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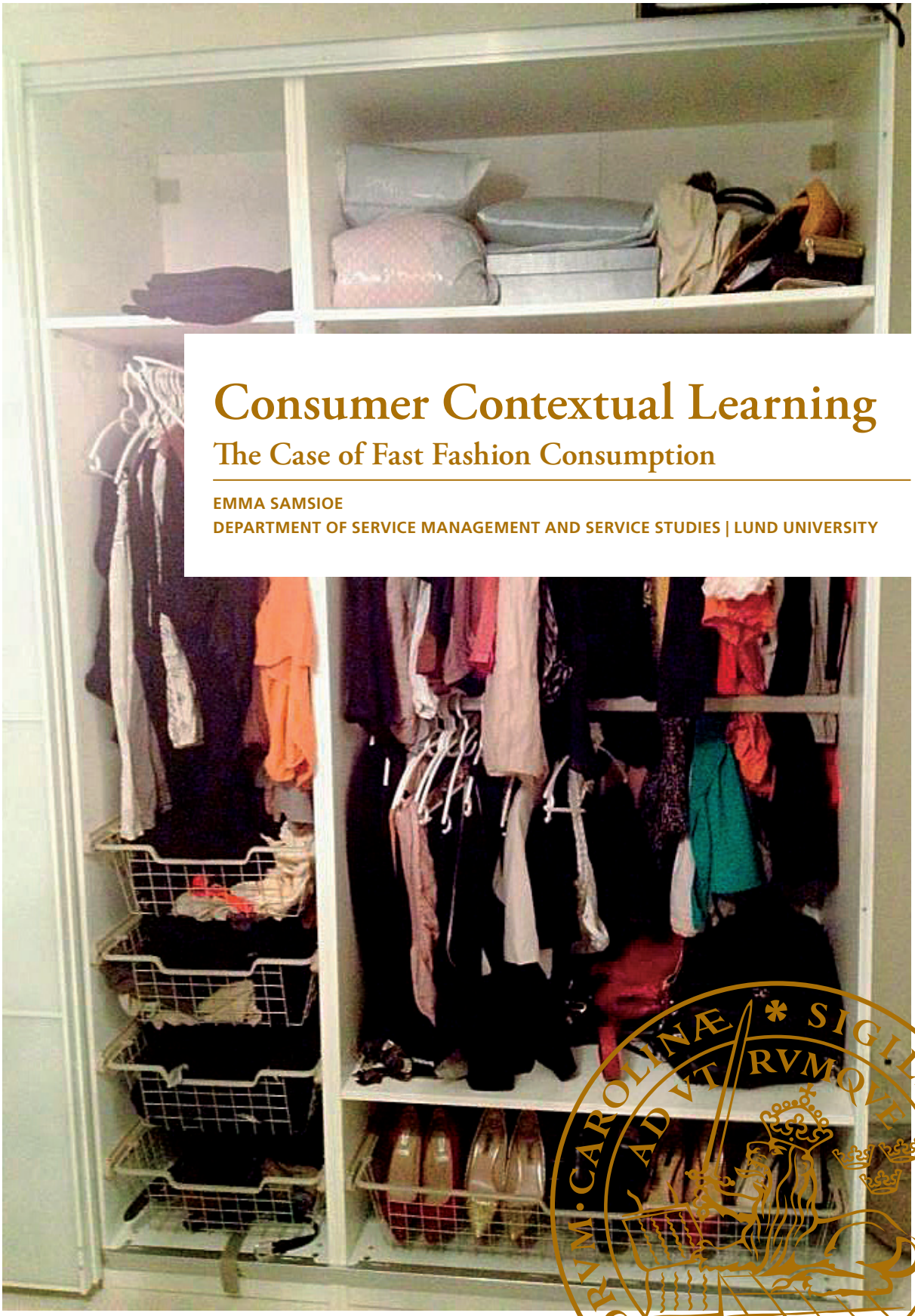
Samsioe, Emma

2017

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record



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The Case of Fast Fashion Consumption

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LUND
UNIVERSITY

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION
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To be defended at U203, Campus Helsingborg, June 8, 2017, 13.15.

Faculty opponent
Associate Professor Marie-Agnès Parmentier
HEC Montréal Business School, Department of Marketing

Organization LUND UNIVERSITY	Document name DOCTORAL DISSERTATION
Department of Service Management and Service Studies	Date of issue June 8, 2017
Author(s): Emma Samsioe	Sponsoring organization

Title and subtitle: Consumer Contextual Learning – The Case of Fast Fashion Consumption

Abstract:

Consumers are dedicated and committed to figuring out ways and creating investigative activities to keep up with a fast-moving retail market. These ways and activities are in this study seen as learning activities, which focus on getting to know the marketplace. The context is the fast fashion marketplace in which offerings are desirable because of their limited availability. This temporary character appeals to the study of consumer learning since it continually offers new reoccurring opportunities for learning.

The aim of the study is to advance understanding of consumer learning by developing the concept: consumer contextual learning. In contrast to previous work in consumer research, which understands consumer learning by experiments in labs, this concept goes beyond cognition and highlights the notion of marketplace participation. It puts the context of learning activities at the centre, while understanding learning as social and taking place in interaction with people and the marketplace. In more detail, this approach allows for identifying and exploring the characteristics of learning activities and how consumers engage in these activities. The methods employed to explore consumer contextual learning consist of group interviews with fast fashion consumers, and observations of fast fashion retail stores.

The concept consumer contextual learning is built on Aspers' contextual knowledge concept, Lave and Wenger's work on situated learning and communities of practice, and it is divided into three dimensions: collective participation in the context, contextual sources of inspiration, and being present and close to the context. To address what consumers do as they learn in the marketplace these three dimensions focuses on everyday consumption practices, and the findings show a spectrum of learning activities, such as spotting, timing, tracking and imagination. These findings demonstrate how the fast fashion context encourages a strategic-oriented behaviour among consumers. Consumers further employ fast and slow learning activities to get a sense of control of the fast-moving marketplace, and use the logic of speed and efficiency to get instant gratification from the newly acquired items.

This dissertation contributes to existing consumer research by identifying how consumers learn as participants in social and cultural contexts. Specifically it points out how consumer learning is situated, it is a constant connection and presence in the marketplace. It contributes to the growing literature on time and shopping by showing how consumers learn the rhythm of the marketplace, and a new type of shopping emerges: fast shopping. It shows how the value of the object is transformed; it is not about the item in itself but about having the competence to acquire the latest items faster. Finally it contributes to work on consumption meanings, meaning is tied to the knowledge one has and the capability to learn.

Key words: learning, consumer learning, participation, context, group interviews, time perception, time work, shopping, fast shopping, newness , fast fashion

Classification system and/or index terms (if any)

Supplementary bibliographical information		Language: English
ISSN and key title		ISBN 978-91-7753-252-1 (print) 978-91-7753-253-8 (pdf)
Recipient's notes	Number of pages: 206	Price
	Security classification	

Signature  Date 2017-05-03

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Coverphoto by Marwa El-Obari

Department of Service Management
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978-91-7753-252-1 (print)
978-91-7753-253-8 (pdf)

Printed in Sweden by Media-Tryck, Lund University
Lund 2017

To my family

Contents

Acknowledgements

During the years I have worked on this dissertation I have had the privilege to meet and work with great people. The completion of this study would not have been possible without their time, guidance and support.

I am grateful to the participants, who have shared their stories, given their time to this study and expressed a lot of interest in my work throughout the years. I have truly enjoyed the conversations!

My sincerest gratitude is to my supervisors for their support and guidance. Thank you to Gustaf Kastberg for valuable advice and for providing me with the tools to work on the dissertation project in my own way. I want to thank Erika Andersson Cederholm for insightful discussions and for teaching me the art of analytical crafting, opening my eyes to sociological reasoning and making me see how abstract ideas can be expressed in more simple words. I want to thank Fleura Bardhi for challenging my ways of thinking, and for always expecting high quality of work. You taught me how to move research forward and the importance of curiosity. I want to thank Cecilia Fredriksson and Filippa Säwe for their guidance at the beginning of my doctoral education, and for providing the foundation for further research studies.

I would like to thank the discussants at the various seminars: Carina Sjöholm, Cecilia Cassinger, Hervé Corvellec, Søren Askegaard and Kristina Bäckström for your thorough reading and for the helpful comments.

Åsa Thelander shared knowledge, professional experience and gave me emotional support. I will always appreciate your encouragement, and the fun times we share. Thank you for being such a great mentor and friend! I want to express my gratitude to Maria Larsson and Katarina Mårtensson at the Division for Higher Education Development, Lund University. Thank you both for your valuable feedback, and for taking your time to discuss different theories of learning. Cecilia Fredriksson, I also want to thank you for your time, and for engaging in theoretical discussions and reflections with me throughout my years as a student.

At the beginning of my doctoral studies, the advice and comments given by Christian Fuentes were of great help in the early research design. Also special

thanks to Katarina Jacobsson for your warm support throughout the research process. And thank you to Christofer Edling for always showing interest in my work.

I want to thank my colleagues and friends at the Department of Service Management and Service Studies for your support, extra thanks to: Mikael Bergmasth, Elin Bommenel, Kristina Bäckström, Su Mi Dahlgaard-Park, Christer Eldh, Lena Eskilsson, Malin Espersson, Jan Henrik Nilsson, Eerika Saaristo, Carina Sjöholm, Gunilla Steen, Filippa Säwe, Ola Thufvesson, Malin Zillinger, and Veronica Åberg. The fellow present and previous doctoral students have provided warm encouragement, and special mention goes to: Malin Andersson, Devrim Umut Aslan, Samantha Hyler, Manuela Kronen, Tomas Nilsson, Carin Rehncrona, Ida de Wit Sandström, and Ida Wingren. My deepest gratitude is to Josefine Östrup Backe for the best times at writing retreats, for the fun and laughter and the endless support! Very special thanks also go to SDR and particularly to Liv Sunnercrantz, Elsa Hedling, Helena Lindberg, and Tullia Jack.

I am grateful for the semester I spent at Cass Business School City, University of London. During this time I had the chance to develop ideas and the direction of the dissertation. First and foremost I want to thank Fleura Bardhi for guiding me in this process, and for always giving me warm support. Your friendship is very dear to me. For the conversations and advice, special thanks go to Stephanie Feiereisen, Marius Luedicke, Irene Scopelliti, and Caroline Wiertz.

The dissertation journey has taken me many places in the world, and my academic community stretches over the globe. I have made great friends and deeply benefited from all the meetings and discussions. There are too many people to name, but a few extra mentions go to: Giana Eckhardt for your friendship; for the warm encouragement, constructive comments, and for introducing me to the food markets in London and to the secret bar in Hong Kong! Gretchen Larsen for your generous hospitality, and for chats about academia and life - it gives me energy! To the Nordic group, you have meant a lot to me during this journey and provided a source of strength: Kira Strandby, Anastasia Seregina, Stine Bjerregaard, Carys Egan-Wyer, Marcus Klasson, Oskar Christensson, Maira Lopes, Andrea Lucarelli, and Alisa Minina.

A warm thank you to all my friends, I am grateful for time spent with you, for the trips, for the visits to concerts and museums and the many dinner parties. A very special thank you to Ashleigh McFarlane for always being there for me, and to Susanna Kastberg and Petra Edvinsson for cheering me on! Katherine Duffy, thank you for the visits to Liberty and, for the magic and fashion inspiration! Great supporters and travel buddies Frida Friberg and Agata Anna Gornik - thank you for our memorable trips - we go up, up and away!

A heartfelt thank you to my family. Thank you for always believing in me and encouraging me to go after my dreams. Your love and care makes me better every day! Lastly, to Helen and Glen: thank you for being my home away from home first in Oxford and later on in Daventry.

Stillingsön, April 2017

Prologue

Fast fashion consumption is full of different ways to get hold of a trendy, up-to-date outfit. It offers plenty of opportunities to discover new trends, explore combinations of outfits and play with different styles. Daily arrivals of new items keep a buzz going about new trends. Keeping up with fast fashion is popular among those consumers that want to acquire the latest arrivals straight away and always be in fashion. For them, this means keeping an eye out for new trends and hunting down the latest items. As a result of this the consumption of fast fashion can be time-consuming: an everyday event that requires dedication and commitment. This means that consumers spend a great deal of time figuring out ways to find out about fast fashion items, ensuring that they are continually surrounded by new trends and dedicated in their mission to visit the places where new trends can be found, such as the retail store or the high street.

Chapter 1

Participating and learning in fast-changing markets

In this dissertation consumer participation in the marketplace takes the form of learning, where learning is seen as a socio-cultural activity. Learning can involve activities such as exploring market offerings, checking store layouts, and spending time in stores together with other consumers and sales assistants. Furthermore learning is here situated in a fast-changing market. A fast-changing market is here defined as a market in which "Companies /…/are using time or speed as a factor for enhancing competitiveness" (Chan and Chan 2010:1196).

Additionally, from a retail perspective, the quick response model (QR) is critical to the definition of a fast-changing market. In a fast-changing market, the competiveness is dependent on speed and time: "QR strategy acts on the activities throughout the entire supply chain — right from the producers to the retailing outlets — with the aim of reducing the time spans that elapse from the textile design stage to the purchasing of the garments by the final consumer (Chan and Chan 2010:1196). The implication for viewing the marketplace from a retail perspective is the spotlight on how a fast-changing market is managed, yet it also provides indications of or insights into how the marketplace is changing at a fast pace.

It is a marketplace in which offerings are desirable because of their temporary nature. As Bauman (2011:15) explains: "A liquid modern, consumer-oriented economy relies on a surplus of its offerings, their rapid ageing and an untimely withering of their seductive powers". The temporary character of the fast-changing market appeals to the study of learning activities, because it continually continuously offers opportunities for learning (which in turn makes the use of these activities reoccur). Henceforth, it makes it an interesting example for the study of learning as the many chances to explore and ponder how the marketplace operates create different ways of learning, and thus offer a plethora of learning activities that can be studied from a socio-cultural perspective.

The understanding of learning that this dissertation is aiming at advancing is about participation through activities, which are situated in a market context. This

approach means that learning is social and contextual and takes place in the social interaction with other people in a usual setting for the individual (e.g. Aspers 2006; Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998), in this case interaction with consumers and the marketplace. Further, the dissertation is placed in the tradition of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) as defined by Arnould and Thompson in 2005. They write " /…/CCT is not a unified, grand theory, nor does it aspire to such nomothetic claims. Rather, it refers to a family of theoretical perspectives that address the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace and, cultural meanings" (Arnould and Thompson 2005:868). This study strives to advance our understanding of what consumer learning can be by putting social interaction in the marketplace at the centre. In doing this, the approach takes into account the actual learning activities and the actual contextual (situated) setting of consumers, compared to previous extant work on consumer learning in consumer behaviour literature which has predominantly focused on studying learning in laboratory settings. Briefly, a laboratory setting results in a limited take on consumer learning as the constructed setting controlled by researchers produces restricted ways of studying how consumers learn about market offerings. To begin with, two schools of thought - behavioural learning theories and cognitive learning theories - have dominated the consumer behaviour field. For instance, behavioural theories study learning within a stimuli response framework with the results of different types of brand awareness (e.g. Urbany, Bearden and Weilbaker 1988; Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991) or the cognitive theories where consumer learning is studied by investigating mental activities such as problem solving (Meyer 1987; Gregan-Paxton and Roedder John 1997). The models of explanation have mainly understood learning as an individual process. Thus these theoretical approaches cannot answer concerns about what consumers do when they learn directly in the marketplace; how consumers participate in different learning activities by themselves and with others, and how these activities are interpreted and valued by participants.

The need for responsiveness of socio-cultural understanding is today important, as consumer learning in the fashion market is a collective interactional activity that has become increasingly social with, as an example, the development of social media, and instant flows of information of new fashion trends on smartphone applications. In the empirical data for this study, we can see how important social interactions in the store and online conversations on social media are for consumers.

