound knowledge and understanding of the field of interest, is part of a scene or a community.

To put it in other words, we who are not experts and do not show as much passion for this field, regard those that are, as a rather closed group of people. A scene that only communicates best with those that share the common knowledge. In that sense, the passionate sneaker collector shows motifs that describe the snob-effect according to Husic and Cicic's definition. The perceived unique value of this group makes them to the outsider appear as an exclusive group. However, in their own scene or community, in which the common interest of people may be the same passion for collecting sneakers, these people may act according to patterns of a herd behavior, which would be according to Husic and Cicic the Bandwagon-effect. The bandwagon effect relates to consumers who 'will pay greater emphasis on the effect they make on others while consuming prestige brands' (Husic, Cicic, 2008).

In that case the passionate sneaker collector shows signs of snob-behavior with reference to the definition given by Husic and Cicic, but the snob behavior is however, part of the bandwagon behavior of their own scene. We may say that it shows motifs of a snob behavior for the outsider, but a bandwagon behavior for the insider. The Hub shop state that they have a '... communication target group and a real target group' (Hub shop). They rent out sales- boxes to private entrepreneurs, and also have those costumers that buy these products. Taking the consumer into consideration that buy the products, Hub shop states: 'But we communicate with women between 25 and 35. People that come here are also starting 25 until the 60's and 70's, but they identify themselves with the young profile. But if we aim at older people, then the young people won't identify themselves with the older people anymore.'

An interesting remark made by Hub shop is the nationality of the costumers of their store: 'I would wish for, what I was actually expecting more before we opened this store was that we would also attract more multicultural target group. Because at the moment it is just really Dutch people that come here. And for this neighborhood it is extreme!'

4.2.2 Development of taste

To investigate the question whether private retail store owners do influence their costumers or potential clients with their offer of conspicuous goods, another interview question was: 'Where do you think do your costumers develop their cultivation of taste?'

Curious about the outcome of that question, I expected many answers. Among other answers I expected a verification of my hypothesis that store owners do influence the cultivation of taste of their costumers.

Answering that question Woei states: 'I think, it's a compilation of everything. I went to New York several times and it's like the sneakers Walhalla, but it's not anymore.'

In Woei's opinion, the cultivation of taste is a mix of everything. He named examples from music, to other sorts of media were to him indeed a source for the cultivation of taste. The cultivation of taste is a 'compilation' so he says. This implies many different areas, fields, items, social groups, interests, that form the individual to cultivate his or her taste in that way.

He supports his opinion by adding: '...everybody got influenced by their own elements, by what they see and for everybody it is different.'

Another important aspect in this case is the exposure of taste. The cultivation of taste develops through the more the individual is exposed to certain things. In this case, Woei indirectly states that due to the exposure of different things such as music, friends, magazines, people begin to perceive what supply on certain things is available and develop a certain opinion about these things.

A clearer statement is made by Nen Xavier, saying: 'Media. I think that is a great source. All kinds of media. Especially now with the globalisation. All different styles. There aren't as many styles than there used to be. Because of the internet, connecting with other worlds actually. You look the same. My neighbor used to have a store. It was called 'Krokus'. And he always used to tell me that he could get the craziest things everywhere. He would go to America, Paris, and it would be so different from what Rotterdam had to offer. But today it is different, because you have brands that go all over the world. And obviously, I try to break that with small new designers in between. What I was actually trying to say: people know more about all the different store designers and labels through... I don't know... through media. And also by coming to stores like this, I think. ' An interesting remark

made by the owners of Bon Bon on the Block that is a clear answer to the question and hypothesis: 'I think a lot of people that shop here know the brands, that is something that has surprised me as well, but they bought it online. So it is not that we introduced them the lifestyle, because they already knew the lifestyle. They were already looking for it, but not around the corner.' They consider the aspect of 'lifestyle' adding: 'Because a lifestyle is not just about clothes, or a store or sneakers. It is about how you represent yourself and how you represent it specially.' (Marieke).

Changes in taste.

Another observation was made by 'Sister Moon' owner Ron Wood. He states that many of his former costumers now go to the big chain brand stores and have a more casual taste compared to back then. The special case with 'Sister Moon' is the fact that he has a wider time period to compare his business with. In the nineties, 'Sister Moon' has experienced the highest income of sale. Being asked about the possible reasons, Ron Wood replies, that the economic situation back then was different then now. The city of Rotterdam had a more significant status concerning the nightlife. He talks about a club named Now and Wow, which now is the Maassilo. Some very innovative people have created a scene around this club which has made it known across the borders. Weekly theme parties attracted many international visitors. The party life has been taken into a different sphere in which people loved to go out and expose themselves. The outfit was a very important pre-requisite. The trend back then was to attract attention with any means. Therefore, the best selling items at Sister Moon back then were neon nylons, spandex shirts, wigs. Nowadays, he admits, his former clients go to H&M, do not dress up anymore. Ron Wood adds:

'People don't dress up anymore. In the same outfit with which they go to Albert Heijn, they also go out to party'.

Nen Xavier has also noticed the change of the preference and taste of the consumer. He states that there are parallels of the way the designers create their new collection and the contemporary feel among the people: 'The trend there is right now is that people are more into simple things ...'

He continues: 'People are more spiritual, not in a religious sense, but they are spiritual knowing that they have to respect one another and everybody wants to be happy in fact. So I do think that in that sense people are becoming more simple. And you also see this in design. If you look at apple, for instance. Their success is mostly because of their design.'

Both store owners, Nen Xavier and Ron Wood see a more casual trend that has emerged in the fashion scene.

Casual wear is also important with regard to the children's collection available at Bon Bon on the Block: 'We are not into kids in uniforms and suits. It has to be a sort of casual, relaxed style.' Casual wear for children is, of course nowadays an important factor when it comes to the choice of clothes, which is not necessarily comparable with the casual trend in the high end fashion scene.

Going back to basic seems to be an all-over trend. However, taking the exclusive sneaker collectors into consideration it is more the opposite case.

Shoe models that used to have an original casual design, are now being styled with materials no one could possibly imagine on a shoe, at least not on casual sneakers. Materials such as horse hair, crocodile skin, real gold laces are only a few with which the exclusive shoes are made. While the fashion trend is going back to basic, the conspicuous good such as a Nike collectible shoe is going from basic to exclusive.

Woei and Urban Unit realize this trend is rising. Shoes that do have something significantly different and special about them sell better than the casual sneakers.

4.3 Marketing

4.3.1 Marketing

As the media proves to be an important tool to distribute information, I asked the participating interview partners how important media is for their store concept, and if and how they use it.

The stores 'Sister Moon' and 'Urban Unit' are the oldest stores among the participating private owned retail stores. Both of them exist around sixteen years. Being asked about the marketing strategy of 'Sister Moon', Ron Wood admits that he hardly used any media to draw attention to his store. However, he realizes that it is inevitable to make use of media such as the internet. Furthermore, Ron Wood states he has to keep up with the competition. Therefore, it is not too long ago since he made himself familiar with internet communities such as hyves and facebook. Moreover, he established a website which introduces his store. As a future project, he plans to invite costumers to an event where he exclusively presents newly arrived items in his collection.

Urban Unit for instance, admit that they hardly do anything to draw attention to their store. For a long time it has been word- of-mouth marketing. Their website has been down for a long time. Nonetheless, since last month

Urban Unit have put their website back on again. Asked about the reason for the long absence of their website, the honest answer was because they were just too: '... lazy.'