Another reason for responding to a more social understanding of consumer learning is the absence of work on consumer learning within CCT work. CCT scholars have, from an interpretative perspective, explored many other topics of consumer practices or activities (for instance identity projects) (Arnould and Thompson 2005, 2007; Askegaard and Linnet 2011). But when it comes to

consumer learning, CCT research has not yet produced extensive work. Yet there seem to be a growing interest in CCT to study learning, beginning slightly in the 1990s. There is work that addresses the issue of learning in conjunction with other processes such as identity formation in fashion markets (Parmentier and Fischer 2011), value creation in consumption communities (Weijo 2014), two types of socialisation processes in choice experiences (Allen 2002), or acculturation (Peñaloza 1994). However, this work does not make the concept of consumer learning its primary area of contribution. Weijo (2014), for instance, explains how some of the value-creating aspects in consumption communities relate to communal learning, especially in online communities. More, Schau et al. (2009) investigate value-creating practices in brand communities and find that value is tied to learning of procedures and understanding of consumption practices in the transfer of knowledge from insiders to newcomers. However, the concept of consumer learning is not the main concept for these studies. Recently, however, Maciel and Wallendorf (2016) focused their attention on learning practices in their study on taste evaluation.

The ambition of this chapter is to introduce the participatory contextually oriented approach to consumer learning, which this dissertation aims at developing. The chapter begins to introduce how previous work on consumer participation in markets relates to the socio-cultural understanding of situated learning introduced above. It then addresses the change of rhythm of social life (Bauman 2007a, 2011; Rosa 2013), and especially the change of rhythm for participation in consumption activities and fashion to that of speed, by discussing consumer learning in fast-changing markets in relation to wider changes such as the social changes of a speed culture (e.g. Bauman 2007b; Rosa 2013). Lastly the chapter presents a specific type of fast-changing market, namely that of the fast fashion market, in which the participants of this study engage in learning activities. Also this section aims at articulating how the case of the fast fashion market contributes to the understanding of learning by participation and as being situated.

Consumer participation in fast-changing markets

As mentioned above, this dissertation focuses on how consumers learn in a fast-changing market context. Consequently consumer participation in a fast-changing market is here understood as focused learning activities and not an aimless distraction, or the result of a whim. For consumers, the ambition is to develop, revise or fine-tune learning activities in order to become a skilful consumer. For example they can revise the ways in how to efficiently locate new arrivals in the retail store.

To discuss consumer participation in markets, I depart from a cultural and social orientation and interpretative approach toward the study of consumers and the marketplace (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Arnould and Thompson 2007; Sherry and Fischer, 2009). This means a focus on consumers' understandings of meaningful ways of life and how the symbolic and material resources which they depend on in learning activities, are mediated in the interactions of the marketplace. By placing the interactions in focus, this dissertation also takes a symbolic interactionist approach. Correspondingly this study joins previous work on how marketing and consumer research ponders questions (from a symbolic interactionist approach) of market interaction, i.e. the roles of consumers and producers in market evolution (Rosa 1997; Rosa et al. 1999; Ligas and Cotte 1999; Svensson and Östberg 2013). Ligas and Cotte (1999) argue that markets are continually constructed in the interaction between producers and consumers, the different but also shared understandings of market offerings drive market evolution. I share this view of how to look at consumer market interaction, and in this study a market is understood as a socially constructed system in which ideals, norms, and values are shared and transformed in the interaction of consumers and producers (Cf. Svensson and Östberg 2013). This sharing enables consumers and producers to participate in the unfolding of the market.

This explanation of a market supports the focus of this dissertation, namely the emphasis on how consumers participate in marketplace interactions by different learning activities. That is how consumers (individually and together with other consumers) keep up with a fast-changing market by participation. The means of participation in this study is about 'keeping up' and it is a different path to study market participation compared to the CCT research, which focused on participation in activities but chose the spectacular context as the empirical setting. These types of contexts, such as contexts of skydiving (Celsi, Rose and Leigh 1993) or river rafting (Arnould and Price 1993), have made us view consumer participation as very lively. That makes this understanding of market participation tied to a very active consumer. However, consumers are still participating in the marketplace even though participation can take a less active form, such as 'keeping up with'. This means that, in this study, participation is not tied to notions such as very active or possibly the opposite, passive.

Moreover, the notion of participation in this study is not about changing the marketplace or transforming it in any way (e.g. disagree with producers' understanding of market offers and work to find alternatives (Martin and Schouten 2013)), but rather to work with it and profit from it. That means to use the marketplace, in such a way that they as consumers can learn from their everyday consumption activities. Accordingly, the way consumers participate in market interaction is different to previous research in the consumer culture tradition on consumer participation in markets.

In previous research on consumer participation in markets I find that work in the area of market evolution concerning roles of consumers in market formation and interaction has focused on how consumers try to intervene in established markets. That is, research has emphasised consumer roles of dynamics regarding creation, fragmentation or disruption of markets (Giesler 2008; Sandikci and Ger 2010; Martin and Schouten 2013; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013) and the legitimisation of a product or practice (Humphreys 2010a, 2010b).

I find that this prior work distinguishes two distinct roles of the consumer in relation to markets. First, consumers resist or oppose the prevailing market logics. Here market logics is about the values, assumptions and beliefs used by consumers to provide meaning to their consumer activities (Scaraboto and Fischer 2013). Consumer opposition to markets can be aimed at changing market logics within the market, with the intent of creating more inclusive markets (e.g., Sandikci and Ger 2010) or temporarily escape current market logics (e.g., Kozinets 2002; Ozanne and Murray 1995). For example, Kozinets (2002) shows how alternative markets created by Burning Man consumers can create a social space where emancipation from the market can temporarily take place. Yet consumers cannot escape the branding logic of the marketplace as resistance is in itself also co-opted by the market (Holt 2002). Besides, research shows how subcultural resistance towards mainstream markets leads to market fragmentation, such as in the study of the Goth subculture (Goulding and Saren 2007).

The second role of how consumers participate in markets considers how consumers work within the market to change their market-based positions. Consumers looking for legitimacy expand current market logics as in the study of fatshonistas within the mainstream fashion market (Scaraboto and Fischer 2013). Consumers also work to extend current market offerings through new market creation by the co-construction of new market structures (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007), construction of a parallel taste structure in the veiling industry in Turkey (Sandikci and Ger 2010) or consumer-led innovation as in the case of dirt bikes and the minimoto market (Martin and Schouten 2013). Based on this discussion I find that existing research provides us links between generative roles of consumers and market emergence or change, yet we know considerably less about how consumers' participation in markets contributes to the development of consumer learning activities in a fast-changing market, in particular among consumers whose participation agenda is not aimed at any type of change.

Thus, consumers utilise their learning activities by taking part in marketplace events. In the case of a fast fashion market examples of learning activities are: scanning for new market offerings, imitating the pace of consumer shopping activities, or observing the changes in the retail store layout. Situated learning is important here because it involves activities that are anchored in the context.

These activities can create order in a shifting environment (Cf. Ancona 2012), by, for instance, making observations of retail store environments to identify sources of potential confusion, and to bring coherence (Cf. Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998; Aspers 2006). Thus through learning activities consumers get a better grasp of what is going on.

The phenomenon of consumer learning is set against the background of the rise of a socio-economic context that Powell and Snellman (2004) and others have termed the knowledge economy, or versions of the same including terms such as the freelance economy (Gandini 2016) or the image economy (Hearn 2008). Here it concerns how society, and especially the economy, is reliant on knowledge creation and diffusion, which includes qualities such as constant innovation and flexibility, self-improvement and self-promotion, as well as attention seeking within the context of social relationships and social recognition (Hearn 2008; Gandini 2016). Social recognition is a core construct of social life (Honneth 1995). To be liked and accepted is widely held as desirable. There are many areas of life in which individuals find recognition to be desirable and important, such as in concrete relationships with parents, siblings, partners and colleagues or friends. In modern societies social recognition usually came with the type of work one did, however, as Firat and Venkatesh (1995) suggest, social recognition has increasingly become attached to being a consumer. According to Firat and Venkatesh (1995) consumption seems to have come to replace production as the main source for meaning-making and social recognition.

Against this backdrop learning becomes an investment and points at the acquisition of skill and recognition among consumers and market actors. In this sense, the learning activities participants engage in can be understood as a type of work (Cf. Cova and Dalli 2009), as it requires dedication to learning at the same time as consumers benefit from the outcome of their efforts (i.e. having a trendy and up-to-date sense of fashion recognised by others). Other types of benefits include social recognition, in terms of being recognised by others and by the market as competent consumers. Thus more broadly, the discussions on consumer learning in this dissertation can also say something about how consumers skilfully participate in markets to gain recognition and attention as competent consumers among consumers and market actors.

Furthermore, consumer learning as situated in fast-changing markets should also be understood in relation to wider social changes in society where the rhythm of social life has sped up, and this is particularly evident in the context of consumption of fashion. The next section shows how learning by participating in the social context of a fast-changing market is situated and thus part of changes in the rhythm of life and consumption. For instance, the changes also transform the way consumers shop, interact with other consumers and engage with the market.

Consumer learning and the culture of speed

Change is of course inherent in how markets evolve, but the ways fast-changing markets evolve today are different due to changes that have occurred in society including, for example, what Rosa terms social acceleration (2013) or what Bauman (2007a,b) explains as a shift from "solid" to "liquid" modernity. This change has created a new social condition for consumer participation in markets. For example, as Rosa (2013) explains, the acceleration of tempo in society brings other ways of going about life's routines, as things are open and uncertain. But also for companies it brings other challenges. For instance, social forms and institutions (such as in this case organisations that operate in fast-changing markets) do not have enough time to solidify as there is a constant need to change, and create temporary advantages in order to not become substitutable.

Financial Times reports on the challenges fashion retailers face in order to keep up in a fast-changing market. The social media and the selfie phenomenon have sped up the fashion market by creating a constant desire among consumers to get hold of the latest thing. Financial Times reporters Andrea Felsted and Hannah Kuchler (2015) write:

> Retailers are having to adapt to ensure that they have the products and price points that younger consumers want — and that their supply chains are swift enough to capture new trends as they emerge. The time from the designer's sketchpad to store must be shortened to bring the latest looks to the market. "Faster is absolutely better because part of the selfie phenomenon is that women want changing trends, and current trends, quicker," says Ms Merriman.

Thus stable processes in traditional industry structures cannot anymore be a source of competitive advantage. In fast-changing retail markets such as hi-tech markets or the fast fashion market these changes involve - for both consumers and producers - a move to short lifecycles, high volatility, low predictability and high impulse purchasing (Christopher 2012). Therefore today's fast-changing markets are environments that are highly competitive and challenging for firms as there is a constant need to "refresh" product ranges and develop supply chains that can handle, for instance, high volatility and low predictability (Christopher, Lawson and Peck 2004). Change in fast-changing markets requires for example quick response strategies, just-in-time delivery systems and thus capabilities of retailers to develop new supply chain management systems (Bruce, Daly and Towers 2004; Christopher, Lawson and Peck 2004; Christopher 2012; Gunasekaran 1998).

The pressure on retailers to meet demand and to constantly pay attention to customer satisfaction reflects, as we can see in the above quote from the Financial Times, consumer trends of, for example, wanting greater variety and frequently

expecting design changes. These changes also present consumer participation with new challenges and opportunities as they face, for example, a multiplicity of channels used by retailers and consumers, such as smartphone applications, Facebook, blogs or fashion magazines, which can provide an overload of information. This information can take the form of ephemeral images and glossy packaging that needs unpacking and interpretation by consumers dependent on their specific skills and motivation (Hearn 2008). In this way, the need for consumers to continually keep up and make sense of the market is especially critical within fast-changing markets.

Viewed from a more macro perspective, Bauman (2007a, 2011) argues that there is a passage from the "solid" to "liquid" phase of modernity, and he uses the term "liquid modernity" to address the shape of modern society. Bauman writes, "What makes modernity 'liquid', and thus justifies the choice of name, is its self-propelling, self-intensifying, compulsive and obsessive 'modernisation', as a result of which, like liquid, none of the consecutive forms of social life is able to maintain its shape for long" (2011:11). Bauman (2007a) contrasts liquid modernity with the preceding "solid modernity" characterised by industrialisation and more stable infrastructures and investment in labour-intensive sectors. In the fashion industry this shift can be seen in the transformation from the ready-to-wear industry (mass production of fashion collections launched every six months) to the fast fashion industry. For example, in liquid times, fast-changing markets and the case of the fashion industry is about constantly creating new desires rather than satisfying yesterday's needs, and thus the main concern is preventing feelings of satisfaction and definitive gratification by constantly reshaping the structures of, for example, supply chains and distribution centres. Adopting Bauman's (2007a) terminology this would mean that structures of the fashion industry become liquid-ified, and the industry's and consumers' relationship to time has changed. As suggested above, one of the main challenges for consumer participation and learning in fast-changing markets is not about monitoring the passing of time per se but the challenge to keep pace with it.

Similar to the idea of liquid modernity, Tomlinson (2007) argues for the condition of immediacy. He writes that immediacy connotes "ideas of a culture of instantaneity – a culture accustomed to rapid delivery, ubiquitous availability and the instant gratification of desires" (Tomlinson 2007:74). It is a culture characterised by a sense of urgency. Tomlinson (2007) observes that his understanding of immediacy is connected to other ideas of shifts from 'modernity' to 'postmodernity' and that any attempt to explain such a shift is inherently simplistic and thus vulnerable to criticism. Thus, the point to be made I find, is that one should approach these attempts as one way to observe and reflect on the present condition by distinguishing it from the preceding conditions.

Hence, in a liquid modern world we can reflect on or perhaps observe how identities are shifting. Individuality is becoming more important as this liquid modernity underscores individual freedom of choice and individual responsibility for that choice (Bauman 2011). Here this means that the individual is responsible for the fashion she consumes and how she keeps on top of new trends and how she learns about it. For example, Bauman (2011) suggests that the model in the search for one's identity becomes that of the chameleon. In terms of fashion this means that, "the injunction to keep an eye on 'what has already gone out of fashion' must be observed as conscientiously as the obligation to keep on top of what is (at the moment) new and up to date" (Bauman 2011:22). Thus the main underlying feature of the modern culture is not about the passing of time per se but the main challenge is to keep pace with it. Bauman writes, "If you do not want to drown, you must keep on surfing: that is to say, keep changing as often as you can, your wardrobe, your furniture, wallpaper, habits, appearance – in short – yourself" (2011:24). Thus, Bauman (2011) suggests that progress should not be thought of in terms of a desire for speed, but rather progress is defined by the desperate effort to not fall off the track and thus risk disqualification from the race. Progress is then about avoiding failure as the rhythm of social life is speeding up.

Needless to say a temporal conception of fashion is well known throughout history. As Van de Peer explains: "our temporal conception of fashion is interwoven with a present that defines itself in a relational manner to whatever style came before" (2015:334). Within a fast-changing fashion market, the rhythm of fashion production and consumption builds on the logic of speed; resulting in changes to how consumers engage with the market and what kind of fashion cycles in terms of new collections and styles or designs the consumer values. The logic of fashion in terms of observing the temporality of what has gone out of fashion as well as what is new and in vogue becomes an obvious skill that those enjoying and aspiring to be in fashion embrace (Cf. Blumer 1969a; Kawamura 2005). The lifestyle that is declared by the individual who aspires to be in fashion is communicated to significant other consumers, and also used as a tool to gain public recognition. Public recognition in terms of being in fashion is defined by the importance of acquiring the symbols of the latest fashion, the hero pieces (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood 2006). To conclude, the conditions of liquid modernity have facilitated the existence of a fast-changing fashion market that provides consumers with fashion that corresponds to today's desires and tomorrow's wants. Thus this kind of fashion market is successful among consumers, but also of course a challenging market for consumers to keep on top of. The next section introduces the example of a fast-changing market in this dissertation, namely the fast fashion market.

A fast-changing market: introducing the fast fashion market

Fashion is and has always been conceptualised as a changing phenomenon. Ephemerality and changeability are intrinsic to fashion. Many are the researchers that have documented and analysed the changing nature of fashion within the framework of modernity and fashion evolution (e.g. Simmel 1957/1904; Lipovetsky 2002; Evans 2003; Vinken 2005). Simmel writes on the transitory character of fashion, change is what makes fashion appealing; it is only fashion if it disappears as rapidly as it arrived (Simmel 1957/1904). And Van de Peer describes the changing character of fashion in the following way: "Because of the primacy of *passagèreté*, fashion is forced to produce continuously its own boundaries in the flow of time in relation to and dependent on what it does not wish to become: its own history" (2015:323). I presented the social and cultural context that facilitates and shapes the changeability and ephemerality of fashion in the above discussion. The rationale for discussing the liquid modernity notion and the changing nature of fashion is that it gives the fast fashion market some texture, and puts the matter of change in fast fashion into perspective.

Fast fashion is a global industry, and it is facilitated by supply chains spanning the globe delivering trendy new fashion to consumers at high speed. Besides this, new technology, such as blogging or Facebook, has contributed to shaping fashion trends and making them global, as images of fashion are circulated at speed in the global marketplace (Craik 2009; Gibson 2011). This globalisation of fashion resembles Urry's (2003) ideas on the network structure of global connectivity and what he terms "global fluids", that is the wave-like motions of for example money, population mobility, social movements or trends which show no clear indication of where they start or stop.

In 2010 the fast fashion industry in Europe grew faster than the retail fashion industry as a whole (Cachon and Swinney 2011) and today the industry shows no signs of a fall in profits (Ozdamar-Ertekin 2016). Over the last decades the fashion systems have transformed and new ways of approaching fashion have emerged. Thus with fast fashion a new fashion market has evolved. Compared to and different to the previous fashion systems (e.g. haute couture and ready-to-wear), fast fashion hinges on 'mass exclusivity' (small batches combined with large variety) (Segre Reinach 2005). The fast fashion industry produces a flexible system that combines minimal lead times (quick response channels), the abilities of firms to identify emerging trends, rapid prototyping and cheap production (Cachon and Swinney 2011). Segre-Reinach (2005:47) describe changes to the fashion system:

> In modern fashion, which was born symbolically with Worth in the mid-1800s, three systems, thus three consumption and production models have followed each other over the course of time. Each belongs to a different age, but all three still coexist in different "doses" and layers that influence the imaginary by which fashion is communicated and experienced. The first model, that of couture, hinges on the concept of luxury, seen as a distinction of class. The second model, prêt a porter, focuses on the concept of modernity of "life-style". The third model, fast fashion, is centerd on versatility, considered as the immediate gratification of new "temporary" identities.

Consequently, with fast fashion another type of fashion system has evolved; a flexible system that combines minimal lead times (quick response channels), the ability to identify emerging trends, rapid prototyping and cheap production (Aspers 2010b; Mihm 2010; Cachon and Swinney 2011).

Current research on fast fashion has shown the importance of supply chain management and the control structures it provides for the development of the fast fashion industry. For example, quick response systems where demand data is captured immediately (close to the final consumer), allowing orders to be based on real-time data and supported by technologies (such as electronic data interchange) that make it possible for suppliers to be informed of instant changes in inventory (Tokatli, Wrigley and Kizilgün 2008; Sheridan, Moore and Nobbs 2006).

Christopher (2012) and Fernie and Sparks (2014) argue that consumers are less patient than before, and Zarley Watson and Yan (2013) explain how consumers expect instant availability and gratification. Thus retailers experience increasingly competitive intensity in the marketplace, regarding the ability to meet consumer demand. This leads to retailers enhancing their supply chain design, including strategic development of chains that are agile and anticipatory so as to respond quickly to changes (Christopher, Lowson and Peck 2004; Christopher 2012), flexible to react to consumer demand (Fernie, Sparks and McKinnon 2010), and efficient at keeping margins (Fernie and Grant 2015). The goal is to develop more efficient supply chains in order to be responsive to changing consumer demands and new trends (Doyle, Moore and Morgan 2006). The key principle that underpins this endeavour is the reduction of lead-time to get products from concept to consumers (Christopher 2012).

This supply chain management approach also enables floor-ready fashion to be delivered to the store, i.e. retails stores receive items with hangers, barcode tickets, pricing and security tags, ready to be sold in an instant (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst 2010). Examples of retailers frequently mentioned and used as case studies in current research on supply chains and fast fashion, are Zara and H&M (e.g. Cachon and Swinney 2011; Bruce and Daly 2006; Barnes and Lea-Greenwood 2006). For example, Zara can operate on a lead-time of two weeks, bringing new clothes into the stores on a daily basis, reducing demand uncertainty and

generating high consumption by facilitating short-cycle fashion garments, swiftly produced and of low quality, both close to and during the selling season (Bruce, Daly and Towers 2004; Barnes and Lea-Greenwood 2006).

Thus the need for consumers to continually learn about and learn to keep up with the market is critical within the fast fashion market. As previously mentioned, compared to haute couture and ready-to-wear, fast fashion hinges on 'mass exclusivity' which means small batches combined with large variety (Segre-Reinach 2005). The idea is that there is a limited number of items of each collection and that these items sell out quickly creating a scarcity of that kind of trendy fashion items. More than this, the fast fashion industry copies designs spotted at fashion shows and transforms them into wearable trends that are put on the market instantly, freeing consumers from the traditional seasonal waiting times common in high fashion and the ready-to-wear market.

I argue that the fast fashion industry has produced other ways of consuming fashion; i.e. a new kind of consumer behaviour has emerged with a new systematic consumption style where consumers support the market by celebrating its speed (Cf. Joy et al. 2012; Gabrielli, Baghi and Codeluppi 2013). The consumers engage in learning activities that are thoughtfully developed to fit the current speed of the market, such as meticulously but rapidly scanning the market offerings in store. Of importance to fast fashion consumers are; speed of availability, small batches (scarcity), up-to-date looks and greater variety than previous fashion cycles (Joy et al. 2012; Gabrielli, Baghi and Codeluppi 2013; Zarley Watson and Yan 2013). Thus the fast fashion consumers search for the latest trends, enjoy instant gratification and seem to place value on fast-changing trendy clothing which is bought for a low price and in bulk (Gabrielli, Baghi and Codeluppi 2013). Consequently, the fast fashion market as a case for investigating learning activities is a choice that will forefront contextual learning activities in a way that makes them easily visible/identifiable (Cf. Arnould, Price and Moisio 2006), as the character of a fast-changing market produces a constant need to use and develop learning activities This means consumers need to engage in learning activities more often and more concisely than in other slower kinds of markets, to not fail to keep up with the changing marketplace (and miss out on new items).

Furthermore, fast fashion is considered by consumers to be the new cheap chic trend and consuming fast fashion is fun (Joy et al. 2012). Joy et al. (2012) explain that fast fashion is considered fun among consumers because there are lots of colourful trendy clothes to choose from and there is no hesitation to buy, as consumers can almost always afford to make a purchase. Gabrielli, Baghi and Codeluppi (2013) also try to explain the popularity of fast fashion consumption, and they highlight the time horizon consumers attach to fast fashion. Fast fashion is temporary and the clothes are not supposed to last long. Hence fast fashion is

attractive to consumers who look for short lifespans of trends and approach fashion consumption with this temporal idea in mind. More, Gabrielli, Baghi and Codeluppi argue: "the fast fashion product allows a person to feel that they belong to a similar group of individuals who stand out precisely because of their use of fast fashion objects or for their actions in relation to the product; it is the utmost expression of fast fashion as a systematic consumption style" (2013:218).

How then is this systematic consumption style carried out? Here in this study I argue that to be able to engage in a systematic consumption style in a fast moving market there is a need for consumers to continually participate in the market; to use learning activities to keep up with the market. Hence, I argue that because of the lack of an interpersonal socio-cultural understanding of consumer learning within consumer research (experiential research), as well as the paucity of work on the concept of consumer learning in CCT work, this dissertation introduces a framework aimed at explaining how consumers learn as participants in social and cultural contexts.

The aim of the study

The aim of this dissertation is to advance our understanding of consumer learning by developing the concept of Consumer Contextual Learning, coming from a socio-cultural approach to learning that is based on market participation. By doing this, the objective of the dissertation is to identify and explore the characteristics of learning activities and how consumers engage in learning activities to make sense of a retail market such as the fast fashion market.

Outline of the book

The book is arranged into eight chapters. The introductory chapter has outlined the main differences from previous work on consumer learning in consumer research and thus contrasted it to a cultural and social interactionist approach to consumer learning. Hence also identifying the 'research gap'. Chapter two continues with a literature review and discussion on the experiential studies and their merits in detail focused on the role of context, and the role of how tools in context are utilised in experiential research, because these are the most important elements in understanding the difference to a participatory approach and distinguishing it in relation to a more contextual and socio-cultural approach to consumer learning.

The objective of the second and third chapters is to develop a framework for Consumer Contextual Learning. Thus the third chapter continues this discussion by introducing the sociological concept of contextual knowledge (Aspers 2008, 2010) as an alternative way to understand learning in the marketplace. It then moves on to adjust this concept to an interpersonal approach to consumer learning. It does so by creating the concept of Consumer Contextual Learning by drawing on work coming from an approach that understands learning as participation through activities, which are situated in a specific context.

In chapter four the book proceeds with discussing the symbolic interactionist approach to Consumer Contextual Learning, as well as the methods used in the study of consumer learning. Chapter five examines the context of consumer learning by accounting for fast fashion retailers in a Swedish context, media representations of fast fashion consumers, and presenting a typology of fast fashion consumers. Chapter six examines different learning activities. The ambition of this chapter is to show what exactly it is that consumers do when they learn directly in the marketplace. Chapter seven investigates the temporal character of these learning activities. It looks at how temporality is connected to the strategies participants utilise in their learning activities to manage the fast-moving character of the market. Chapter eight provides a discussion on the findings in the light of the aim of the dissertation and in relation to the previous state of the knowledge on consumer learning in consumer behaviour literature.

Chapter 2

Literature review of consumer learning

This chapter is a continued elaboration on the discussion in the introductory chapter on the need for a perspective that views learning as participation through activities in social interaction with other people in a context. It extends this discussion by showing how consumer researchers mainly approach consumer learning, which is different to a participation learning perspective. The rationale for this procedure is the past and current predominance of approaches to consumer learning that dominate the ways in which consumer research has discussed learning. Thus, understandably the discussion on learning as participation needs to take place in the light of this dominating previous work in order to account for its usability/contribution to the academic conversations on consumer learning within consumer research.

In chapters two and three I will develop a framework that can be used to study how consumers learn by participating in social processes in cultural contexts. These two chapters are connected. The connection is that learning is a socio-cultural interactional activity (Cf. Mead 1934/1967; Vygotsky 1978; Lave and Wenger 1991; Säljö 2013). And that previous work in consumer behaviour literature has not yet been sufficiently responsive to investigate questions that are aiming to explore learning as occurring in social situations with others (as chapter two will show). Henceforth in chapter three, an alternative to this previous work is developed in the concept of Consumer Contextual Learning that places consumer participation in the marketplace at the centre.

In chapter two I show what consumer researchers know about consumer learning, focusing especially on the role of context and the use of tools in this context. The role of chapter two is concerned with how findings from this literature review can work to facilitate and inspire the development of the concept of Consumer Contextual Learning. Yet the purpose is not to take the result of the literature review in chapter two, and use it to build the concept of Consumer Contextual Learning; rather the result from the literature review is utilised to show what has been done, and how previous work has understood the role of context and tools

used in this context, and based on this opening up of the discussion of consumer learning to other perspectives and views, i.e. offering another way to speak about consumer learning.

Offering another way to speak about learning means that the objective here is to move learning out of the heads of individual consumers and instead locate it in everyday social interactions (Cf. Lave and Wenger 1991; Aspers 2005; Säljö 2013). This will be done in chapter three with the development of the concept Consumer Contextual Learning. The idea is to highlight how a consumer learns by developing skills within the context she is part of and how the conditions of the context, i.e. the possibilities and challenges that face consumers are negotiated and handled. For example, learning how the market works in the context of a fast-moving market as the fast fashion industry involves numerous contextual conditions such as the rhythm of supply chain operations or the speed of fellow consumers' shopping practices.

In the remainder of chapter I will discuss the two schools of thought, behavioural learning theories and cognitive learning theories. In this chapter an examination of the most influential studies and recent work with immediate relevance to this study on consumer learning is carried out (i.e. what is 'on the table' that is of interest to this study). It should be noted that the work reviewed on consumer learning whether it is being written within the behavioural learning tradition or the cognitive learning approach is looking at the same issue, the issue of learning; but depending on ontological and epistemological assumptions the results and contributions of these studies vary.

The aim of the review is therefore to bring the commonalities and differences to the fore, to create a nuanced picture of how we understand consumer learning based on previous work in consumer behaviour literature. That is, the review looks at work in the two traditions (behavioural learning theories and cognitive learning theories), and concentrates on the main arguments made. This process is guided by questions such as what commonalities are shared by previous work and how are some studies different from others when it comes to conceptualising consumer learning. By asking these questions the review focuses on the big picture, i.e. the conceptualising of consumer learning in previous work, and does not aim to go into detail on findings, rather the overall contribution is of interest. The above is of importance as the issue of learning is the focus for developing the framework, not specific findings.

What is consumer learning in consumer literature?

First of all it may be important to point out some probably obvious, but still important, differences between experimental work and CCT work on how they understand consumers. CCT research has an interest in cultural perspectives on consumption and the orientation of CCT work has been towards reshaping the research agenda moving away from a psychological understanding of consumers as restricted by assumptions of for example information processing and rationality, to an understanding of the consumer as a reflexive and empowered identity seeker (Askegaard and Linnet 2011). In this work, CCT research understands consumers as situated in social situations. Hence from a CCT perspective consumer learning can be about studying how consumers interact with each other in a cultural context. If we instead look at experiential based approaches to consumer behaviour, consumer learning is understood in another way (as will become evident in the next section). For instance an experimental-based approach is mainly interested in seeing what happens in a closed setting of an experiment where the conditions for consumer actions are rather restrictive as the setting is defined by the behavioural research lab (Hutchinson and Eisenstein 2008). Moreover this approach is instrumentally oriented, and it tends to assume that consumers are rational information-processing individuals that follow a specific process to fulfil their needs (Hutchinson and Eisenstein 2008).

To clarify how these approaches differ, Askegaard and Linnet (2011) show us a paradox as follows: psychologically-based consumer behaviour work focuses on the individual consumer and his or her intentions in decision making. Thus, experimental design work says individuals have agency. But because of the underlying methodological and ontological assumptions this agency is restricted by for example how the study is carried out by experimental design, such as the controlled environment the consumer is situated within. For instance, the role of context is therefore limited to (only) function as something that restricts action. Hence agency is restricted to a narrow universe, and as such agency is then controlled by the context (its experimental design structures) in which the consumer is placed. As mentioned above, this way of approaching the role of context differs then to the CCT perspective where consumers are viewed as reflexive and empowered identity seekers by navigating among different market offers. The interesting part of the CCT perspective, besides the view of reflexive and empowered consumers, is the active use of marketplace resources and the reflection on the use of these resources not only in direct relation to the market as a context, but also in relation to the context of context. That is, reflection based on the context of the market in light of the broader social world within this market.

I find the distinction between those two approaches to be a useful tool when thinking about how theories of consumer learning are formed, and how it impacts the relationship between the individual consumer and contexts when learning. I believe it to be helpful to keep in mind while going through previous work on consumer learning in the consumer behaviour experimental (psychological) tradition, which will follow in the next sections of this chapter. In this literature review I focus on how previous work understands the role of context in consumer learning. Here the focus on context and how consumers learn maps onto the aim of the third chapter of developing a framework on how consumers learn by participating in social processes in cultural contexts. Yet before discussing the role of context in consumer behaviour literature, I start the review with a discussion on influential models of learning, and how these models produce a certain way of understanding consumer learning from an experiential point of view. This is important, because in order to later be able to thoroughly discuss the role of context in these consumer learning theories (derived from experimental work), we need to have an idea of how models of learning understand consumer learning and how they have dealt with context (or if context is missing).

Consumer learning in consumer research

There is extensive work on individual learning within consumer behaviour literature. Again, the literature review presented here is not meant to be exhaustive, instead it focuses on some of the most well-known models of learning. It brings forward the theories most suitable in understanding the role to understand the role of context in consumer learning. Hence this section is divided into three subsections, beginning with a brief introduction on definitions on models of learning in consumer behaviour, followed by a section on the role of contexts in these models, and thirdly a section exploring if and how different types of tools are used in consumer learning models. Tools are important, as these are the means to interact with others and provide a connection to context.