Marieke and Lennie from Bon Bon on the Block do have a different marketing approach. As their store is mainly focused on children's clothes, they mainly try to approach parents. They have created little cards with their store address and description, tied a small rope on it and whenever they see bikes with children-seats on them, they tie the cards on the bike. The owners stress, that their store is more than just a store: 'That is why we organize these events, for example tomorrow, across the street [a painting action and competition for kids, the money raised will be donated to a beneficial organization]. We are full of plans to show lifestyle.'

A press release is also an important element for the marketing strategy. The press release summarizes in a concise way the characteristics of the store and additional messages. Bon Bon on the Block want to be different: 'I think the main thing, that we already put into our press releases and stuff is that it has to be distinctive in any way, it has to show your individuality, and it has to be relaxed.'

HUB Shop relies heavily on media coverage: 'We get a lot of media attention and actually we do publicity as a



main promotion for us. We have written a good press release and we have sent it out to a lot of journalists, and that was picked up very well. And from now on we are also working on our website and there will also be a webshop and a web blog that will be updated every day. We are working on it. That is a way of reaching people.'

Not every store may have a press release kit prepared for the media coverage, however, what they all do have in common are the facts that they have a website which introduces their store and provides additional information. Facebook is a further internet community tool where many of the interviewed stores have opened an account.

The marketing strategy of Woei has been the most thorough one. During the interview, Woei enlists several actions he undergoes in order to draw attention to his store: '... I got a good logo, I got a good internet site. About thousand visitors per day.

I got hyves, I got like almost 8000 people now... No webshop. People can see what I sell and if somebody calls who lives far away, asking: 'can you send me a pair?' – Then I send them one. And people talk a lot. And that's the biggest advertisement for me.



An interesting feature of the blog is a video documentary of sneaker stores in New York where exclusive Nikes can be obtained. Several video streams show Woei in conversation with the store owners talking about shoes, opinions and messages:

'people like it, you know. These guys started to collect sneakers and they are like: 'Oh, this guy is cool, he goes everywhere to find sneakers. That was an obsession for them, I think. And they want to do the same and buy exclusive Nikes, and become more fans.'

As the video documentary has been a huge success, Woei plans to extend the documentary to Asia: 'Now, it's pretty big in Asia. Like Japan. As you have seen my videos made in New York, I want to do the same thing in Asia this year, I hope.' (Woei). Furthermore, Woei's logo has been designed by one of his friends, well known artist Parra. The logo carries a strong brand image. T-shirts with the logo on it are sold out within a few weeks, he remarks. The collaboration with a friend that happens to be a good friend of his is also adding up to the marketing approach of making the store appealing and subject of discussion.

The store is also represented with poster campaigns all over the city of Rotterdam: 'I do a lot of poster campaigns and that's what people like'.

Even though his marketing concept seems very professional, Woei does not work with communication agencies: 'I don't advertise, I don't call bureaus to make it bigger. I don't think, it is in my league. Big companies need it to get big and I do it without.'

The only collaboration and help he seeks is that of his friend, Piet Parra.

Especially the newly established stores have a very strong concept concerning store design and marketing. The stores which do exist around sixteen years pay less attention in the store design and marketing. However, they are aware that due to the large competition, it is also important to keep up with the trends such as creating a website for the store and connect with the customer by creating a store profile at several online communities. In general, the internet serves to be a strong tool when it comes to approaching the customer.

Only one store covers more than just an internet performance: Woei has a multitude of collaborating friends designing his logo and t-shirts with him. Additionally, poster campaigns and interesting video documentaries on international sneaker stores are an eye catcher on the store's web blog.

All store owners agree that word-of-mouth- marketing is important and very effective when it comes to the acquisition of new customers.

Concerning the choice of location, the rent and rental agreement prove to be the most decisive factors for the choice of the location.

Being situated in the city of Rotterdam gives them the advantage of an already familiar surrounding. Furthermore, the city proves to be supportive when it comes to supporting entrepreneurs to establish their own businesses. With regard to the style, Rotterdam is very street driven, meanwhile Amsterdam is very fashion driven. Being asked about the reason of being located in Rotterdam, many store owners agree that they have a love for the city and want to be part of the process of developing the city into a more cultural and creative city.

The last part presents the prognosis of the emergence of more private retail store owners. Answers are very diverse. The prognosis very much depended on the store owners and their consumption goods. Store owners that sell exclusive goods such as exclusive collectible shoes see a large trend. However, they state that it depends on the product the stores sell.

A store which completely relies on selling clothes has a bigger competition to face rather than those stores that sell more exclusive products.

4.3.2 Location and the city

A further question of investigation was the reason for choosing the specific location for the private individual retail store. Having interviewed stores that were located in certain areas, which the city of Rotterdam wants to lift up, a great motivator for the choice of location were appealing rental contracts.

Besides the streets that are intended to be lift up, the majority of stores claims that either it was the only location, which would fit to their budget and at the same time was located at a likable area, or it was solely the low rent incentive.

For Bon Bon on the Block, the location proved to be as much bigger than originally planned. However, due to the fact that Bon Bon on the Block together with Ansh46 stepped out of the Hoofbogen project, the location became available last minute and therefore proved to be a good choice.

After stepping out of the Hoofbogen project, an alternative plan of Lennie and Marieke was to locate their store in the South of Rotterdam: Katendrecht. Being aware that they would only approach a limited number of poten-

tial costumers and taking the location and its inhabitants into consideration, they soon agreed to search for a space in the center of Rotterdam.

Ron Wood of Sister Moon admits that he started the store together with his girlfriend out of necessity. His former girlfriend was unemployed and he was pretty unhappy with his job at the post office. A friend of theirs gave up the space and soon 'Sister Moon' moved in.

The Hubshop, located at the Nieuwe Binnenweg, a main street leading to the city, admits, that they had a very interesting rental contract: 'this place it's been the perfect timing because they have working out this street [Nieuwe Binnenweg], there are a lot of new cool shops coming and we have been one of the first. So we got a really good rental agreement. That has been really positiv.'

A similar reaction was also given by Woei: 'I picked this store because rent was low. That is the only reason I was here. But from day one everybody looked, people talk and everybody knows it now. If we would be in the middle of the center it would be a commercial store, that is not what I want.'

Nen Xavier joined her friend who opened a hairdresser salon on Witte de With and motivated him to take over part of the store to use it as his own store. The creative are of Witte de With have been very appealing to them. Before deciding on a store location, Marieke and Lennie have done some research: 'We first looked at another area in Rotterdam and we did some research on how many kids are living over there. It is more outside of the center, it is where people live, near the zoo Blijdorp, behind that. It is a very rich area, well not really rich but younger people with kids and double income. So we wanted to do that but last minute we thought: 'No.'

Being asked for the reason of preferring being in the centre, Marieke and Lennie responded the clientele that they would reach, is more diverse. Moreover, they name tourists as another consumer group that is more present in the center rather than in Blijdorp.

As already mentioned before, the city of Rotterdam tries to elevate the reputation of certain areas and streets in Rotterdam. Especially those areas that are newly established, such as the Wilhelmina Pier in the south, or those areas that have had a bad reputation due to many criminal incidents, such as the Nieuwe Binnenweg.

During the search of a space for their shop, Marieke and Lenny experienced the appealing incentives that real-estate agents offered them: 'You can get money, but only if you but your shop in that area. Rotterdam was youth capital and entrepreneurs would get money if they focus their business on the youth plus if you do a shop or anything in the south or in an area that they [they government] want to uplift.

Like the Nieuwe Binnenweg. Even when we signed our contract they asked us: 'are you sure you don't want to position your store at the Binnenweg? In that case, they could have arranged six months of free rent.'

Even though the offer sounded appealing, the owners decided that the Nieuwe Binnenweg is not the right location for their store specialized on children's wear.