Models of learning

As mentioned above there are two dominant schools of thought regarding individual consumer learning (Hutchinson and Eisenstein 2008): the cognitive theories and the behavioural theories (there are many variations, exceptions and nuances of these). If we look at the two schools of thought, consumer learning is obviously defined differently. The behavioural theories (sometimes called the stimulus-response theories) define learning as an observable behaviour which is the outcome of a response to specific external stimuli (Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991). That is, consumers have "learned" something when they behave in a

predictable way to a stimulus that is known to them. This means that learning is a response to external events. Consumer behaviour research, especially about advertising (Stuart, Shimp and Engle 1987), has had an extensive interest in behavioural theories. For example, within this work it is well established that a stimuli response framework that tests information acquisition, such as advertising in a laboratory setting, leads to increased brand awareness among consumers (Stuart, Shimp and Engle 1987; Allen and Janiszewski 1989; Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991; Huffman and Huston 1993; Janiszewski and Warlop 1993; van Osselaer and Janiszewski 2001). There are two main directions of research: classical conditioning, and instrumental conditioning.

Briefly, classical conditioning builds on work by Pavlov (1927) and his now famous experiment with hungry dogs and their food. According to Pavlovian theory, conditioned learning will happen when a conditioned stimulus (in his case the sound of a bell) is paired with a second stimulus called the unconditioned stimulus (in Pavlov's experiment this was food). In turn this unconditioned stimulus results in an unconditioned response (which in the case of hungry dogs was when they got meat paste which resulted in salivation). The conclusion was then that learning occurs after there has been repetition of the sound of the bell immediately followed by the food such a significant number of times that the sound of the bell alone started to generate the unconditioned response. When this happened Pavlov concluded that the unconditioned response turned into the conditioned response to the bell sound. As we can see here the receiver of the stimulus is rather a passive entity. In early consumer behaviour work this view is common, and consumers learn something as long as the marketing message is sufficiently repeated (Stuart, Shimp and Engle 1987).

In work on instrumental conditioning learning is also about linking a stimulus with a response (Hutchinson and Eisenstein 2008). Here learning can be said to occur through the trial-by-error principle. For instance if a consumer visits fashion stores to learn about jeans and makes a purchase decision regarding a specific pair of jeans in a specific store that suits their needs (price, wash, fit, design and brand) they are likely to become loyal consumers and repeat their purchase. From an instrumental conditioning perspective this repetitive choice can be seen as a reward for the consumer, and every time the consumer makes the same decision regarding these jeans she will be happy and content.

Work that uses variations on instrumental conditioning draws on previous work by the American psychologist Skinner (1957) and his work on how language can be learned by conditioning. Skinner (1957) thinks of learning as occurring within a controlled environment and individuals will be rewarded as they make the 'right' decisions. This in turn will lead to a favourable outcome, like picking the 'right' jeans in the example above. From a marketing perspective it is then "instrumental"

to teach consumers to repeat certain purchase behaviour in order to establish a connection to consumers.

Within the cognitive theories, learning is defined as engaging in mental activity such as thinking and problem-solving in various ways (Hutchinson and Eisenstein 2008). That is, learning is here about how consumers engage in problem-solving, and from a cognitive learning perspective this activity will help consumers to gain control of their environment. Yet it seems that learning is something that occurs in the mind of the individual independent of context, that the studies of learning are concerned with examining individual mental processing (e.g. Bruno and Wildt 1975; Beatty and Smith 1987; Meyer 1987; Gregan-Paxton and Roedder John 1997; van Osselaer and Alba 2000). Here I find that there are two main ways of examining cognitive learning; information processing and concept formation.

Information processing research is concerned with how consumers in different ways store, retrieve and use information in relation to purchase decisions. Central notions that are used to understand these processes are consumer familiarity, consumer memory and prior knowledge (Hutchinson and Eisenstein 2008). For instance, work on familiarity examines how previously acquired knowledge is mentally transferred in the individual's mind by investigating how consumers learn by analogy. Analogy models focus on how consumers, when faced with something unfamiliar will try and make sense of the situation or product by relating it to something that is familiar (Gregan-Paxton and Roedder John 1997). Empirically, research in this domain has primarily focused on brand awareness. If we relate it back to the behavioural stimulus-response theories we can find some similarities regarding the role of previous experiences. For example information processing is about how consumers evaluate new information acquired in the search phase in relation to prior experiences. In a way it is similar to instrumental conditioning (remember the example of the jeans), as this approach highlights how learning is linked to previous experiences. Hence previous experiences are one key element in both theories; that is, repetitive acts (instrumental conditioning) or familiarity with similar products that are kept in the memory (information processing). The difference being that instrumental conditioning looks at experience being made in some relation to the consumer's environment, not solely as a mental process in the minds of consumers which is the case in information processing perspectives such as analogy models.

Work on concept formation on the other hand investigates cognitive learning by studying how consumers use category or classification devices (i.e. concepts) to mentally organise and sort information during the search phase of decision making (Hirschman 1980). Early attempts to understand how concepts are formed had a focus on defining/finding a single universal mechanism that every consumer

would apply as a specific strategy when sorting information about market offerings (Newell and Simon 1972).

Later work has found that there are variations in how consumers sort information and thus classification devices differ. Hirschman (1980) shows how consumers use different cognitive mechanisms to sort information. Hence cognitive theories investigate how consumers form these different concepts; how consumers develop concepts and how these concepts are used. For instance, a concept in the form of a category can be ballerinas, a type of flat shoe that can be distinguished from other flat shoes such as docklands or oxfords. Concept formation models parallel models of information processing (analogies), as a new product is encountered the consumer will, according to work on concept formation, scrutinise other concepts in the memory similar to the new product and the attitude towards the new product depends on what consumers find when they look in their memory concepts. In consumer behaviour there have been studies examining category formation based on brand awareness and the different cues consumers use to sort information about brands. Here models of concept formation based on multi-attributes are developed to be able to examine the extensive numbers of cues consumers use to form categories of for example brands (e.g. Meyer 1987). The marketplace is overflowing with competitive information on old and new brands, and many are the marketers that try to grab the attention of consumers. In later work, Hoch and Deighton (1989) have for example discussed consumer learning from product experience and how managers can form strategies to manage consumers' learning, focusing on when consumers are most open to managerial influence.

As we can see from the above discussion, there has been an extensive interest, over many years, concerning how consumers learn. The reasons for this interest vary. For instance, looking at the work by Hoch and Deighton (1989), their interest in this research mainly involves knowing more about how consumers can be taught effectively about market offers. That is, how can consumers be taught about the benefits and attributes of the brands and how can managers differentiate their brand from competitors. Hence, in order to develop an idea about this, managers need to try and figure out how consumers learn, which has also been the focus of the work on consumer learning models presented above.

The above discussion mainly concerns the conceptual models, not the areas of empirical investigation these models may be rooted in. This is what the next two sections will address. For example a common empirical focus in the work has been communication, direct communication such as advertising or indirect communication such as price and packaging. Here we can see how consumers learn about the product or service from sources other than the product or service itself, and from sources that seem to be understood as controlled by managers. There seems to be a focus on how information is transferred to the consumer and

then how the consumer processes this information (which is a different process depending on what model of consumer learning you will apply). Yet some of the underlying paradigms acknowledge some type of environmental conditions.

The next two sections aim at investigating what roles context and tools play in the different models of learning (in some cases no role). That is, how previous work sees the contextual conditions or how they do not see them. As noted above, the psychologically-based consumer behaviour work focuses on the individual as the unit of analysis, and the role of context is secondary. Yet even if the contextual conditions and tools play a limited part in consumer learning, they are still present. The question then becomes: what does the context look like in this previous research? With this focus on the role of contexts, I want to address two questions when reviewing learning in consumer behaviour work (Cf. Larsson 2009): What do consumers learn? i.e. do consumers learn only about the product or the market (wider context) and in what kind of situation or environment do they learn? And second how do consumers learn? i.e. by observing, by participating in social situations, by themselves (information processing in their minds), with others in interaction or by using tools (physical or language) by themselves or with others? That is, the two sections will give examples of how research on consumer learning models has dealt with the role of context and the use of tools in consumer learning.

The role of context in models of learning (what do consumers learn?)

The researcher makes up the context in experiential studies, and it is confined by the isolated trials in a lab. Yet there is a context. The context here is about trying to manipulate cognitive associated learning. That is, the context is made up and altered during experiments in order to get different results that can achieve some degree of generalisability based on how the context is slightly altered in different ways (Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991).

The role of context has evolved in experiential work on consumer learning. For instance, early work on consumer learning usually used one conditioned brand without any changes in context for the consumer who took part in the experiment, thus researchers here artificially restricted their work to include only this one relationship between the consumer and a brand (Cohen and Basu 1987). However, later work has developed the idea of the context in the experiential setting, by trying to create a setting, which would mimic an actual buying situation (decision making situation) for the consumer (Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991; Janiszewski, Silk, and Cooke 2003; Cooke et al. 2004). For instance, this can be done by working with filler brands (Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991). Filler brands "can be thought of as providing subjects with a cognitive context or comparison standard against which to judge the CS brand, thereby priming a category exemplar or schema and influencing how the CS brand is interpreted and evaluated" (Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991:2). This means that the context is created in such a way as

to try and hold up a "real-world-like" competitive situation of brands trying to capture the consumer's attention (Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991).

Going back to the early work on consumer learning in experiential classical conditioning studies the context is as mentioned above restricted to a brand. For instance, the conditioned stimulus is an advertised brand (a brand that is currently being advertised) (Stuart, Shimp and Engle 1987; Allen and Janiszewski 1989). The context is then made up in isolated settings in a lab, and conditioned trials are set up to test different pairings of conditioned and unconditioned stimuli, and thus test consumer learning in situations that differ from one another in slightly yet in conceptually different ways (Stuart, Shimp and Engle 1987). Hence, context here then refers to the advertising of a brand in relation to the different pairings of conditioned and unconditioned stimuli, i.e. paired in differently arranged ways by researchers (for example regarding price or product benefits) (Stuart, Shimp and Engle 1987; Allen and Janiszewski 1989).

Here we can see how the advertised brand is taken out of its structural environment, i.e. the social and cultural structures of for example who made the ad, in what way (using what kind of material, medium etc.), for whom was it made, for what purpose and where was it produced. Also no situational experiences (other consumers, service encounters, other brands etc.) that can affect the pairings of different, conditioned and unconditioned stimuli (i.e. it is set up in an isolated box) are included. Adding to this work, some studies limit manipulation of the context to one attribute (e.g. price) by fixing a second attribute (e.g. product benefit) and keeping it at a constant level (Urbany, Bearden and Weilbaker 1988). Thus in these studies our understanding of what consumers learn is limited to one brand and a rather fixed setting, as the context is only slightly recreated. Yet these slight manipulations have provided knowledge on how consumers learn about one important attribute of the brand, for instance pricing.

Moving on to the later work on consumer learning, we find work that focuses on developing the use of filler brands and the idea of embedded context in classical condition studies. As Shimp, Stuart and Engle (1991) explain, the goal of this work is to develop the use of what they call the embedded context. The point of departure of this work is the criticism early conditioning studies have received regarding the way the context is arranged (e.g. the limitations with one brand and the lack of a "real-world-like" competitive situation) (Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991). In their study Shimp, Stuart and Engle (1991:1) address "the character of the conditioned stimulus (in this research, different brands of cola drinks) and /…/the composition of the embedding context in which conditioning trials occur (in this research, other cola brands included as filler stimuli surrounding conditioning trials)". Hence they justify their study by saying that researchers have artificially restricted studies to relationships between consumers and one single

consumption object and ignored the structural context in which these relationships actually exist. Instead Shimp, Stuart and Engle (1991) try to mimic the structured context of the advertised brand, thus it is still an experiential study and it is kept it in a lab setting. But what is new here regarding the context compared to earlier work on classical conditioning studies is the use of filler brands and the idea of embedded context. This means using filler brands (some well-known brands and other more less-known brands to the participants presented in visual images of attractive scenes where these brands appear or are consumed) that provide the subjects (of the experiment) with an embedded context or comparison standard against which the conditioned brand can be evaluated/judged (it is thought to influence how the brand is judged) (Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991). Thereby a context is created that aims at providing 'real' situations where consumers learn about brands when they compare these brands to brands already known to them or when they encounter situations where the conditioned brand is put in an unfamiliar setting.

Yet, there are still no situational experiences that can affect the consumers' understanding of the pairings of the conditioned brand (i.e. it is set up in an isolated box). But what do we know about what consumers learn from this study? Our understanding of what consumers learn has developed from the early work on classical conditioning, here we can see how consumers learn to evaluate, compare and contrast their understanding of a brand, that is, based on the conditioned brand consumers learn how to evaluate the brand as it is paired with well-known and less-known brands. This means we can see what happens to consumer learning when something is familiar and what happens if it is unfamiliar.

Summing up, much of the classic conditioned stimulus research on context effects on consumer learning has focused on the creation and manipulations of context or the embedded context (filler brands). Hence adding to the above, classic conditioned stimulus research on context influence on consumer learning about choice has also made contributions that show that the timing of the contextual manipulation (for instance the timing of the introduction of different filler brands) matters (Wedell 1994), and so too does the framing of the alternatives (e.g. how the filler brands were described to participants) of the contextual factors (Janiszewski, Silk, and Cooke 2003).

Moving their work forward, Cooke et al. (2004) observe how previous work on context and consumer learning is mainly concerned with the monotonic sequence (a function that is either consistently increasing and never decreasing or a function that is consistently decreasing and never increasing) of how the introduction of single (one brand) or multiple (filler brands) contextual attributes/factors has been studied. As Cooke et al (2004) make this observation they also note how this previous work has not yet investigated correlated processes of different

properties/attributes of contexts. Hence Cooke et al. (2004) focus on how different attributes correlate to form single-peak preferences. To sum up Cooke et al.'s (2004) work, single-peak preferences are interesting in understanding consumer learning as they tell us how the combination of different attributes at a certain time affects what the consumer makes of a product based on how the evolution of a given alternative is a function of its performance relative to the other options (for instance if price correlated with the quantity of cheese or the quality/type/brand of cheese). It further tells us about consumer learning in terms of how contextual information (attributes/factors) can be combined and understood as relational by consumers. However, these attributes are chosen and introduced by the researcher, the consumer herself has no say in what attributes will be included and thus attributes that may be important to the consumer can be left out.

In contrast to the work above, there are experimental studies that argue for a context-less understanding of how consumers learn. For instance, Chernev (2004; 2005) investigates how researchers can use a balance of attribute introduction (a constant introduction of attributes throughout the experiment), to eliminate contrast effects of choice. Hence, the aim is to make a contribution that shows how attribute balance can provide a way at looking at how consumer learning and thus choice is made independent of the context, such as the embedded context (filler brands). Hence in Chernev's (2004) work context is understood as problematic, and a methodological effort is identified to eliminate contextual relational effects on consumer decision-making. Chernev (2005) instead proposes what he terms the attribute balance effect (which is relatively independent from the relative functions in the choice set consumers are presented with and make decisions from (for instance different product categories)). Unlike the relational traditional effects of context, the attribute balance effect is about the option's internal properties and not about external relational functions to other properties introduced in the study.

In work on information processing perspectives such as analogy models, Gregan-Paxton and Roedder John (1997) argue that even if learning can occur in relation to external contextual stimuli, it is also likely that learning occurs in a process of internal knowledge transfer. The focus is on internal mental processes, and the external context is not relevant here. Rather, knowledge is acquired from within the mind. These studies are accounted for here, because I want to show that there are studies which, in contrast to this dissertation, argue that the context is not important in consumer learning.

To conclude, this section looks at how context plays different roles in experimental work on consumer learning. In early work the context is restricted to one brand, whereas in later work context is understood as the embedded context (filler brands). Parallel work on filler brands tries to manipulate the context by constructing a constant way to introduce new attributes in studies on correlated

processes of different properties/attributes. Thus in previous work researchers study consumer learning in terms of consumers mainly learning about products in terms of brands (i.e. what do consumers learn?). Consumers learn about the content, i.e. how a brand compares to other brands (i.e. price or product benefits), but the experiments do not cover consumer learning as part of consumption in actual stores. That is, how consumers participate and act in the marketplace, as the context is created and manipulated by researchers in a confined box. Hence in this work researchers are not interested in how consumers learn in the actual consumption context such as in the marketplace, or how consumers learn about market logics (the way the market operates).

Another point to be made is that work on consumer learning in experiential classical conditioning studies seems to understand the learning process as a one direction process, i.e. consumers are just passive receptive individuals for the fixed and somewhat ordered context of learning created by researchers. Besides this work seems similar to injection models used in early advertisement work in which message reception is automatic, that is the message is assumed to have the same effect on everyone. Here this would mean that the way consumers learn is the same, and the context created affects consumers in the same way. Hence this is contrary to how a framework that studies how consumers learn by participating in social processes in cultural contexts would understand consumer learning. Because here the point of departure is that learning is a socio-cultural activity in interaction with other consumers in the marketplace.

Lastly with the focus on the role of context in consumer learning the above discussion has addressed questions such as do consumers learn about the content (about the products/brands) or is the focus on learning how to participate in markets by understanding the conditions/logic of the market. A question that relates to this is the question of how do consumers learn, i.e. by observing, by participating in social situations (with others in interaction), by themselves (information processing in their minds), or by using tools (physical or language). The use of tools will be investigated in the next section in the work on attribute use in experiential classical conditioning studies.

Types of tools (attributes) in models of learning (how do consumers learn?)

This section investigates what kinds of attributes are identified in work on consumer learning in experiments on learning (based on the above section), and how these are used to study consumer learning in a created manipulated context. I use the notion of tools here (Vygotsky 1978; Säljö 2013), as this is the notion that will be used later in chapter three to discuss consumer learning by the development of a framework on how consumers learn by participating in social processes in cultural contexts through social activities.

In consumer behaviour experimental work researchers speak about attributes (sometimes aids) instead of tools (e.g. Alba and Hutchinson 1987; Urbany, Bearden and Weilbaker 1988; Hutchinson and Alba 1991; Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991; Chernev 2004; 2005). As mentioned above tools to learn about a product can be a brand (different cola brands), different product categories (an MP3 player, and a personal digital assistant (PDA)) a description of product benefits or statements on product price (Chernev 2005). For instance using the trade-off-contrast principle these attributes are tools (toolsets) to study learning in experimental settings. The trade-off principle is used to show how the favouring of one attribute (product benefit) is a function of the other attribute (e.g. price) within a decision set (Cf. Chernev 2005). This means that how consumers learn is about trade-off gains for one of the product's dimensions and for the losses on the other product's dimension. Hence, these toolsets (choice set) are created and somewhat forced onto the subject in the experiments, meaning that tools can here be understood as "manipulated tools".

The role of tools in consumer learning is significant though. The use of tools in experiments determines what consumer learning is, that is how consumers learn. The combination of toolsets and how tools are manipulated in experiments determines what/how consumers learn in an experiment setting. For example, how different tools are used as filler brands, or how the timing or combination of tools in experiments are arranged (Hutchinson and Alba 1991; Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991; Chernev 2004; 2005). Alba and Hutchinson (1987) and Hutchinson and Alba (1991) show that consumers find it more difficult to learn if there are many different brands represented in a toolset (multi-attribute information), especially when consumers need to learn to discriminate a new brand (when a new brand is introduced into an already familiar product class combination) in order to differentiate.

Also what is important to note in this type of work is that consumer learning, what kind of tools are chosen and introduced by the researcher (or not thought of), will determine how the consumer learns. Moreover the consumer is passive in response to the aid. Here the consumer follows certain instructions and there is little room for making creative individualised ways of learning, as strict guidelines will determine how consumers learn.

The guidelines of experiments and toolset composition will make sure that one type of consumer learning is tested and investigated thoroughly within the boundaries of the project. This means that tools are mainly generic, it is the same kind of tools used in repetitive experiments. Researchers want to test and construct some generalisability of learning (e.g. Urbany, Bearden and Weilbaker 1988; Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991; Janiszewski, Silk, and Cooke 2003). Basically how consumers learn is tied to the way toolsets are chosen and combined by

researchers and how they tell consumers to use them in the experimental setting. The implications are then that consumers learn about the market, such as facts about products and what kind of facts are more valuable to consumers (for instance the trade-off between price and product benefits). Thus to conclude, consumers learn by using tools, not by observing, by participating in social situations with others in interaction, or by themselves (information processing in their minds).

Implications for a socio-cultural perspective on Consumer Contextual Learning

The review of the extant literature in consumer behaviour work on consumer learning shows that experimental studies (such as classical conditioning studies) on how consumers learn about different products (e.g. brands or types) have long interested consumer researchers. The context is mainly approached as a manipulated setting in which consumers learn about content specific characteristics of products, and tools are introduced and controlled in order to study particular ways of how consumers learn. Hence, overall we know much about specific types of learning in a confined and controlled setting, however we know little about how consumers themselves learn about market offerings in an everyday situation.

It should however be clear that the above discussed work is a different approach (another paradigm) to understanding consumer learning and it has produced a thorough (and for this work) appealing conceptual basis for our current understanding of consumer learning. Yet it is important to note recent initiatives and discussion on how experiential work may be moving towards an approach that would include a multidisciplinary way of looking at how consumers learn. At the 2015 Association for Consumer Research Asia Pacific Conference, Darren Dahl (editor of the Journal of Consumer Research) reflected on and encouraged work that would include studies that actually leave the experiment setting behind and go out there to experience actual consumer behaviour. He spoke about how the work would benefit from going out there and talking to people, asking actual consumers questions or observing consumer activities. This would complement experimental studies and enrich our knowledge of consumer behaviour.

The review has shown that the notion of context is important for understanding consumer learning. The context is here the boundaries of consumer learning created by researchers. This means that the context is the foundation (the point of departure) on which our understanding of consumer learning can be based. It thus sets the possibilities and the limitations of what consumer learning can be in experimental designed studies. Moreover the importance of context in experiential

studies is also tied to the fact that researchers can control and manipulate the context in certain ways to single out certain ways consumers can learn about for instance different cola brands (Cf. Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991). Because of its central role in consumer learning, the role of context is included in the socio-cultural approach to learning that is presented in the next chapter. This approach will also stress the implications the context has on consumer learning, but in slightly different ways, including how consumers interact with the context, how the consumers understand and work with the context by themselves and together with others. It thus includes not only learning about content-specific attributes of products, but also shifts its focus to discuss how learning is a way of participating in the markets (the consumption context) by understanding the conditions or logic of how the market operates (in this case a fast-moving market).

Looking at the role of tools in how previous work has studied consumer learning, we can see that the choice and combination of tools determine how consumers learn in experimental research. The role of tools is significant from a socio-cultural perspective as well. Here, as the next chapters will show, the importance is tied to what kind of tools are used, how consumers utilise tools, and perhaps appropriate them to fit a specific type of market (in this case a fast-moving market).

Chapter 3

What is Consumer Contextual Learning?

In this chapter I begin with a review of the sociological concept of contextual knowledge (Aspers, 2006; 2010). I define the concept based on the work by Patrik Aspers, and discuss the empirical settings in which it has been used to study knowledge that is contextually oriented. Thereafter I proceed with a discussion on the possibilities and limitations of the concept when wanting to investigate how consumers learn contextually. Then I introduce the concept of Consumer Contextual Learning, and present a framework for the three dimensions of Consumer Contextual Learning.

The concept of contextual knowledge

Patrick Aspers is a Swedish sociologist focusing on economic sociology, while empirically he is interested in fashion markets. He has developed the concept of contextual knowledge. Contextual knowledge is defined as "the capacity to do what it takes in a situation" (2006:746). According to Aspers (2006) the idea behind developing the new concept of contextual knowledge was to be able to "study the conditions of knowledge that are needed in these industries [creative aesthetic work], rather than the content of knowledge" (2006: 746). Here in this quote, we can see that there is a focus on "doing" things in a market that is characterised by specific conditions in order to gain knowledge about a particular type of market. Thus it is not about how people make decisions in a predetermined controlled setting, or how they collect/process information by themselves. Furthermore, Aspers describes how knowledge is developed collectively through social and cultural activities. The notion of contextual knowledge is thus collective, as from a sociological point of view the work by an individual is not the result of only this person's work or activities but rather it is the outcome of collective efforts.

For Aspers (2006; 2010a) the focus on the conditions of knowledge is about highlighting the ways of acquiring and using knowledge, which in turn enables production of items that sell in a market that has specific conditions. Hence the main idea is about contextually anchored knowledge that can be used in a specific time and place, or in a time and place that has similar conditions.

To provide a more specific definition of the concept of contextual knowledge, Aspers (2006) introduces three dimensions: *contextuality* is related to 1) a network of actors, 2) understanding and investigating different arenas of aesthetic expressions, and 3) the understanding of consumer behaviour (fashion designers' points of view), related to the negotiation between aesthetic work (being creative) and what sells (sales figures).

The first dimension on the network of actors is about the setting in which the creative aesthetic workers operate in. The connections to other people are important here, especially to know those who are 'in the know' (Aspers 2006). Thus in this dimension the importance lies in the collective work and efforts of other people, and how the knowledge produced is not that of one single individual (Cf. the discussion on the limits of the sole genius (Cf. Becker 1982; Kawamura 2005). Moreover, not everyone who takes part in the production is an aesthetic creative worker, rather they are economists or technicians. Thus, these people act as a support in the aesthetic creative process. The support can be intangible (advice etc.) or it can be tangible (material samples) (Aspers 2006). Consequently Aspers (2006) argues that the knowledge that is needed to work as a creative aesthetic worker is not something that is concentrated in one person but a result of collaboration. This means that one person's knowledge can only be used if others support it. Hence this is one way how knowledge is contextual. To clarify his argument Aspers (2010b) provides the example of the fashion designer who works at a large garment chain store. This designer needs to know buyers who can locate vendors to produce clothes for the fashion line. Also, buyers will provide designers with designer input, gained at fashion fairs or on trips to suppliers (Cf. Blumer 1969).

Moving on to the second dimension, and another way to look at how knowledge is contextual. Here knowledge is contextual because creative aesthetic workers draw inspiration from different art worlds (Aspers work is here inspired by Becker 1982). According to Aspers (2006) this could be inspiration from high art, music, theatre or high fashion design. However, direct copying is not acknowledged as a practice, but rather creative work is about putting together bits and pieces from already known work to form something new and unique. The challenge is to know how to interpret the different meanings that come with each of the pieces (from the various art worlds) in order to make something new. Here Aspers (2006) refers to how designers learn and develop this knowledge through processes of

socialisation, for instance by attending art school (here Aspers draws on the work of Bourdieu 1984).

The last and third dimension of contextual knowledge is about the closeness to the final consumer market (Aspers 2006). Here closeness refers to the geographical closeness of actors in relation to the market where they sell their products. The closeness seems to be an important part of the notion of contextual knowledge as it highlights the role of the actor to participate/act as a trend analyst of consumer behaviour. Aspers (2006) describes how the success of the creative aesthetic worker is tied to how well she is able to follow the trends on the streets, as well as take notice of how consumers react to new designs and trends. This contextual knowledge is constantly tested through feedback from consumers and the designer's peers (i.e. if the latest collection is a hit or a miss). This last dimension of contextual knowledge is similar to work by Blumer (1969), as it stresses the importance of not detaching from the market and always staying tuned to the market so as not to lose track of what is happening. This means that understanding the idea of being in fashion is vital in fashion creation, and it (if following the ideas of Blumer (1969)), can shape a common sensitivity to what is regarded as sine qua non in this work.

To sum up, these three dimensions provide a basic framework of what contextual knowledge is about. It is a useful framework that captures the main, different ways of how knowledge can be understood as contextually oriented. These different ways are especially interesting for this dissertation as it is anchored in the fashion industry, and thus may be useful for discussing the specific conditions a fashion market brings to how individuals learn. The next section will briefly discuss the empirical fashion settings in which the concept of contextual knowledge have been used and thus developed (e.g. tested and refined).

In what settings has the concept of contextual knowledge been studied?

As was mentioned above, the concept of contextual knowledge has been developed in the context of creative aesthetic work (fashion industry) (Aspers 2006; 2010a). Aspers (2006) has two empirical focuses: the fashion photographer and the fashion designer. The study of the fashion photographer includes data collected in Stockholm and New York (mainly Swedish fashion photographers working in New York). For example, exploring how the photographer's style has developed by being around other members of the fashion industry and by flicking through fashion magazines. The other context, perhaps more relevant to this study, is the fashion designer. The fieldwork regarding the fashion designer is part of a larger project on the global garment industry (Aspers 2010b). Here the focus is on larger chain stores usually found on the high street such as the fast fashion retailers

of H&M, Zara, and Topshop. The fieldwork consists of data on designers who work in teams in the design department of each of these companies. For instance Aspers (2006; 2010b) explores how designers collect information by going to fashion and fabric fairs, buying trend books, attending fashion seminars as well as following fashion shows and runway shows at fashion weeks.

To conclude, as mentioned above the contexts of where the concept of contextual knowledge has been developed fits well to this present study. Thus the strong connection to aesthetic markets, and in particular the fashion industry makes this concept valuable. This means that the three conceptual dimensions identified ought to fit the context of fast fashion. However, even if the concept of contextual knowledge may be beneficial to utilise in discussing how the specific conditions of a (fashion) market are important to take into account when discussing contextually oriented knowledge, it also has some drawbacks concerning the use of the notion knowledge. The limitations, and to some extent the possibilities, will be discussed in the next section.

Limitation of the concept of contextual knowledge

For this study the limitation concerns the preference in this dissertation to approach learning as participation in activities, but not an interest in the progression or outcome in these activities. Thus the focus is not on studying if the consumer has understood something and gained certain accumulated knowledge. However, the notion of contextual knowledge (Aspers 2006), suggests that the focus is on a process of understanding that leads to knowledge that is defined as "the capacity to do what it takes in a situation" (Aspers 2006:746). Aspers further explains that "to have knowledge in these fields boils down to know what to make in order to sell in a final consumer market" (Aspers 2006:746). Thus in contrast to the approach to learning in this study, knowledge is in the work of Aspers about having reached that point where one knows what to do. Besides it is, as Larsson (2009) writes, perhaps not desirable to study if someone at one point in time has gained knowledge or understanding of a certain phenomenon. As she explains: "I have chosen to look at reasoning in the meaning-making process which would seem to be important to learning, manifested in the ability to "go on" (Wittgenstein, 1980), which can be seen as of value in itself, rather than to claim to be investigating /…/ understanding" (2009:53).

For this dissertation this is an important limitation of the contextual knowledge concept. The next section will henceforth introduce the alternative concept of Consumer Contextual Learning, which is developed to fit the specific focus on learning as participation in activities. It builds on the contextual knowledge

concept, but instead highlights learning. Despite the limitations of the concept it does however provide a framework that beneficially organises and brings forward the contextual and situated ways of learning by participation. Further, learning by participation has some similarities with meaning creation activities in consumer identity projects, yet the learning concept focuses solely on activities through which the consumer can acquire familiarity with a marketplace, and get a sense of how to identify activities that are valuable for the ability to "go on". The learning concept emphasises direction-oriented consumer behaviour, in terms of not being aimless but focused and forward looking. Thus what the learning concept highlights is the way one uses learning activities, and the keenness to learn.

The concept of Consumer Contextual Learning

Here I introduce and create the concept of Consumer Contextual Learning. In doing this, I first explain how Consumer Contextual Learning builds on the concept of contextual knowledge (Aspers 2006; 2010). Then I introduce enabling theory found in previous work in the situated learning perspective (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998; Säljö 2013). This enabling theory should help to formulate the ways in which learning is about participation, as people engage in learning activities in a group of people within a social environment. Lastly it outlines the result in the form of the three dimensions of Consumer Contextual Learning.

First of all, the notion of knowledge is changed to that of learning. Further, I have decided to keep the contextual focus of the contextual knowledge concept. More, as a framework, I have kept the three dimensions of the contextual knowledge concept in order to discuss the contextuality of learning. However, these dimensions are modified to fit a contextually oriented consumer learning perspective. This means, since the focus is here on how consumers learn in interactions with others and the market, the three dimensions have to account for the interpersonal nature of learning. Thus the work on situated learning, learning with others, from the work of Lave and Wenger (1991), Wenger (1998) and Säljö (2013) is utilised and added within the three dimensions of Consumer Contextual Learning. Thus, the way of approaching learning chosen here is a perspective that will take into account and underline the importance of learning as a social interactional process and as contextually oriented.