The Nieuwe Binnenweg is now being marketed as a street for upcoming individual entrepreneurs. Knowing about the reputation of the street, the Hub shop is aware of the fact that not too many people might find their store. However, they are optimistic. They appeal to the creativity of their potential costumers to get to the store. Moreover, they think that the Nieuwe Binnenweg fits their image: 'Because if we would be on an A-location it would be strange somehow. Coolsingel or something like that. I think it would be strange if you then do what we are doing.'

Costumer's opinion might doubt the store's concept of fair trade and a green living philosophy: 'Because people then also think, they are also paying for that location.'

Moreover, they appeal to their potential costumer's creativity to get to find their store: '... the people that get to find us, they are really anxious and they will come back. The challenge for us is more that people know about us and that they can find us. I think, it fits our image to have this location. But it asks a bit more creativity to get to the shop.'

Relevance of being situated in Rotterdam

Among the interviewed party was a rather positive concerning the support legal support offered by the city of Rotterdam. A clear statement concerning the cultivation of taste was made by Marieke of Bon Bon on the Block: 'I think that Rotterdam will always be a town where the scene will be street driven. Not fashion-driven like Amsterdam, where it is driven by companies or creative people that live there and decide how things are going to be. That is how Amsterdam works, because you have all the creative agencies, fashion, advertising, agencies. It's over there. And here people just work: in normal jobs, creative jobs, they work for themselves, the work. And that's why the style, ideas and the concepts are more street driven because it happens on the streets... because it is not happening in big companies. They are not here. They are in Amsterdam.' For all the private retail store owners choosing Rotterdam as the preferred city to open their first store, was a good decision. Due to the individual store concepts that each of the private retail stores provides, the acceptance was positive enough to

feel the support and need of the people for stores like these. Nen Xavier states that the demand for designer fashion stores is big enough.

Woei admits that the sneaker scene started to become bigger when he opened his store. A comparison he makes with Amsterdam states, that the demand for exclusive sneakers comparably the same for Rotterdam.

Asking about the diversity factor for the city of Rotterdam if there were would be more individual retail stores opening, he states: 'I think it's better for the city. I think it's better for the street culture, but it's hard.'

Urban Unit confirms that Rotterdam was a good city to start their project of the store, as the demand was high and supply was rare.

Bon Bon on the Block say that Rotterdam starts to get open for these stores. A store that does not only sell conspicuous goods, but offers them a lot more.

4.4 Prognosis

An interesting question to ask the individual retail store owners was the question: 'Is the trend of more privately owned retail stores going up or down? What do you think?'

Responses varied quite a lot and depending on the store and product, the prognosis for upcoming privately owned retail stores was either rated positively or negatively.

Nen Xavier states that the demand for designer wear is certainly there: 'I think it is going up. The trend there is right now is that people are more into simple things and I think we are going there.'

Woei shows a real appreciation and love for the city of Rotterdam. He states that he has never been anywhere else for so long. This is his city and his passion just fits into her. He regards himself part of the sneaker scene in Rotterdam.

Marieke and Lenny on the one hand express their positive attitude towards Rotterdam's supportive service: 'I think Rotterdam as a city is a really supportive city. Everybody knows each other. You know a lot of other shop owners. There is a lot of support between ourselves.'

But on the other hand comment that creative minds such as entrepreneurs as they see themselves should get more support:

'They should support entrepreneurs without having a preference of store location. The trade press says that these individual stores add to more character of the streets. So they will be more focused on that.' (Lenny)

Being asked the question whether Rotterdam needs more of these kind of concept stores, Woei's response was following: 'High demand. I got lucky.'

G: Do you think Rotterdam needs more of these concept stores?

W: I think it's better for the city. I think it's better for the street culture, but it's hard. Summary: This section was divided into four major parts.

The first part was directed to the store owner and their impression on topics concerning the motivation to start a store, their store concept, their lifestyle influence implemented in their store concept, the possible contribution of their store and to the city. As major incentive to start their own stores, passion, interest and knowledge of the field of interest were named. Their personal conviction and the feedback they hear from other people made them clear, that there is enough demand for their products in Rotterdam.

The store owner's own cultivation of taste results in the influence of different sources. Furthermore, their store implement many elements from the store owner's personal lifestyle attitude.

The store design and the goods sold at their stores reflect much of the store owner's own style and taste.

The store owners state that they do have knowledge of the things that they sell. They specialize on certain products and give the customer a feeling of exclusivity when purchasing items. Most often, their interest developed into a hobby and transformed into more profound knowledge, which was enough knowledge to realize a store with their concepts.

Concerning the store concepts, the store owners focus a lot on the general store atmosphere. It is important that the customer feels comfortable yet at the same time should he get the impression of a unique store design. A minimalist store design adds more to the character of the store rather than a crowded interior as it would distract from the collection. Due to the minimalist store design, it is easier to expand the store interior with furniture which can have a bigger effect on the change of the store design. Furthermore, music plays a decisive role when it comes to the creation of a comfortable store atmosphere. Another important issue is the fact that the private retail store owners are aware of the bigger chain brand stores that sell clothes and other consumption goods much cheaper.

The difference of the product if the chain brand store and the private retail store are the quality, quantity and price. The private retail store owners are aware of the fact that they sell more pricey products. However, they do think that their costumers also need to have the possibility to balance the costs. If they buy a branded good at their store, they may get the basic apparel at a cheaper price at other chain brand stores.

The individual retail store contributes in so far to the consumer preference and the city, as they make certain brands visible and locally available. The private retail stores add up to the character of the street and the city. Moreover, especially the lifestyle sneaker stores contribute to the local scene.

The second part summarizes the influence of the costumers. Questions on the sources of their cultivation of taste and the relevance of exposure to certain consumption goods arise.

A remark being made by Woei states that the cultivation of taste of the individual derives from their own elements. This means to say that the individual exposes himself to certain things. There is not just one single source, it is rather a mix of music, family, friends, social groups that take a big part in the process of cultivating taste.

Moreover, the media in any form tends to be a big influencing source. Due to the fact that we are living in a more globalised world, trends and brands become global as well. The internet and known designers tend to set a fashion trend upon which fashion magazines react and share these trend with their readers.

Most of the time, the consumers coming to the private retail stores are already aware of the existence of the brands, however, they express that they know the brands from the internet and could hardly find any stores that make these brands locally available. The private retail store does not influence their costumers in buying certain brands in that sense as the consumer already knows the brand most of the time also the collection by informing himself through the internet.

4.5 Provisional Analysis

4.5.1 The perspective of Product, Place, Promotion, Price

Taking all the answers and results of the interview into account, a visible division into the four P's of marketing-mix was visible. Therefore, the survey results are being presented in four categories, which I found useful:

- Product (including Store concept)
- Place (and time)
- Promotion
- Price

Product

During the interviews, a closer focus on (luxury) conspicuous consumption goods in form of lifestyle items such as luxury designer brands and exclusive sneakers.

Having interviewed several parties concerning their choice of product, all individual store owners were convinced of the fact that there is certainly a demand for that. Moreover, they refer to feedback given by their costumers being fond of finally being able to purchase the items in a local store in Rotterdam.

There has been a distinctive element concerning the decision to solely sell clothes versus selling a mix sneakers and apparel uttered by Woei: '...if you want to sell street clothing like I do and if I open a store and sell clothing alone I will be gone in half a year. I sell a lot of clothes but I only make money with my own stuff and one or two other brands. All the other brands don't sell at all. I tried it for three years, this brand and that brand, but it doesn't work.'

This statement shows the power of choice of the consumers. The consumers have enough choices to purchase clothes, in this case street clothing, from other stores. Chain brand stores represent a big competition when it comes to price and the variety of clothes and other items offered.

Several individual store owners are aware of the competition through bigger companies. The store owners do realize that their costumers do not only shop in at their exclusive stores. Several items are also being obtained at these chain brand stores, such as basic items as a t-shirt.

The cultivation of taste for the offered products at the private store owner's place has, according to the interviewed parties, several sources:

The exposure to the media has been named as a central source. Moreover, the 'compilation of everything' (Woei). Different styles can influence the individual.

It is then the exposure to certain elements from which the individual chooses his preference from. These sources can be derived from music, circle of friends, the media in its various forms such magazines and the internet.

An interesting discovery during the interviews was the importance of the globalization. As stated by Nen Xavier, the globalization has taken a big influence on the cultivation of taste of people. He draws a comparison between the period of the thirty's and our present times. Back in the thirty's the product range concerning fashion was very specialized. Trends differed and developed in very distinctive different direction concerning the location. Trends in Paris differed a lot from fashion styles in New York. Nowadays, fashion styles seem to overlap and universal. Fashion styles and trends in New York are similar to Rotterdam and Paris. Globalization has been seen as the main motivator and reason for the assimilation of taste concerning fashion. To specify this, the emergence of internationally known and favored labels and brands have emerged. An Armani or Hugo BOSS suit is internationally known and receives the same luxury status elsewhere where the brand is known. The branding of labels and designers has been a decisive factor of worldwide distribution and recognition. Magazines, fashion stores and consumers address to the fashion shows defined in New York, Berlin and Paris, for example. Fashion has a brand and derives nowadays more from known designers and labels rather than from specific countries. Many costumers already do know the brands. They mainly obtained the knowledge of designers and their collections online. The store represents a place where consumers can obtain the items locally rather than on the internet or abroad.

Moreover, a general attitude from dressing up to dressing in a more casual way has been observed by the private retail store owners who mainly concentrated on the sale of clothes.

Reasons for this were on the one hand the economic crisis and on the other hand the change of people's perception on certain issues, such as the environment. Further reasons were: people have gotten more 'spiritual' and are concerned about things that matter more to them than outward appearance.

A casual lifestyle is being regarded as both: comfortable yet elegant in a minimalistic way.

Several products such as exclusive sneakers as lifestyle article have gained demand during the past four years. Lifestyle sneaker stores such as Urban Unit and Woei have managed to provide the city of Rotterdam and also the consumer the availability of certain limited exclusive goods in form of sneakers. The availability is being made easier for collectors as they do not have to travel abroad or search the internet for their collector's item. Urban Unit and Woei have managed to awaken the enthusiasm of costumers for their conspicuous goods. On the one hand, many of them are aware of the existence of these products, however, being influenced by the global media, the availability of these products varied immensely in certain countries and locations. The emergence of the stores lessened the distance to these products and could be purchased.

There is no applicable formula for a long lasting store, however, the two stores that do exist for around sixteen years now in Rotterdam state, that their store concept has brought a certain novelty factor to the city has given them a status of recognition and a loyal clientele.

An important combination to the product is the store design and the service offered. A significant difference between the private retail store and the chain brand store are: personal service and attention, exclusivity factor of selected items made available, unique store design.

Place

As important choice of location for their store, low rent and an appealing rental agreement have been named as the main reason for the decision.

Moreover, several store owners undertook some research concerning the already existing and similar concepts of their store in order to prevent competition or to get a better overview of prospect clients they may attract.

The city of Rotterdam has been generally rated as a supportive city for young entrepreneurs. However, as a disadvantage, areas that are planned to be renovated, renewed and lift up receive special attention. In order to incentivate investors and entrepreneurs, appealing rental agreements are being offered for these areas. Some individual store owners named Zuid- Rotterdam and Nieuwe Binnenweg as privileged areas for appealing rental contracts. Moreover, if a shop concept is designed for youth activities, they are likeable to receive privileged treatment.

Nonetheless, the interviewed private store owners do not only share Rotterdam as the chosen place of their store, but they also share a strong affection and loyalty to the city of Rotterdam.

As the majority of the store owners have already been living in Rotterdam since the nineties, they have experienced the city of Rotterdam as a very fruitful scene for cultural activities enhancing lifestyle. Even though this also stands in close connection for the more prosperous economic situation back then, the private store owners believe in the renaissance of comparably fruitful times for the scene in general. They see the potential in Rotterdam and do not regret choosing this city as the home of their store.

Promotion

As major tools of marketing, the internet and its community networks hyves and facebook have proven to be an inevitable tool for reaching the potential consumer.

Even though, the store owners are aware of the importance of using these web tools, the frequency of usage varied a lot. Those store owners that put a lot of effort in creating a website, state that the store's website or web blog are one of the major ways to reach the consumer. Well maintained web sites show a high number of visitors daily. Those websites that are not frequently updated do not receive much of consumer feedback.

A good web site includes an appealing web design and constant updates on the store and the products.

Moreover, additional information connected to the lifestyle good are an additional incentive for consumers to frequently visit the web blog and

the store. Other means of promotion are for some consumers a recognizable store logo, a strong store concept and image which provides the consumer with a feeling of consistency on the products available. Other methods of promotion are poster campaigns in and around the city centre, distributing flyers. As the private retail store owners have a limited amount of money compared to the chain brands, they develop the store design themselves and often with friends that do have the knowledge in fields such as furniture design and graphic design. Furthermore, all stores profit from word-to-mouth marketing. According to all interviewed people, this is a very strong factor to attract new costumers and to draw attention to their stores.

Even though none of the interviewed store owners hired professional communication agencies, and do not post paid ad- vertisements in magazines and newspapers, it is due to the word-of-mouth-marketing that city guides and local magazines advertise certain stores.

Price

Several opinions were given on the price as purchasing factor.

Even though the store owners are aware of the prices of clothes set by the competition, namely the big chain brands stores, they know that there are costumers willing to pay for the articles purchased at their stores.

A store owner states, that it is important to co-exist next to the chain brand stores. People should have a broader choice for purchasing their products. The private store owners are aware of the fact that not only wealthy people shop at their stores. Furthermore, the target group of the private retail stores was very diverse that it was not possible for the store owners to point with the finger on their characteristic clients.

Buying items at their private retail stores is connected to higher prices, however, they understand that their costumers also shop articles at the bigger chain brand stores to balance the price of an more expensive item with a cheaper item.

The willingness to pay for a product depends much on the product itself.

Meanwhile the availability of exclusive collectors sneakers are limited in Rotterdam and the internet, people are willing to purchase them for the set price.

Designer clothes, on the other hand are internationally better available than collectors items. Therefore, strategy to break the chain of only selling internationally known designers, is to present evenly talented upcoming or nationally known and respected designers, which are yet to be exposed to the public.

Summary In this chapter, the four P's of the marketing mix Product, Place, Promotion and Price are used in order to put the results obtained from the conducted interviews into a better order.

Moreover, the paper focuses on individual retail store owners that do sell (luxury) conspicuous consumption goods. Designer clothes and exclusive limited edition sneakers, for instance, are products which, according to the theory of Husic and Cicic (2009) have one thing in common: on the one hand, the consumers purchase these goods in order to 'communicate meaning about themselves to their reference groups', on the other hand, they generally want to 'enhance their self-image'. This is especially the case, as the conspicuous consumption goods sold by the private retail store owners are visible status goods that are exclusively sold in only a few stores in the city of Rotterdam. The retail store owner give their products a sense of exclusivity as there are not too many stores that sell these kinds of consumption products.