Moreover to further explain the centrality of context, it is important to notice that the type of context used here can be referred to as the direct micro-social context. Here a micro-social context is the direct everyday setting with different characteristics (for instance the store environment, as well as the values and norms

in social lives of specific groups) which surround given phenomenon that help people make sense of it (Cf. Dilley 1999). Namely the micro-social context refers to the physical setting of fast fashion consumption and the social frames of reference the participants use in their learning activities (such as norms and values etc.). However, in the concept of Consumer Contextual Learning the context also refers to "more" than the direct micro-social context. Hence in order to fully comprehend the extended meaning of the contextual aspect of the concept I have divided the notion of context into two different parts, although these belong together and are highly intertwined. The division is only made for analytical purposes in order to be able to discuss how Consumer Contextual Learning takes place on different levels and sometimes in different ways. One part is the notion of the direct micro-social context as described above.

The second part is the notion of 'context of context'. The context of context refers to the "societal class divisions, historical and global processes, cultural values and norms" (Askegaard and Linnet 2011:396). Here one appealing idea with the notion of context of context is that it allows for thinking in terms of contextualising the direct micro-social context. Important to note here is that consumers as learners "are engaged both in the context of their learning and in the broader social world within which these contexts are produced" (Hanks 1991:24). Furthermore the context of context allows us to discuss everyday learning practices as embedded by referring to the interplay of the structuring influence of larger sociocultural contexts (such as class based norms and values regarding H&M, which we return to in chapter five) and the more (to the consumer) concrete experiences such as face-to-face meetings with other consumers or employees in fast fashion stores.

Next, this chapter moves on to outline and explain the three dimensions of Consumer Contextual Learning. These dimensions are adjusted from the three dimensions of the concept of contextual knowledge (which have provided direction), and from the situated participatory perspective on learning developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998; 2000) (that addresses the interpersonal nature of learning). Thus the development of the concept of Consumer Contextual Learning involves examination of this literature. The aim is not to provide a complete overview of every socio-cultural approach to learning theories from fields other than marketing, but rather to bring together a few identified useful concepts concerning contextual and situated learning practices derived from sociological work and used especially in the field of sociology or in the field of education research, to form a conceptual toolbox. Here education research refers to work that uses socio-cultural perspectives inspired by Vygotskian cultural-historical theory, such as Säljö's theories of socio-cultural tools (Cf. Larsson 2009). The adjustments done to the concept are also made in such a way that the three dimensions are attuned with the data. This was an iterative process (Charmaz 2014), moving back and forth between the data and the

theoretical building blocks of the three dimensions of contextual knowledge, as well as previous work in the situated learning perspective (also further explained at the end of the next chapter on perspective, methods and data).

First dimension: learning through collective participation in the context

The first dimension of Consumer Contextual Learning is about learning as collective and social participation in a social everyday context (such as a fast-moving market). Thus learning concerns participating in activities together with others. These activities can take the form of, together with one's friends, looking out for new trends and styles in how other consumers dress or observing fellow consumers' behaviour in the store. It can also be about taking part in conversations with those in the know (such as friends, store employees, Facebook users or YouTubers). Learning is thus collective. This above account of the first dimension is based on Aspers' (2006) ideas that connections to other people are important. In order to extend the ideas of learning being collective, and that connections to other people matter, I utilise the notion of learning by participation (in a community of practice) (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998; 2000). Here in this perspective one should take note that learning is social and "viewed as an aspect of all activity" (Lave and Wenger 1991:38). Wenger further explains (1998:8) "learning in this sense is not a separate activity. It is not something we do when we do nothing else or stop doing when we do something else". Here this means that learning is all activities that constitute collective participation in the context (as well as the activities that constitute dimension two (contextual sources of inspiration) and dimension three (being present and close to the context)).

This notion of situated learning emphasises participation. Wenger (1998:55) explains "my use of the term participation falls within common usage. It is therefore helpful to start with Webster's definition:" To have or take a part or share with others (in some activity, enterprise, etc.)." Thus participation here refers to activities in which people take part, and it concerns both actions taken and connections made among people. Furthermore these activities and connections among people can be viewed as a way to establish some sort of belonging to a group. As such, connections to other people matter, and Wenger (1998) notes that learning activities gain their meaning in negotiations that happen in interactions. Wenger (1998) thus utilises an interactionist perspective as an analytical viewpoint on learning. This interactionist perspective informs the following central constructs/domains of learning which make up dimension one:

Learning is the interplay of social competence and personal experience (Wenger 2000). Social competence of the group develops over time as people interact with

each other when sharing their observations and adding these experiences to the group's 'collected' competence. This social competence is about knowing the ropes and a way of doing things as the group have established (Wenger 1998). Alternatively, as stated by Wenger (2000:227), "what it takes to act and be recognised as a competent member". Social competence is further made up of three elements (Wenger 1998):

- Joint enterprise: a common ambition valued by the group, and members hold each other accountable for this joint enterprise.
- Mutuality: ways of acting that will evoke members' support, i.e. engaging in activities in certain ways that are recognised by members.
- Shared repertoire: members create a common way of speaking about the joint enterprise as well as common routines.

Personal experience is described by Wenger (2000) as an individual experience that does not fully fit with the ways of the group (the shared enterprise, mutuality and shared repertoire), which then if useful to, for instance, the joint enterprise, is added to the social competence. Wenger (2000) labels this procedure boundary interaction. Hence, when social competence and personal experience do not match, the social competence of the group can evolve.

To conclude, these central constructs/domains of learning are important building blocks of dimension one: learning through collective participation in the context. To further distinguish the particularities of this dimension to other work in consumer research, the next sections will contrast the perspective of learning by participation to previous work in CCT. The CCT work addressed here has examined issues related to consumer interactions in social groups and their influence on informed acquisition behaviours. Thus it will show how previous research has addressed questions of consumer-to-consumer dynamics in terms of for instance status competition, or questions on how groups of people can influence meaning-making about a brand or a social activity. The objective is to show how previous consumer research in this area has accounted for various ways consumers make informed choices, but also how consumer research presents a limited understanding of how consumers learn in social interactions with other people.

Consumer researchers have paid much attention to how interconnected consumers in groups form social bonds that in a number of ways influence how consumers will act, and what consumers will purchase. One such approach is the concept of reference groups (Bearden and Etzel 1982). The concept of reference groups is employed to explain how groups can have influence on the behaviour of others by giving expert advice, and to explain how others will seek acceptance and admiration from a reference group by mimicking behaviour or purchasing brands

that will give them recognition from the reference group (Ford and Ellis 1980; Bearden and Etzel 1982). These ideas focus on processes similar to social emulation and look at how consumption choices evolve as the reference group moves forward. Further, this approach puts the individual consumer at the centre and explains how the individual looks up to the reference group in some type of hierarchical relationship. These ideas are quite different to the perspective on learning by participation. Especially as the concept of reference group is not formulated to capture the collective nature of learning and as such it cannot hold the same explanatory power as the notions of mutuality and the joint enterprise hold as key constructs within the approach to learning by participation in the social context. Also the ideas on learning by participation do not have such a clear focus on hierarchies, even if tensions can occur in relationships between members (Wenger 2000).

Other ways consumer researchers have studied diffusion of, for instance, information or brand enthusiasm among consumers are the concepts of opinion leadership (Kratzer and Lettl 2009) and market mavens (Feick and Price 1987). Opinion leadership circles around one person who is socially active, and this person holds the expert power to influence others in terms of product information (e.g. Belleau et al. 2001; Bertrandis and Goldsmith 2006). Early conceptualisation in the 1980s had a focus on the opinion leader as a static position, and viewed information diffusion as one way (not recognising actions of other consumers), while later work in the area has to some degree shown evidence of opinion leaders recognising the response of other consumers (Antonides and Asugman 1995; Goldsmith, Flynn and Clark 2012). The market maven concept is similar to the concept of opinion leadership in the focus on the individual expert, but differs in the way information is delivered to other consumers. For instance, market mavens will transmit market product information with passion and joy, which comes from their extensive interest in markets (Feick and Price 1987; Clark and Goldsmith 2005; Goldsmith, Flynn and Clark 2012). More, this concept differs from the concept of opinion leadership in the sense that market mavens acknowledge the needs and requests from other consumers. As Feick and Price state, market mavens are "individuals who have information about many kinds of products, places to shop, and other facets of markets, and initiate discussions with consumers and respond to requests from consumers for market information" (1987:85). While this research on reference groups, opinion leadership and market mavens has expanded understanding of how information is evaluated and circulated to an audience of consumers, this previous work does not fully capture how people learn in interactions with others in social contexts.

Recent consumer research has addressed questions of consumer-to-consumer dynamics by utilising the concepts of marketplace cultures or consumption communities. Consumption communities are understood as a group "comprised of

consumers who share a commitment to a product, class, brand, activity, or consumption ideology" (Chalmers Thomas, Price and Jensen Schau, 2013). A marketplace culture is conceptualised as:

> Transient social spaces in which the often alienating and individualising effects of everyday modern life in advanced industrialised societies can be temporarily ameliorated in favour of the effervescent excitement and energy of ritualistic, communal sociality and solidarity (Goulding, Shankar, Elliot and Canniford, 2009).

Consumption communities and marketplace cultures are further commonly approached and conceptualised as subcultures (e.g. Schouten and McAlexander 1995), brand communities (e.g. Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001) and consumer tribes (e.g. Cova and Cova 2002; Goulding, Shankar and Elliott 2002; Cova, Kozinets and Shankar 2007). Studies of subcultures, brand communities, and consumer tribes show the many ways that consumers frequently socialise and establish relationships. The focus on sociality revolves around the identification with a brand or activity, and the passion for this consumption activity or brand. A connected concept to brand communities is the concept of taste regimes (Arsel and Bean 2012). A taste regime is a shared understanding among consumers about a specific aesthetic order that shapes the ways in which people will act when using an object and the meanings that will be associated with this object (Arsel and Bean 2012). This order helps people navigate in social settings, such as brand communities.

These studies have provided insights into shared enthusiasm for an activity or product category, or a shared understanding of specific orders for ways of using objects that create value in the interactions of consumers. But these studies fall short of offering explicit explanations of how social interactions or specific orders that help consumers navigate in consumption activities can play a role in how consumers develop their understanding about the product category, such as engaging in learning activities. Thus a Consumer Contextual Learning approach can expand knowledge in consumer research about how learning takes place within aggregations of consumers. From a Consumer Contextual Learning perspective, people learn in interactions with others in social contexts and the value lies in creating learning activities, adding to the social competence of the group, and going about these activities in a joint enterprise. Thus even if joint enterprises can be compared to the passion members of a brand community express toward a consumption activity or product category, the reasons for engaging in this joint interest differ. That is, from a Consumer Contextual Learning perspective, engaged consumers have an interest in further progressing in developing social competence whereas in brand communities the value lies in sharing the passion of a product category.

To conclude, dimension one of the Consumer Contextual Learning perspective addresses the ways in which consumers engage in learning activities together with others in a socio-cultural context. By incorporating learning activities it further expands the scope of our understanding on consumer interactions in communities with passion for and commitment to a product category or activity. Thus while research on brand communities or consumer tribes has provided important knowledge on how and why consumers interact with each other in different forms of consumption collectives, learning activities among consumers are hence also worthy of attention. Based on the above explanations, dimension one is defined as collective participation in the context. This definiton can further be elaborated by the following description: Learning concerns participating in activities together with others. To learn is about social participation in a social everyday setting.

Second dimension: learning is about contextual sources of inspiration

The second dimension refers to the (re)sources of inspiration consumers use to learn about a specific context, like the fast fashion marketplace. The sources of inspiration can also be understood as different types of tools. In this study, these tools are for instance using news media articles to get information. In addition, tools can also be social media such as YouTube videos (on how to follow and interpret trends), or Facebook, used by consumers to learn about a fast-moving market, fashion trends and styles. As Aspers (2006) points out, the trick here is to learn to use and interpret different sources of inspiration, and put the results together in a new combination (such as an outfit) that is not a copy of something already existing. To summarise, the above description of the second dimension is inspired by Aspers' (2006) ideas on how aesthetic workers draw inspiration and knowledge from numerous different tools, and how these bits and pieces from already known work are put together into something new.

To further explain how the notion of tools is used here in this dissertation, and elaborate on the role of tools in learning activities, the enabling theory and perspective on situated learning is utilised. This perspective puts the usage of tools within the dynamics of social interactions. This means, tools are here understood as employed in the interaction of members of a community (Lave and Wenger 1991). Säljö (2013) further explores the idea of tools in interaction with others. Tools are understood as being collective, in the sense that the way tools are used has been negotiated within a community of users. Säljö (2013) explains, by defining the use value of tools together with others, how one can learn about the tools and when and how to use them. Thus the social interplay is central for the development of tools (Säljö 2013). Examples of tools mentioned by Wenger (1998) are images, language, symbols, underlying assumptions and subtle cues. These tools are aids that people use in learning activities (Wenger 1998). As

mentioned above, these tools can be videos on YouTube or images on Facebook. The next paragraphs will show how consumer researchers approach the role of tools in informed consumption practices.

Within consumer research the utilisation of tools in consumption activities has been addressed in numerous ways. For instance, Denegri-Knott and Molesworth (2010) and Denegri-Knott and Molesworth (2013) have explored virtual consumption practices. They argue that early consumer research did not acknowledge the role of resources in acquisition processes (for instance advertising, speciality magazines or catalogues (e.g. Carrier 1995; Clarke 1998; Belk 2001), nor has early consumer research explored the idea of software as a potential partner in information-gathering and acquisition processes (Denegri-Knott and Molesworth 2013). Accordingly Denegri-Knott and Molesworth (2013) provide an account of how software, such as digital virtual goods, wish lists or watch lists can interact with consumption activities. Heinonen (2011) presents a description of consumers' use of social media. She finds three main ways social media is used: information processing, entertainment activities, and social connection (Heinonen 2011). Among these activities, information processing is an activity that resembles the use of social media as a tool. It refers to how consumers share information and experiences on social media, and how these sharing practices can aid in decision making (Heinonen 2011).

Other ways researchers have studied how consumers utilise market offerings to learn about the marketplace includes work on productive consumption, and concepts such as prosumption and working consumers (e.g. Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Cova and Dalli 2009; Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010; Ritzer 2014). For instance, previous work discusses how consumers participate in markets by co-producing their own experience in such a way that the value of their experience is contingent on their contribution (Cova and Dalli 2009). Yet the focus of these studies is not on the specific tools or (re)sources utilised by consumers, but rather acknowledging how consumers themselves can use market offerings to construct individual identity projects and collective identities (e.g. Kozinets 2002; Cova, Kozinets and Shankar 2007) or use market offerings to transform symbolic meanings of brands (e.g. Holt 2002). Turning to work on the usage of social media in fashion consumption (regarding user-generated content (including co-optation by the market)), McQuarrie, Miller and Philips (2012) explore how fashion bloggers are a source of information, evaluation and inspiration for their followers, and an aid for fellow consumers in selecting garments to buy and combinations of outfits. In their work on engaged consumers in the fashion market, Dolbec and Fischer (2015) mention how outfit sharing websites work as a vital platform for participation, contribution and utilisation of fashion outfit tips and tricks among consumers. Here it is clear, these platforms are important tools employed to get

information about market offerings, and used to figure out how the market operates in the online fashion arena.

To conclude, consumer researchers have in numerous ways shown how different types of sources can be utilised to figure out how the marketplace operates. Previous work has also shown how tools can be employed to get information about certain market offerings, or how these sources of inspiration can be combined in, for instance, fashion outfits. Yet this previous work is not attentive to the idea that the information or experiences gathered can be used to create something new (i.e. new ways of combining outfits). That is, the idea that consumers, for instance, learn to use social media, and interpret the content of social media, in such a way that they will create a new combination of, for example, fashion items (using items of different colour or material to put together in a trendy outfit). This is, however, something that is central to the second dimension of contextual learning. Generating something new, such as a new outfit combination of already known bits and pieces, by utilising tools specifically suited to capture the changing character of a rapidly changing context is critical to learning in the fast fashion marketplace. To sum up, the second dimension of contextual learning is about contextual sources of inspiration: the tools consumers use to learn about a specific context.

Third dimension: learning by being present and close to the context

The third dimension is about how consumers learn by being constantly present and close to the context of their interest. Here this means being geographically close to the market and staying attached to the things that are happening (what is in fashion (Cf. Blumer 1969). Here the consumer can be seen as a trend analyst (Cf. Brannon 2005), who learns by being constantly present and tracking, for instance, new trends and activities of other consumers (a process of socialisation).