4.5.2 The stores and their owners - A short evaluation.

This section concentrates on main topics which resulted from the interviews with the individual store owners of the retail stores.

In order to evaluate the interviews, it has been a useful tool to figure out the most important topics discussed about during the interviews.

Besides the four P's of marketing, I found following four categories also interesting to

Analyse the stores from.

The four general titles and themes stand in connection to (are to be regarded in connection to) the cultivation of taste and concentrate on:

- Lifestyle Philosophy
- Consumerism
- Marketing Approach
- Influence

An interview review of the stores Sister Moon , Bon Bon on the Block, Nen Xavier , Hub shop are being presented in this evaluation

Lifestyle - Philosophy

To begin with the first theme 'Lifestyle Philosophy':

All enlisted stores have a certain 'Lifestyle Philosophy' which they implement in their store concept.

Referring back to the Lifestyle Philosophy the store owners from Sister Moon, Bon Bon on the Block, Nen Xavier and the Hubshop have built up a store which is, different than the chain brand stores – designed according to their own likes and (lifestyle) attitude.

The importance of building up a store based personal likes makes it easier to present a credible unity of the products and store concept to the consumer.

The private retail storeowners show a certain know-how and are experts within the field they represent. This shows in the selection of their products in form of clothes and other goods.

The store is being regarded as an extension to the personal lifestyle attitude.

Nothing is being sold that they personally dislike. Furthermore, what also matters to the store owners is the distribution of taste.

With the represented collection made available in their store, the customer is exposed to a certain range of brands and their items.

The exposure of the potential customer to certain brands and their products is important for the cultivation of taste.

Stores, especially the private retail store owners have the ability to expose these products in a more innovative and often more appealing way and therefore drag the attention of the potential consumer even more.

The store is not bound to given concepts from a superior head of a company. Individuality of the store has the effect of an individual feel of lifestyle.

Consumers react to that and often see the store as an extension of their own personal lifestyle attitude and their personal taste.

The availability of certain items and products can be very limited in certain areas and cities. With regard to the stores and store owners being interviewed in the city of Rotterdam, many store owners state that the internet has a huge influence and impact on the cultivation of taste.

Brands and products are often first spotted online, an individual research is being undertaken by the consumer. Several private retail store owners report that most of the time consumers already know the brands and products but just could not find a store in their area that sells these items. By the pre-selection of products by the store owners, a certain part of the product line is being represented.

However, it is never a random selection of brands and products.

One storeowner comments that 'the store and its represented items should show a certain consistency. Customers should always know where to get certain products such as clothes and other items'.

The lifestyle attitude is being regarded as essential basic for the cultivation of taste. There are several fields in which taste can be formed and cultivated.

A very known area of taste formation and cultivation is music. In another chapter, the influence of music for the cultivation of taste is being analyzed.

The majority of the store-owners find it very important to accompany and enhance the atmosphere of their store by playing selected types of music in their store. It may also be a psychological effect that by playing music in the store the potential consumers are more easily receptive to buy.

Consumer and consumerism

Unlike I expected, the store owners stated that they in fact do not have a certain target group.

In the beginning, while setting up the store concept and deciding on the store appearance, the development partly also considered the possible potential consumers that should feel the appeal of the store.

However, how Lennie from the Bon Bon on the Block explained to me, imagining the possible costumers before the launch of the store is a different story after the store has really been launched.

The location and place of the store seem to be an indicator in the beginning.

As the Bon Bon on the Block store had first plans to open the store in the Hoofbogen project, they kept the active vibes of something newly developed with a fresh and new concept in mind. Due to a delay in the planning, the store owners of the Bon Bon on the Block stepped out of the project and had intentions to build their store in Kaatendrecht. This would have meant to firstly be available and accessible for inhabitants of that area and closer around. The decision to finally move their store into the West-Blaak would also mean a broader audience. Coming back to the first point of reference: Store owners state that there are no precise costumers they deliberately address. The audience is broad.

With regard to Sister Moon the owner states that there are surprisingly more female costumers. However, there is no precise classification with a dominating age group.

Bon Bon on the Block is specified on clothes and items for children up to the age of around 8 to ten. However, they want to be accessible for everyone. By selling items for children, chocolate, designer bags designed by Susan Bijl, they try to appeal to a broader public. According to their own statement, there are grandparents shopping for their grandchildren, students and single people, parents.

Being located at West Blaak right next to the cinema 'Cinerama' makes the store visible for the visitors that pass by the store before and after they see a movie.

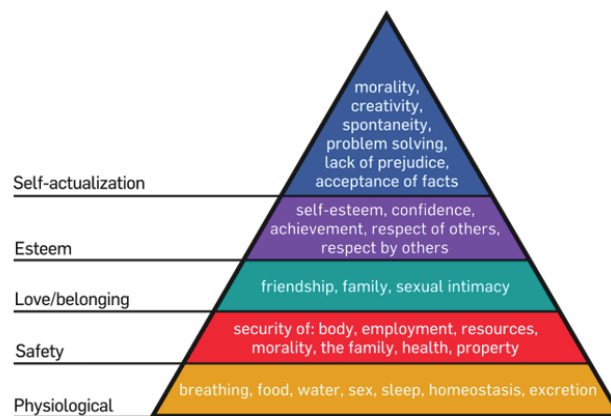
Nen Xavier also stated the various classes of age of his target group, no further specifications on gender.

The Hubshop has a very ecologically friendly store philosophy, being located at the Nieuwe Binnenweg gives them the opportunity to be integrated into a developing urban street in which many people are walking along.

The co-owners sell economically friendly products and therefore try to raise the awareness of their costumers to environmental issues. The public is broad but due to the specific store philosophy.

Consumers consumer the products being made available by the retail store owners. Reasons are various: Consumption can satisfy basic needs if we think of Maslow's pyramid of needs.

Consumption of certain goods out of aesthetic reasons, addiction, social effects are just a few to name.



Marketing Approach

In order to raise awareness to the store (concept) and the represented items, it is important to have something special about and around the project.

What all these stores share in common is the fact that they personally decided how their store should look like, which items are to be sold and what image they want to represent.

Except for Sister Moon, all store owners make use of several internet applications and are very much aware of the fact that the world wide web offers a better possibility to advertise for their store and reach a broader public.

Internet applications such as hyves, facebook and a personal website of the store are being used as means of communication. Virtual newsletters enhance the up-to-date development of the stores.

Special auctions and events are being planned in order to draw further attentions. To name several examples: Bon bon on the block organizes events on the streets such as painting events for children, support urban events such as "Where my Girls at?!", Hubshop invites their costumers to special events in their stores which are

accompanied by live-music for example. Due to the long history of Sister Moon, it was not always necessary to make use of virtual applications as the main source of income for Sister Moon has been the loyal client group. However, the owner realizes the importance of staying up to date. An the use of the internet is nowadays an essential tool in order to communicate and to keep up with the competition. Slowly they have established and make use of hyves and facebook. However, they are also aware that they do not use it effectively enough and also not on a regular basis.

Influence

In order to develop a certain awareness of taste and for further cultivation of taste, exposure of the consumer to these items are very important.

Stores carry an important role when it comes to the exposure of style and taste with the regard to the consumer. However, the style and taste formation originates in and from different fields, music is one big field that can be named as an example. Therefore, the stores should not be regarded as ultimate and original source of taste cultivation.

By referring to the importance of music, there are several reference points to the music culture and nightlife of Rotterdam, especially in the 90's.

The store-owners who are originally from Rotterdam or have been living here for a longer time all agree that certain move- ments in the 90's have had a huge impact and influence on Rotterdam and the cultivation of taste. Several clubs such as the former Now& Then have had weekly theme parties which soon became very famous. People from abroad would come to the city of Rotterdam in order to take part in the weekly part celebrations. An influencing person during this time was Ted Langenbach. Under his lead the theme parties were realized. Make-up and costumes were vivid, sexy. People dressed up, stores such as Sister Moon report that during the 90's they have had the best selling times of their store.

People would spend more money, nightlife and the party scene had a completely different appeal back in the 90's compared to present times. Dressed to be seen was a very common motto.

Nowadays, the scene of Rotterdam constantly brings out innovative projects, however, the unity of a creative cluster seems more loose in these days than it used to be in the nineties. People develop different syles, there is so to say not a monopoly of a dominating party scene that immensely influences people in their styles. Music has become a rather diverse source and is shattered around the city.

Music is not an indicator for style as it used to be back then.

However, it is noticeable that the city of Rotterdam attempts to create and represent a young, artistic environment.

The Kamer van Koophandel offers future store entrepreneurs appealing deals according to the location.

Furthermore, parts of the city are being re-developed by taking the young spirit of the city into consideration.

Projects such as the Hoofbogen project are directed to young and innovative entrepreneurs.

The cultivation of taste in a city with high artistic and innovative potential is also in the need of a more unite and dense creative cluster. If there are several projects operating the unity is too shattered and not transparent enough for the public to understand their concept.

The owners of Bon Bon on the Block state that even though the project Hofbogen was in fact a very supportive project, it was a good decision to take the destiny of their store into their own hands. Store-store owners with similar store concepts (in their case: selling clothes for children) are very fond of the fact that they have established this store independently.

The resonance is fairly positive and other individual retail store owners are rather grateful for the emergence of other individual retail stores. The fact that they are being supported by the city due to subsidies and special rental contracts adds to the cultivation of a net of individual store entrepreneurs.

However, this subsidies and location-privileged subsidy for the stores is also regarded as discriminating. Parts of the cities do not have as easy possibilities and conditions to realize stores. Especially areas in the South of Rotterdam and partly the to be renovated streets in the city centre (such as the Nieuwe Binnenweg) are being favored.

5 Reflections

The importance of the cultivation of taste

Having undertaken the interviews with these store owners has given me an insight into multiple things. It has not only been for the sake of the evaluation and the data collection of and for the interviews. It has been an encounter with individuals that have put a lot of heart and soul into something they believe in and want to share with people.

The important difference between individual store owners and chain brand stores became more and more clear to me and the motivation to draw attention to the importance of supporting the development of a more stable creative cluster for individual store owners that provide support and a firm network for these mainly young and innovative entrepreneurs.

The vibe of the city, of the youth and the scene needs several ways of expression. It is not enough to provide them several pop-podia and expose them to the public in that way. There is a supportive movement, which brings along a combination of interconnected parts. What is there so special about the imitation of clothes?

What is there so special about taking choices on clothes and giving some pieces preference over others?

After being given an insight into the thoughts and opinions of the individual store owners, there can be given a clear answer: Choosing clothes and wearing certain clothes is a statement and an extension of the personal level of the individual made visible through the wear of supporting garments.

All consumers and customers that shopped at the stores owned by the store proprietors that I have interviewed, have a keen interest and awareness of the aesthetic function of clothes and shoes. They stand in close reference to their personal aesthetic likes and in many cases also in close reference to the continuation of the imitation of the lifestyle which can derive from different fields of the individual's interest.

However, these individuals most often also see themselves as part of a certain group that enjoys and shares the same interests. If we refer this to music again, one can say that the fashion industry is also divided into different genres that attract certain people.

Every store tries to be outstanding in its own way. Remarkable about it is the fact that this is not necessarily shown in a pushy and obtrusive way.

The individual store owners have one thing in common: 'Do not let the big chain brands dictate and set your personal standard on taste and style!' And make yourself aware of the fact that there are more ways of self expression without getting back to the mass produced clothes set by a very commercial and mass-directed taste for trends and fashion.

Most of the time these trends are being bought by bandwagon consumers who are easily adaption to the style and taste of the masses. The main explanation for the bandwagon effect is a higher factor of social acceptance. Furthermore, the bandwagon consumer is more easily given the feeling of the 'rightness' of the social consensus. The feeling of being an 'odd-man-out' of the society is being avoided by adapting and in the end also liking the likes of the broad consensus that has set the standards.

By getting back to the title 'The importance of the cultivation of taste', it can be summarized that the importance of the cultivation of taste supports the individual's ways of self-expression in an external way.

As mentioned before, it is an extension of the inner attitude of the individual. Some people are more aware of it and make use of the possibilities of self-expression and other individuals are less aware of it and see less importance in it and therefore make less use of the possibilities.

Taking the snob group into consideration, they differ from the bandwagon consumers. They show traits of wanting something exclusive.

The snob group can be regarded as the smaller group.

Interesting, however, is the fact that within a bigger group such as the bandwagon group, a smaller group does exist, which is formed by the snob-group. Moreover, the snob-group can at the same time be a bandwagon-group among the snobs.

The mechanisms of bandwagon-, snob- and Veblen-effect can co-exist at the same time within the same target group in the same scene.

To elaborate on this example:

There is a special case concerning the group formation of bandwagon-and snob- consumers. As mentioned earlier before in this thesis, the bandwagon- consumer shows traits of herd-behaviour. In simple terms, the bandwagon-consumer forms the bigger group, namely that consists of the majority of the people that find it appealing to purchase this certain kind of product and want to stand in line with the other consumers who purchase that good.

Social acceptance is being regarded as an essential outcome by buying a certain consumption good.



Taking the sneaker scene as an example, we can say that people who collect sneakers differ from the conventional sneaker buyer.

To apply this on a specific example:

Sneaker collectors share one passion: which is the interest in sneakers. However, within a group of sneaker collectors, there are many sub-groups.

The snob-group can be a bandwagon group for the snob-consumer as well.

Within this bigger bandwagon group, there co-exists a sub-group formed by the snob group that is interest in buying and collecting a special kind of sneakers, such as limited edition sneakers, expensive sneakers or foreign shoe models.

This elucidates that the general snob-group can hold multiple positions. It can be a snob group for the outsider and a bandwagon-group for the insider.

Collecting specific sneakers has started up as an insider trend. Meaning to say, that only a very little group became interested in collecting certain sneakers.

To the majority of the society they were regarded as a non-conform group.

In comparison to the socially conform group formed by the majority of people that set the social standard, these insider sneakers collectors are regarded as snob group, meanwhile the socially conform majority are the bandwagon consumers.

However, this group which shows mechanisms of the snob effect to outsiders such as the conventional buyer, also shows mechanisms of bandwagon behaviour at the same time. The members of this snob group show bandwagon behaviour among its members. In order to maintain status and the membership in this group, the collector has to adjust into 'unwritten' rules of this group.

The main difference lies in the fact that the sneaker collector buys these shoes for reasons of passion such as aesthetic pleasure, the fact of collecting and obtaining an exclusive, passion, social acceptance or addiction to name a few.

The conventional sneakers buyer might share the aesthetic pleasure, but further reasons may also be the functionality and the necessity.

Considering this example, it becomes clear that labeling consumers to bandwagon- and snob-consumers is not entirely precise and just. A bandwagon consumer can belong to a circle of snob consumers when taking the

whole consumer group into regard.

Also, the snob consumer becomes the bandwagon consumer with special regard to the whole consumer group.

The terms bandwagon and snob consumer are very changeable and do not show consistency in their labeling of consumers into categories.