The above description of the third dimension is connected to Aspers' (2006) ideas on closeness to the market. Here closeness refers to the actual geographical closeness of actors in relation to the marketplace. The enabling theory and perspective on situated learning reinforces this idea of geographical closeness. As Lave and Wenger (1991) explain, people are constantly present in the context while learning. For example, learning is an everyday activity (Lave and Wenger 1991). Here this means that all activities one engages in will tell you something about the marketplace. This can include activities such as watching the people in the environment, figuring out delivery service schedules, taking notice of items and artefacts present, or observing the physical setting and its proximities by moving around not just in the adjacent areas of the retail store, but expanding the view of the environment for learning to include overlapping areas. For example, in

the case of fast fashion consumption it is about including the entire high street (the mix of shops or the location of shops etcetera), bus routes that stop at the high street and work/university, or the location of the home (as participants describe how they choose to live close to the high street) as settings for learning.

In this way, one can also view learning as a process of socialisation as learning is about being constantly present in a number of overlapping settings that make up one learning environment. In the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) this is exemplified by the case of apprenticeship and how the apprentice observes a mentor and follows this mentor around at the workplace but also in moving about the city dealing with various matters. Here it should also be noted that learning as spending time in a setting also involves learning from other people (as discussed in dimension one; the three dimensions are not separate, but do complement each other and at times they overlap), and should be understood as a collaborative undertaking (again learning is done in interaction with others as dimension one of Consumer Contextual Learning shows) (Lave and Wenger 1991:95).

Consumer researchers have studied the importance of the retail environment to brand strategy and consumer experiences in a number of ways. One of these areas is research on flagship and brand stores. This work has informed our understanding of brand strategy focusing on notions such as brand narrative or in-store brand experience (Kozinets et al. 2002; Kozinets et al. 2004; van Marrewijk and Broos 2012) or brand ideology (Borghini et al. 2009). Recent studies in this area have provided insights into the different impact flagship stores and brand stores have on building brands (Dolbec and Chebat 2013). Other work in consumer research has studied the retail environment, concentrating on the physical space of the retail store by investigating the domains of the servicescape with a focus on how the physical environment can shape particular interactions and thus influence consumer behaviour (e.g. Aubert-Gamet 1996; Sandikci and Holt 1998; Aubert-Gamet and Cova 1999).

While this research has expanded understanding of brand strategies or the role of servicescapes, it does not account for the multiplicity of consumer experiences or consumer meaning-making in retail environments, which is an important aspect of how and why consumers choose to engage in consumption activities, and stay close to and be continually present in the marketplace. For example, Bäckström (2006) shows how retail environments can act as vehicles for meaning transfer, i.e. how the symbolic value of store characteristics can shape meanings consumers ascribe to their experiences. Other studies of consumer experiences in retail settings have focused on specific places of shopping such as the mall or the shopping centre (Haytko and Baker 2004; Maclaran and Brown 2005). This research has discussed the experiences derived from shopping (e.g. social spaces, freedom, retail mix) (Haytko and Baker 2004), or how consumers create meaning

in a shopping centre, which is seen as an example of a utopian space where cultural meanings are negotiated in social interactions and within the space of a festival marketplace (Maclaran and Brown 2005).

Taken together, research that has looked at consumer experiences has mainly focused on meaning-making and the pleasure it brings. Thus consumer experiences have been presented as being about, for instance, enjoying social spaces, freedom or the retail mix. But previous research has not examined the implications for learning in the marketplace, i.e. what and how can things about the marketplace be learnt from the visits to the retail environment. Furthermore, in contrast to this previous research, dimension three of the Consumer Contextual Learning perspective addresses a wider sense of the retail environment. This means that the retail environment in which consumers engage in learning activities has a larger scope than the previously defined understanding of the retail environment. As was explained above, being present in the marketplace includes a range of activities, not just those within the walls of the retail store. Thus to conclude, dimension three of the Consumer Contextual Learning perspective will offer insights into how consumer experiences in retail environments can be more inclusive of the wider environment (resulting in a more multifaceted view of the retailscape including numerous places), and how learning activities can be one form of consumer experience in the retail environment. Based on the above explanations, dimension three is defined as follows. Dimension three is about: being present and close to the context. That is, learning by being constantly present and geographically close to the marketplace. To stay attached to the things that are happening.

Framework on Consumer Contextual Learning

To summarise, the three dimensions of Consumer Contextual Learning are illustrated in the table below. It provides the framework on Consumer Contextual Learning. The name of the dimension is given in the left column, and the description of what it means is in the right column.

Table 3.1
The three dimensions of Consumer Contextual Learning

Dimension	Description
Collective participation in the context	Learning concerns participating in activities together with others. To learn is about social participation in an everyday setting.
Contextual sources of inspiration	The tools consumers use to learn about a specific context.
Being present and close to the context	Learning by turning up everyday, and showing dedication to staying geographically close to the marketplace. To stay attached to the things that are happening.

Further, as seen in the name and description of the dimensions, the concept of Consumer Contextual Learning brings other kinds of questions for investigating consumer learning to the fore. For example, questions concerning what do consumers do when they learn in the marketplace; how does one figure out when and how often new deliveries arrive in store, and how does one make sense of actions of other competing consumers. These questions raise method issues that are different to the methods employed in research on models of learning in the cognitive theories and the behavioural theories. The next chapter accounts for the methods used to study Consumer Contextual Learning.

Chapter 4

Perspective, methods and data

In this section I discuss the interactionist perspective chosen to the approach of Consumer Contextual Learning. It connects this perspective to the methods employed to investigate Consumer Contextual Learning, and thus introduces the methods used to collect empirical data for the dissertation. One of the methods used is the group interview. Accordingly the section then moves on to discuss the consensus aspect of group interviews and their advantages and drawbacks for investigating Consumer Contextual Learning. Lastly the section addresses data analysis.

A symbolic interactionist approach to Consumer Contextual Learning

As Berger wrote in his "Invitation to Sociology" in 1963, what is important in social science research is to see how people orient their actions towards one another, and to approach the layers of meanings, expectations and conduct resulting from such mutual orientation as the basis of analysis. Here in this dissertation social interaction among consumers who participate in socio-cultural interactional learning activity is important (Cf. Mead 1934/1967). It is important because a social interactionist perspective that focuses on the interpersonal processes by which people understand their world is crucial to situated learning activities, because it can highlight the collective nature of how people learn in relation to the market. That is it emphasises how consumers make sense individually and how sense is collectively created and shared by consumers.

Mead's (1938/1972) contribution to the social sciences on interactional processes shows the centrality of how people learn to identify and interpret the actions and reactions from other people, rather than just reacting to them without any effort to try and understand the other person. Thus through interaction with others people develop a sense of what certain actions and reactions mean, which results in the creation of a system of meaning on common collective actions/reactions that in turn constructs interpersonal ways of interpreting, communicating and

understanding (Mead 1938/1972). Through this understanding people also come to understand their own actions and reactions based on what they experience in the interaction with others (Mead 1938/1972).

Hence, this dissertation project joins this interpersonal research orientation by, as mentioned in the introduction, taking a symbolic interactionist approach on consumer activities (Blumer 1969b). This approach situates the research in inter-relations of consumers and places itself in the specific historical and social contexts of the particular market under investigation, namely the fast fashion market. As such it underscores the context of the social and cultural processes (e.g. liquid modernity), which shape this market, and how it has come into being at this particular time (Cf. Sherry and Fischer 2009).

This approach is also in line with the recent call by Kusenbach and Loseke (2013) to switch focus from the individual subjectivity (how individuals understand, experience and manage their own meanings and emotions), to social and cultural processes where meaning is created in interactive processes. Although, much remains to be studied about the individual (the lived experience of consumption, i.e. identity projects) this project joins the movement that seeks to focus on the social and relational dimension of meaning-making in consumption (Cf. Moisander, Valtonen and Hirsto 2009; Askegaard and Linnet 2011; Kusenbach and Loseke 2013; Svensson and Östberg 2013).

Work in the CCT tradition such as Firat and Dholakia (2006), Moisander and Valtonen (2006) and Moisander, Valtonen and Hirsto (2009) introduces and encourages research methodology that emphasises the importance of and is designed to illuminate aspects of social interaction and collective meaning-making in the social and cultural context of consumption activities. For example Moisander, Valtonen and Hirsto (2009) notice how personal interviews have long dominated consumer culture research, at the same time they show how explanation strategies and methods for personal structures of meaning cannot be successfully applied in gaining better insights into cultural complexity of social action, dynamics or interactions. Their main argument is that the "phenomenological interview" in the way it was introduced to CCT, with the underlying research paradigm of existential-phenomenology, is not applicable or adequate in understanding the social and interactional character of consumption as it focuses attention on the individual and the first-person experience (here consumption is seen as individualistic and the approach is thus not designed to consider the complexity of social action) (Moisander and Valtonen 2006; Moisander, Valtonen and Hirsto 2009).

Here the symbolic interactionist approach to Consumer Contextual Learning facilitates an analysis that is situated in the social and cultural contexts of a fast-changing market, and thus it brings forward both how consumers learn

individually and how sense-making of the market is collectively created and shared among consumers. Hence the character of the empirical world is taken into account as the symbolic interactionist approach fits the empirical phenomenon being studied (Blumer 1970). Also, the version of symbolic interactionism as developed by Blumer (1969b) fits the participatory, collaborative and contextual nature of Consumer Contextual Learning (Cf. Lave and Wenger 1991; Säljö 2013). This makes symbolic interactionism as articulated by Blumer (1969b) largely convergent with Consumer Contextual Learning, as both highlight how consumers learn by participating in social processes in cultural contexts. Also the symbolic interactionist approach keeps in play some of the most important elements of Consumer Contextual Learning as it underscores participation (joint action), interaction situated in contexts, and collaborative meaning-making. An interactionist approach captures how these actions emerge in interaction, as well as its variations and discrepancies (Blumer 1970; Denzin 1978). This leads to an approach in which we can be alert to the ways consumers learn about - and in - the market, that is how consumers test, evaluate and develop learning activities by actions and shape each other's ways of working with these activities in the market.

Based on the above discussion, Blumer's (1969b) three principles of basic premises for human group life and human conduct are the methodological foundation of this dissertation project. For Blumer (1969b:2) symbolic interactionism rests on the following three principles:

> "human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them/---/ The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from or arises out of, the social interaction one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters."

Furthermore in his work on symbolic interactionism Blumer (1969b) explains how the term symbolic interactionism has come into use as a label for studying a quite particular approach to human group life and conduct. However, Blumer (1969b) clearly shows that similar ideas and thoughts have been at the centre of the classic works of many other scholars, for example regarding how they viewed and studied human group life. Symbolic interactionism is built around these similarities. Contributors to the intellectual foundations of symbolic interactionism include, among others, George Herbert Mead as illustrated above, and Robert E. Park, both of them intrinsically connected to Blumer through academic genealogy. For example, George Herbert Mead, who was Blumer's supervisor, had particular influence on Blumer. According to Blumer (1969b) Mead's thoughts, above all others, played a major part in the foundations of symbolic interactionism as developed by Blumer. After Mead's death Blumer advanced Mead's initial work

and thoughts on social behaviour, and termed the approach symbolic interactionism (1969b).

The position of symbolic interactionism as proposed by Blumer (1969b) views meaning as arising in the process of interaction. For instance, the meaning of fast fashion consumption for a consumer can grow out of the different ways in which other or fellow consumers act toward that individual regarding how fast fashion is consumed. Furthermore, Blumer (1969b) adds that the creation and use of meanings for a consumer in her actions involves a process of interpretation. From a Consumer Contextual Learning perspective this process becomes a matter of handling meanings; consumers check, choose, suspend and transform meanings in the light of the situation they are part of, the direction of their actions and in relation to other consumers. As an example, the fast fashion consumer checks and chooses meanings in the process of exploring and learning about a fast-changing market, that is to keep up with the market with dedication and a trained sensibility.

In order to embrace a symbolic interactionist perspective and its premises in my fieldwork, I have turned to the work on the active interview by Holstein and Gubrium (1995). This perspective provides a mind-set and a vocabulary to help us think about the interactive aspects of doing fieldwork. Initially this perspective is applied to interviews (Holstein and Gubrium 1995), however I have used this approach for every part of my fieldwork, i.e. for virtual research, group interviews or hearsay ethnography. This can be done, as Holstein and Gubrium (1995) explain, because the active interview approach is more a conceptual sensitising device than a precise formula for conducting a particular interview. Accordingly the active interview approach by Holstein and Gubrium (1995) hinges on the idea that both parties of the interview (or other types of interaction) are necessarily and unavoidably interpretatively active. This means that both are involved in meaning-making work, and no one is a passive vessel of knowledge or answers that the interviewer may elicit by apt questioning (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). Hence, all participants in this research project are active collaborators, by constantly building meaning in the on-going communication throughout interactive processes. As mentioned above this active interviewing approach to fieldwork underpins the methods I have chosen to help me explore the phenomenon being studied. The next section will address these methods.

Methods used to investigate Consumer Contextual Learning

Figure 4.1 below shows the methods and procedures used in this dissertation project. It is not supposed to illustrate a straightforward process in which these different methods or procedures have strictly followed each other in a timeline. Rather the process of data collection is characterised by going back and forth between the different methods. Consequently the different methods have informed each other.

Figure 4.1
Methods and procedures I used to investigate Consumer Contextual Learning

Virtual research: media representations of fast fashion consumption and the fast fashion consumer

In October 2011 I began to create an understanding of the wider context surrounding fast fashion consumption and the fast fashion consumer by virtual research. Here virtual research is defined as "data collection by means of the Internet" (Saumure and Given 2008:926). It is utilised to locate data sources and to gather data (Cf. Saumure and Given 2008). The objective of virtual research was to identify where representations (in the form of written texts and images) of the fast fashion consumer can be found in media, and then to collect representations on fast fashion consumers in different types of online media. The collection of media representations is believed to generate insights into the ways the phenomenon of fast fashion consumption is widely portrayed in popular culture. Moreover these representations provide an understanding of how this kind of social life is mediated by different representations in magazines and newspapers. For instance, these representations indirectly shape the nature of how participants in this study engage in fast fashion consumption, and thus learn about the market.

The investigative procedures have consisted of reading and rereading the data collected, pinning down the main themes in representations and thus drawing a picture of the key assumptions and conventions used in the representations that constitute this social and cultural context of which the data is a part (Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori 2011). These virtual research procedures have not followed a

predefined protocol when collecting or analysing the data because this data collection method is not the primary extensive method used in this dissertation but rather takes a secondary role. As Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori (2011:530) explain, "an informal approach may, in many cases, be the best choice as a method in research focusing on written texts. Especially in research designs where the qualitative text analysis is not at the core of the research but instead is in a subsidiary or complementary role, no more sophisticated text analytical methods may be needed."

Representations in fashion media and mainstream news media

The first step of the virtual research mapped the online mediascape and located data sources where fast fashion consumption and consumers are discussed (Cf. Kozinets 2010). Using Google Search as a web search engine I searched for articles that used the term "fast fashion" or in Swedish "snabb mode". Following the mapping stage, I collected articles that included representations of the fast fashion consumer and the fast fashion market from the identified different Internet sources, such as fashion media and mainstream news media (which report on fashion). I chose to include all articles that contained any systematic commentary or story about the fast fashion market or the fast fashion consumer. Also I chose to include articles from global (including Swedish) publications, because articles from global publications appear to be included when participants in this study search for information about fast fashion. Thus the mainstream news media articles comprise of articles from newspaper publications such as The New York Times, The Guardian and Svenska Dagbladet. Fashion media articles include articles from for example Vogue. The included articles cover a time period from 2006 to 2015. It appears that 2006 was the year when the phenomenon began to be mentioned, by using the empirical notion of fast fashion. Yet the phenomenon was scarcely mentioned at that time and became much more frequently reported on in the years from 2008 to today (2016).

As mentioned above I set out to create an understanding of the wider context surrounding fast fashion consumption and the fast fashion consumer by virtual research in 2011. But the underlying reasons for collecting media representations are different at different points in time in the research process. In the beginning of the research process (October 2011) I collected these representations in order to understand the broader context around the fast fashion market and the fast fashion consumer. At this point in time I also read widely on previous work on fast fashion in the marketing management literature as well as retail logistics literature. While reading this previous research I found that the phenomenon of fast fashion was mainly used as a case study in work on supply chain management, these case studies illustrate the efficiency of supply chain management techniques to meet demand, but the idea and understanding of the consumer was based on media

representations and not novel fieldwork (e.g. Bruce and Daly 2006; Barnes and Lea-Greenwood 2006). As I read this previous work I was curious about these media representations. This curiosity led to the collection of media representations as accounted for above. Later on in the research process (Spring 2013) the reason for collecting and studying these representations also came to include the fact that participants in interview situations told me about how they use media to look for updates and news about the fast fashion market.