Considering this, it becomes obvious that the term bandwagon-effect and snob-effect depend on many external factors that define their precise meaning.



Therefore, a bandwagon-effect stands in close connection with the snob-effect and vice versa. It depends on the environment in which these effects are analyzed by.

The scene of the passionate sneaker collector unites the likely-minded people considering the fact that likely-minded sneakers collectors want to and are looking for a circle in where they can share their interest and find likely-minded people.

Even though they share the passion in collecting a certain item and do have a profound knowledge in this field, there are still differences among them within the same circle.

The sneaker collector may have different priorities when looking for a shoe he would like to own. Aesthetic reasons may be generally important for all of them. But aesthetic pleasure also implies different meaning to all of them. It may be the case that collectors are collecting the limited edition, models that are not easy to obtain in certain countries, models that have a distinguishing look and imply the exclusivity of the object.

Others may still be passionate about the sneakers but collect them having the quantity in mind. Owning as many shoes as possible from a certain brand ensures them the acceptance of and belonging to the scene, however, putting the quantity over the quality will give these collectors a different kind of credibility compared to those that go for the more exclusive and limited choice.

Putting this example into the terms of bandwagon-, snob- and Veblen-mechanisms, following can be said:

The sneaker collectors differ from the conventional sneaker buyer. They show traits of distinguishing themselves from the conventional collector. A passionate collector unites knowledge and passion in his field of interest and prefers to connect with people with a similar attitude. This scene of likely-minded people represent a group which has attributes of the snob-effect.

Besides sharing interest in the same object, a somehow frequently updated knowledge is preposition as well as the fact of owning and collecting and sharing information on and about sneakers.

As soon as common rules are not being taken as serious as the rest of the group members do, the credibility of that person becomes questionable and denial of the group follows.

Other members have more means to finance collecting and obtaining shoes, but due to the fact that limited and exclusive sneakers do generally have a high price, it is the financial issue that also can set limitations to the group members and can take control over their activity within this group.

Moreover, in one way or the other, price can also be seen as a sign of exclusivity and quality for those that want to belong to this group but do not have sufficient knowledge yet concerning the evaluation and choice of the collectors item.

In this case, the Veblen-effect is also taken as an indicator of choice.

Creative clusters of the city

After the field research has been undertaken, it proved that the city of Rotterdam is a rather supportive city concerning the support of young entrepreneurs and the support for cultural projects in which a more diverse variety of culturally enriching projects can emerge and reach people.

There are several separate projects that provide artists and artistic and innovative thoughts a platform to realize their ideas. However, these different projects operate separately from each other and therefore only have a lim-

ited range of influence in a certain field. Further disadvantages of separately operating projects are the financial limitations.

Reported to me by Lennie from Bon Bon on the Block, the Hofbogen project was and still is a very appealing idea. However, delays of the finalization and renovation of certain parts of the Hofbogen in the end then made the project a bit question-able and less favourable for some participants. The consequence of this was the fact that several participants stepped out of the project and were taking the plans of finding space in order to realize their project into their own hands. Ansch46 and Bon Bon on the Block were two of the drop-outs. In the end, both stated, that they are happy about this decision. The location of both shops is the centre of Rotterdam. And still the Hofbogen project has not fully been finalized in the meantime.

All shops are aware of the effect of the economic crisis. However, their general attitude was: 'It can only get better'. Some people have to start it in order to motivate more people to follow them.

For the cultivation of taste a trend is needed. A cultivation of taste is based on the need and the insight and understanding to cultivate something motivated by something else.

The cultivation of taste is an extension of the cultivation of a lifestyle and vice versa.

The main argument in this chapter is the fact that the cultivation of taste needs a hype, to put it in informal terms. If we compare our present situations to the much talked about prosperous '90s we see that the trend was to live life to the fullest, enjoy it and party .

Nowadays, also due to the economic crisis, the tendency has become more basic. People have different priorities.

If a chain brand refers to the taste of the masses and produces mass consumed articles, there should also be a chain brand producing events or other conspicuous articles for people of different genres.

This is actually the case in Rotterdam, however, due to the mentioned separated operating methods, the distribution of the projects is very limited and people hardly see the trend out of it. It has just not been set as a standard, developing standard for the people that make the standard in these sub genres.

Referring to the theoretical framework, the intention of this paper is not to show the bandwagon, snob and Veblen effect. This paper is made and designed in order to raise the awareness of the additional tools to make the cultivation of form more consistent and permanent.

The cultivation of taste can be acquired and manifested by exposure. Unfortunately, if we refer and compare this state to the children's ability to learn the most for their lives during their first 3 years, it does not work like that with the cultivation of taste.

In many pedagogic books, scientists state that the social competences of people are acquired in their early childhood days, especially in their first three years. The most important group for the individual during these days is the primary group which is formed by the close family.

If we take this pedagogic example on how to acquire social skills, it shows partly similar but also different features.

The cultivation of music can be acquired and motivated by our parents. They used to listen to the Beatles, now we like singer songwriter, protest songs and all acoustic unplugged versions of nirvana and cat stevens who now batished himself as Yussuf.

But if we think about our cultivation of taste concerning clothes, I can partly just shrug my shoulders and consciously say that this taste was not acquired by the influence of my mother who liked to put me into flounced dresses, tied my hair to the max that after removing the pigtail or braids would hurt days after.

So in this way several individuals also take a completely different adaption of taste than seen in their childhood from the primary or secondary group. The reason for this turn is simple: The cultivation of taste is a natural process of the individual which basic fundamentals are: free choice of taste and free-will to express themselves in that way. Referring back to my childhood example, I can tell that a force was used to not making it possible to cultivate my own taste but to force a certain taste on me. Against free will and choice, this taste cannot be of any permanent existence to the individual.

6 Conclusion

Findings

The following findings are mostly the result of observed patterns during the undertaken interviews.

The Expectations I formulated in the third chapter are being evaluated in form of the findings.

E(...) Expectations

F(...) Findings

- E1** With their selection of conspicuous goods, the store owners have an influence on the potential customer, with reference on their formation of taste. – To be more precise: By exposing the potential customer to their selected items of mostly conspicuous goods, the store can influence and change the taste of the customer. This is shown in the form of liking and taking over the taste for conspicuous goods from the store.
By exposing the selected items to the potential customer, the taste of these potential consumers with reference to the offered conspicuous goods is being influenced.
- F1** With regard to the interviews I have undertaken with the private individual store owners it proved not to be entirely the case that store owners influence the potential consumer.
Due to the ongoing globalization and the impact of the mass media, consumers are more exposed to a lot of information. Television, the internet and magazines do provide some consumers with initial knowledge.
Therefore, consumers that come into the stores mostly already know the brands due to own research. In many cases, the consumers see the private retail stores as representatives of the brands in which they get the opportunity to obtain the brands which they saw on the internet or in magazines locally.
- E2** Privately owned retail stores attract a certain group of consumers. The group of consumers show Veblen-, bandwagon- or Snob behavior with the purchase of certain goods.
- F2** The undertaken interviews showed that the store owners intend to attract a certain group of consumers. However, it is not only the firstly intended target group that is attracted by the store. More broad and diverse people came into the store.
However, the majority of them is looking for different kind of conspicuous consumption goods compared to those they could obtain at big chain brand stores.
- E3** The cultivation of taste is an extension of the cultivation of lifestyle and vice versa.
- F3** Due to exposure to certain fields, the individual gets an impression of the diversity and variety on certain things such as fashion goods. Making choices for what the individual thinks is best for him, serves to define a taste of his own. Depending on the interest in the field, the individual can become more or less involved in the scene.
The matter of involvement has an impact on how much it can become a part of lifestyle for the individual.
- E4** The store owners are aware of snob-and bandwagon consumers.
- F4** Store owners are not aware of the mechanisms of 'bandwagon', 'snob' and Veblen-effect in the sense in which Veblen and Leibenstein refer to it.
During the interviews, bandwagon-, snob- and Veblen- effect proved to be unknown terms. However, even after having paraphrasing, they could not categorize their consumers into these categories. Nevertheless, they are aware of the fact that they attract people who do want to have an alternative option to buy conspicuous consumption goods next to the chain brand stores. Most of their customer's feedback show their support and need for more private retail stores.
- E5** The consumers mostly get their initial exposure of the sold conspicuous consumption good at the individual retail stores.

F5 According to the store owner, globalization has got a huge impact on the perception of fashion, trends and brand perception.
The mass media contributes to the formation of taste very much. As brands emerge and become globally known due to the globalization, the design and the designer brands develop a monopoly on the fashion market and influence the mass media. Style has become more global rather than individual. The media has a huge impact on that.

F6 The fashion sold in stores is an extension of the lifestyle and clothing behavior of the street. Many young people look for the styles that they personalize into their own.
F4: Passion is a decisive motivator to run a store.

As commented by one of the interviewees: the style of Rotterdam's people and youth is inspired by the streets rather than the fashion trends as it is the case in Amsterdam.

Passion was one of the main motivator for the store owners to open their store.
All of the interviewed store owners already had existing profound knowledge in the field which mainly became a big part of their store and store concept. This field can be in the field of fashion, which was most often the case for the interviewed store owners.
Taking their interest and passion for fashion into account, it can be said that their field of interest has been a big part of their life which became so comprehensive that it expanded to the work in form of the store.

F7 Especially private (fashion and lifestyle) store owners can add to the character and identity of the streets of the city and its people.

A number of interviewees stated that the city of Rotterdam intends to reach the diversity of several streets which were regarded as shabby and dark where crime occurs. In order to live these streets up, especially young entrepreneurs are encouraged to set up stores there.

F8 According to several store owners, the acquisition of taste derives from several sources. On the one hand, the mass media has a huge impact on the cultivation of taste, on the other hand, there are different sources such as the circle of friends, music and all other factors that the individual chooses for himself.

This finding proved to be right. The store owners indicated that exposure to several things such as fashion, people and music are all fields from which the individual chooses what he prefers and implement them into his own lifestyle.
Without exposure taste cannot be defined.

F9 Private shop owners have a distinguishing element in their store concepts which differentiates them from the chain stores.

The store design proved to be something that the majority of store owners paid much attention to. Beside mostly playing music to provide a comfortable atmosphere, the store design contains elements that are supposed to look appealing.

F10 These stores have a special concept.

F11 The store atmosphere is being regarded as important. It incentivates the potential consumer. In order to achieve a comfortable atmosphere music is an important tool.

In order to remain competitive, the private retail stores are aware that they should offer costumers products that differ from the big chain brand stores. Next to the availability of certain brands which cannot easily be obtained locally, the selection of the products and fashion styles are also important. This means that people who are looking for a certain fashion style should be aware of the fact that they might find the item in a certain store.
As the private retail store owners select their own product lines, they become a big part of the character of the store. The stability in the product line become something recognizable and represents the character of the store.

- F12** Marketing is being regarded as an important tool to reach a broader audience of potential costumers. In order to raise awareness of the existence of their stores, most of the private retail stores put much effort into promoting their store. Being aware of the impact of the internet, the private retail store owners regard it as an important tool to promote their store. The online community networks such as facebook and hyves serve as platform to inform costumers and potential consumers about the current collection, upcoming projects and sales, for example. Moreover, especially one store has recognized the importance of marketing. Being present in the city through poster campaigns enhances the probability of potential consumers to visit the store. Furthermore, city guides for tourists especially present and recommend interesting private retail stores.
- F13** The individual store owners are aware of the competition in form of the chain brand stores. Price has become decisive for clients. Next to quality and longevity, price has become decisive for clients. In order to afford luxury consumption goods consumers save on several items such as clothing, to balance the costs they spend on other consumption goods.
- F14** The rental price and rental conditions have been a decisive factor the choice of place / location. Being located in the city of Rotterdam implies high prices on the rent. However, as most of the entrepreneurs have to cover initial costs, the rent has mostly been a decisive factor. Without having mentioned a precise price, the majority of the store owners admitted that the appealing rental contract was decisive concerning the
- F15** The cultivation of taste is an extension of the cultivation of a lifestyle and vice versa. Due to exposure to certain fields, the individual gets an impression of the diversity and variety on certain things such as fashion goods. Making choices for what the individual thinks is best for him, serves to define a taste of his own. Depending on the interest in the field, the individual can become more or less involved in the scene. The matter of involvement has an impact on how much it can become a part of lifestyle for the individual.

Final remarks

In this master thesis I focused on the private retail stores and their owners with special interest on their impact on the cultivation of taste on the consumer.

The field was undertaken with private retail store owners in Rotterdam. Expectations concerning the influence of store owners on the potential consumer, their possible target groups and the connection between conspicuous goods and lifestyle has been the subject of this thesis.

After having evaluated the literature and the conducted interviews, it became clear to me that the cultivation of taste does originate in many fields.

The private retail stores serve as a gate for the consumer to obtain certain goods of which the consumer is already aware of.

An interesting finding is the awareness of the private retail store owners on the impact of the mass media and the effects of the globalization.

Much of the cultivation of taste is being suggested by the mass media such as the internet. In that way, the consumer can collect information. In many times, the consumer has undertaken research and already knows the brands which are represented in the private retail stores. For that reason, the cultivation of taste is more guided by the media rather than the private retail stores.

These selected stores face cheaper stores as competition.

Furthermore, the brands represented in the stores are most often globally known.

Taking the development of the cultivation of taste from the perspective of the private retail store owner into consideration it can be said that consumers have gotten more casual in their lifestyle and in their taste. This, according to some interviewees has something to do with the change of lifestyle. People have become more aware of certain issues that matter, such as environmental issues. People have become more spiritual. Compared to the golden nineties, where parties and an extraordinary fashion trend was present, people nowadays like to dress casual and less outstanding.

Concerning the bandwagon- and snob-consumer, it became obvious that a snob-group can be fort he snob-consumers a bandwagon-group at the same time. A bandwagon-group as well as a snob-group are divided into sub-groups. Therefore, a snob-group can be regarded as a bandwagon-group by ist consumers and can show nuances of internal-snob behaviour in their sub-groups.

This also ist he case for a badnwagon-group. It is divided into further sub-groups which can show characteris-

tics of a snob-group.

The economic crisis has had an impact on many fields, the new found casualty in lifestyle may be one of its outcomes.

Even though the participating interviewees were limited in number, this thesis provides a good general overview for upcoming cultural entrepreneurs concerning the Findings summarized in the last chapter.

They can help to build a business built knowing about the importance of the consumer, the role of the media and the cultural activities within a city.

In the end, the thesis has become an overview of several newly established private retail stores and their perspective on the cultivation of taste, lifestyle, marketing and future prognosis.

For future research, it is important to interview more private retail store owners to gain a better insight into the development of the entrepreneurial environment of the city. Furthermore, the consumer should also be taken into consideration as they have a different perception on the cultivation of taste compared to the private store owners.

Additionally, it serves as a possible guideline for entrepreneurs that intend to establish a private retail store.

Factors such as the four P's of Marketing introduced by McCarthy form a main part of this thesis.

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Appendix

videorecordings of the interviews