The data collected consists of different types of representations. For instance, it can be journalists writing about and interviewing fast fashion consumers, but it can also be journalists who are themselves fast fashion consumers writing about their experience. A typical example of the latter type of representation is included below. It shows how the representation of fast fashion consumption is usually made, it highlights elements such as the speed of collections making it into the fast fashion store, and the persistence and skill of the consumer in engaging in "shopping math". Further it is full of fashion references, not only is it set in the fashion capital New York, it also includes references to brands popular in fashion TV shows, as well as making a mention of the King Cole Bar well known from the iconic fashion film The Devil Wears Prada. This representation is found in The New York Times in the year of 2010, and written by Christine Muhlke:

> In March, I was biking the wrong way up Fifth Avenue, late to meet a friend for a birthday drink at the King Cole Bar, when the windows at Zara made me brake hard. The toffee-colored leather shorts. The wide pants. The silk tuxedo shirt that I was in the process of talking myself toward, even though the real one was $990 in the Barneys ad. (It would go on sale by July, I figured — what better time to wear a long-sleeve white silk blouse?)
>
> Last spring, Phoebe Philo's debut collection for Céline was that exciting. And, what was this? The knockout knockoffs were already in stores, like Pixar bootlegs being hawked opening week. I considered popping in, but I was already on borrowed time.
>
> "Mind if I tweet?" I asked my friend before I'd sat down. "They're knocking off Céline at Zara."
>
> Her eyes bulged. "That was fast."
>
> After drinks — which ended up being so expensive that the birthday girl insisted on paying — I zipped around the corner to the store, just before closing.
>
> "Sold out," the saleswoman told me, shaking her head. Not a five-inch platform clog sandal to be found.
>
> Be calm. Think this through.

> So began the shopping math: which Zaras would carry it, minus those that wouldn't be shopped over by fashion-smart customers. The chase was on. The next morning I was at the lower Fifth Avenue store as they were unlocking the doors. They hadn't gotten it yet. Before dinner the next night, I tried the SoHo location — the craziest — anyway. So busy! So gone. Lexington and 57th. Nope. I wished that I was in Paris, where the selection at Zara is so on trend (what career basics?), the location on the Rue Saint-Honoré — somewhere between the Lanvin men's store and Colette — fits right in. Then I got so busy that I had to pull back: why was I chasing down clothes that would end up in my yard sale within two summers?

Representations in social media: YouTube and Facebook

During interview situations it also became clear that participants use social media to learn about the fast fashion market, such as searching for information about certain fast fashion items or designs of new fast fashion collections. In particular participants use YouTube haul videos and the Facebook pages of fast fashion retailers. The social media representations of fast fashion consumption are not at the core of the analysis, but are used for illustrative purposes in respect of discussions participants have in the group interviews (Cf. Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori 2011). Thus I have selected representations from specific YouTube haul videos to be included in the dissertation based on the videos mentioned by participants in the interviews, or during follow-up conversations after the interviews.

Haul videos are videos that can contain user-generated content uploaded to YouTube (user-led content creation), while other YouTube haul videos are not consumer-generated but rather co-opted by the market (Askanius 2012; Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2012). Yet both types of haul videos are used by the participants to explore and learn about the market, and are thus included in the analytical chapters of this study. The Facebook pages used by consumers are the Facebook pages of the fast fashion retailers, and the most commonly mentioned by the participants are the pages of H&M and Zara. The posts participants are interested in feature the new items in store, and participants look at the posts to determine when the items will appear in their local store. I have included examples of these Facebook representations of fast fashion items to illustrate the stories participants tell about the interplay of Facebook announcements and actual store purchases.

Post-it Notes: empirical definitions of fast fashion

In the beginning of the research process (in 2011 and 2012) fast fashion was an emergent phenomenon in Sweden, and it was difficult to pin down. This meant that it was difficult to get a sense of whether the Swedish fashion consumers knew

about fast fashion and if they were consumers of such a type of fashion. Consequently it was unclear if fast fashion could be a fruitful case for studying consumer learning in a fast-changing market. Yet later on in the research process, there proved to be no difficulty in the recruitment process finding consumers of fast fashion eager to be a part of the study. However at the beginning of the research process I wanted confirmation of an (emergent) interest in the phenomenon from consumers. I thus wanted to get a sense of what fast fashion consumers might think of the fashion phenomenon.

To explore this I decided to collect empirical definitions of fast fashion from a group of young fashion consumers. I collected consumer definitions about one particular garment of fast fashion. The garment chosen was the party top. This fast fashion item is frequently mentioned in newspaper articles, and considered by fashion journalists to be the essence of fast fashion, because it is the ultimate trendy item, which cannot be worn more than once. I asked 64 retail management undergraduate students at Campus Helsingborg, Lund University (February 2012), to write down their definition of the party top (what this type of fast fashion item meant to them) on one Post-it note. The idea with the Post-it note was to keep the description to a short definition and not a long story. As mentioned above, the idea at the time was to explore if there was any rationale for even talking about fast fashion with consumers in Sweden. Did they recognise the item that they were asked to describe? And if so what words would they use to describe such an item? Moreover a short definition was asked for because I wanted to explore if consumers could put down into words (in limited space) a short definition of this fast fashion item, and if so this description could indicate that they are knowledgeable about fast fashion as a phenomenon (i.e. what it is to them). It should be noted that the findings from these students are limited in scope, but the definitions provided gave an important justification of the topic and proved the case worthy of further exploration in the initial stages of the research. Correspondingly when going through the Post-it note definitions not only did the participants provide rich definitions of a fast fashion item, there was also some kind of consensus among consumers on a number of different characteristics of the fast fashion item: what kind of stores this item could be bought from, what kind of colour items usually are, material and design of items, as well as price and how to use the item. Thus I found that the consumers I might want to include in further interviews could be among this age group. Furthermore this part of the fieldwork served as a basis for further fieldwork of consumer interviews.

Group interviews

Group interviews is the data collection method at the core of this research project. The focus of the research project is on how participants talk about how they learn in the fast fashion marketplace. I have conducted group interviews with fast fashion consumers. The groups, totalling ten, comprised of two, three or four participants per group (Cf. Morgan 1988 on a discussion on the number of participants in group interviews), involving a total of 27 participants (see appendix one).

The sampling of interview participants is based on the premise that the consumers should be competent of speaking of fast fashion consumption (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). Speaking about fast fashion consumption refers to consumers knowing about the phenomenon of fast fashion) and engaging in fast fashion consumption activities. Thus the selection is purposive with the intent of making voices heard that have a narrative competence as fast fashion consumers (Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Silverman 2005). It is this competence that makes their participation in this study justified. The participants in this study are between the ages of 21 and 36 years old, and some of them are students (e.g. media and communication, economics, management and fashion and cultural studies) and some work (e.g. stylists at Swedish Television (TV4), personal shoppers, hairdressers, pre-school teachers, brand managers at cosmetics companies, work with advertising at fashion magazines and shop assistants in fashion).

The identification of the first fast fashion consumer is based on careful considerations of what a competent fast fashion consumer is likely to be knowledgeable about (Cf. Silverman 2005). I listed a number of shopping activities (e.g. interest in fashion, shop from stores such as H&M, Zara and Gina Tricot, knowledgeable about trends and the different "brands" of the retailers, spend much time in stores, have an interest in developing awareness about this fashion market, and a "strategic" sense of how to get hold of a much-wanted item) based on my own previous experiences of being a fast fashion consumer and the Post-it note definitions. It should be noted that the sampling procedure is targeted, and in this process I follow procedures that many qualitative researchers employ. As Denzin and Lincoln put it: "Many qualitative researchers employ /…/ purposive, and not random, sampling methods. They seek out groups, settings and individuals where /…/the processes being studied are most likely to occur" (2000:370). In this case, it means that I was looking for similarity in the consumption activities among participants. Thus it should therefore be noted that the participants in this study are a particular type of consumer. We are all more or less fast fashion consumers, but we shop at H&M or Zara in different ways. For example, we may all recognise popping into H&M looking for a new jumper or shirt, buying children's clothes or some last minute shopping for a new dress for

this weekend's party. But when it comes to the participants in this study, fast fashion consumption is much more concentrated and vivid, which shows for instance in the daily visits, the dedication to timing the arrival of new trends, and the attempts to thoroughly investigate items by trying to slow down the speed of events in the store.

After the identification of the first fast fashion consumer, each participant in the first group interviewed was asked to recommend other fast fashion consumers who they knew were competent fast fashion consumers. This procedure was then repeated after each interview. Here the sampling took the form of snowball sampling (Belk, Fischer and Kozinets 2013). More, the first-identified fast fashion consumer is also the key participant number one. This key participant has asked her fast fashion consumer friends to take part in the interview. This means that the group interview is based on friendship groups (Morgan 1988), and can thus enable exploration of communal learning in these social networks (Cf. Sandikci and Ger 2010). The recommended participants become key participant two, key participant three and so on (i.e. the key participant is the gatekeeper who contacts her friends, who are to take part in the interview together).

The interview took place at the key participant's home. Typically the interview took place in the evening and key participants organised a dinner or dessert for this occasion. Usually the "formal" interviews lasted from one hour to two hours, but the whole sequence is much longer as it lasts for approximately four hours including cooking food, setting the table, having drinks and after the interview clearing the table, doing dishes, having a look at the wardrobe and trying on clothes (Cf. Warren et al. 2003; Warr 2005). Further, the interviews have taken place in cities in the southern part of Sweden.

The interview guide took the form of some pre-specified themes (including for instance: in the store, searching for information about the market and talking to friends about the market and shopping), however, the interviews have taken on the character of a dialogue, which has facilitated dynamics, with the respondents also asking questions and introducing themes for discussion (examples of themes introduced by participants: what is old and what is new, how often we shop and shopping is fast) (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). The interviews (during the dinner) were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. In the transcription Silverman's (2011) simplified transcription symbols have been used. This transcription system was used because it permits analysis to incorporate dynamics in the conversation, and thus may facilitate analysis on how group dynamics are continually created in the group interview as pauses and other expressions such as laughter are included. However this system is not as detailed or as strict as a conversation analysis transcription system. Also I took notes during the extended interview situations (before and after the interview), and consumers were aware of the note taking and

participated in the scribbling down of thoughts, making suggestions or pointing out when they wanted something to be noted. I found, as many researchers have written about, that consumers tended to mention things they had on their mind during the interview as soon as the recorder was turned off (e.g. Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Silverman 2005).

Participants have given their written informed consent by signing a consent form. In this study, informed consent means the participants have the right to know that they are part of a research project, and they have the right to be informed of the nature of the research project as well as being aware that they can at any time withdraw (Cf. Ryen 2004). The consent form explains the nature of the research project, what rights participants have as research subjects (such as asking questions during the research process, anonymity, withdrawal from the study etc.), contact information and how to obtain the results from the study once it is concluded.

All interviews began with a discussion on the nature of the research project, the nature of participation in the study (and that participation is voluntary), lastly participants were given two copies of a consent form. Participants read and signed both copies, and returned one copy to me. The signed consent forms are kept in a locked cabinet at the department of Service Management and Service Studies, Lund University. Further my ambition has been to use the consent form as one part of the dialogue (with participants). The consent form is a guide for explaining the study and a document to return to if there are any questions during the study. The dialogue has been more extensive with some of the participants than with others, as they have stayed in touch by sharing news they believe is relevant to the project.

For instance, participants have expressed their wish to tell me about fast fashion consumption mostly because it is not a subject they can talk with others about, for example Cornelia says after the interview that fast fashion consumption strategies are not something you talk about, everyone knows about strategies but does not mention it (interview 2013-04-10, Malmö). Other participants have expressed interest in the project by keeping in touch over the years, sending me updates on, for example, new shopping strategies (such as video tutorials). Thus the group interviews have led to follow-up conversations after the interview, which in turn have added to the data of how they learn in the marketplace.

The focus group method was preferred as it facilitates group interaction (Merton, Fiske and Kendall 1956), and seems to create a supportive setting and sometimes an exciting atmosphere with lively conversations (Catterall and MacLaran 2006). This is important as the choice of method reflects the social dynamics and interactions that are inherently important to a symbolic interactionist approach to Consumer Contextual Learning. Furthermore from an active interview perspective,

it is a context in which participants can learn from each other and an environment where meanings are created, shaped and shared among participants (including me as a researcher and former fast fashion consumer) in the interview situation. Besides, previous studies on fast fashion consumers and consumption communities have also successfully used the focus group method as it facilitates group interaction and provides an opportunity to both talk about social dimensions of consumer communities and study it in the making (Gabrielli, Baghi and Codeluppi 2013). Hence, group interviews have been used in this dissertation project as it provided an appropriate setting for social interaction and dialogue, and has produced rich accounts of how participants speak about learning about the fast fashion market, at the same time as the setting itself provided an opportunity to study how ways of learning are produced right there in the interview situation.

In the analysis and writing-up of the material I have considered the material as generated (Jacobsson 2008); i.e. the material is co-constructed in the interaction and it has in the process of coding been treated in a sequential manner. The sequential manner provides contextualisation and concretisation of the interview accounts bringing to the fore both answers, and questions or suggestions, and thus turning the whole sequence of the dialogue into the subject for analysis (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). The analysis of data is further discussed in the last section of this chapter.

Fast fashion clothing items as elicitation material

Most elicitation studies have focused on the use of photographs, but studies can just as likely use other forms of elicitation material (Harper 2002; Allett 2010). In this study I use elicitation material, and the materials used are clothes. Each participant in the interview is asked to bring her favourite item of clothing and the latest purchased garment. The ambition is to make it easier to start talking about fast fashion, and also to relate to different shopping activities. Thus, the aim is also to encourage participants to talk about these garments and hence also reflect upon, for instance, how often consumers actually buy something, how long they may keep a garment and why certain garments are kept while others are thrown-away almost immediately. Here learning activities emerged in the interview situation as participants embraced the opportunity to talk about and interact with each other and with the fashion items, by picking up and touching the garments; they hold up garments and try them on. As such, clothing as elicitation material also gave the opportunity for memories and situations that hold specific meaning in consumers' lives, everyday life shopping activities for example, to be discussed among the participants (Cf. Allett 2010).

In this process elicitation can be a reflexive mode of researching when the participant brings her own clothes to the interview and as such her story will guide the interview (Cf. Andersson Cederholm 2011). This is in contrast to traditional

use of elicitation material (particularly photographs) where researchers, as Andersson Cederholm (2011) show, rather provided pre-selected elicitation photographs and used these as a "can-opener technique" to discover the "true" experiences of their participants. Instead, here my interactive active interview perspective manifests itself as the participants take a leading role in bringing their own garments, initiating talk about their clothes with each other and myself, and also ask each other and myself questions about these garments. Sometimes, participants are eager to show more of their clothes (this occurs when participants have difficulties choosing which garment to bring to represent the favourite garment), and thus bring multiple garments to set up a showcase for the group. Here consumers initiate an event of their own and thus create a situation where the researcher authority is altered (Cf. Andersson Cederholm 1999; Andersson Cederholm 2011). Some participants also wanted to show how they keep their clothes, for example in wardrobes or separate clothing racks in their bedrooms. This led to consumers taking pictures of their wardrobes and sending them to me after the interviews. This provided rich material of wardrobe management and the approach to fast fashion consumption. This data provided some texture to the stories participants tell, and even though the first photographs were taken by participants on their own initiative, as the interview sessions went on participants were asked to take photographs of their wardrobes.

Consensus in group interviews

As mentioned above the group interview has provided rich accounts of how participants discuss learning about the fast fashion market, and at the same time the interview setting itself provided an opportunity to explore how ways of learning are shared during the actual interview. For instance, the discussion on different ways of learning often creates agreement on how to approach the fast fashion market. However, one of the drawbacks commonly referred to when using the group interview (as a method), is the occurrence of consensus seeking in the group. For instance it seems as though consensus making often is understood as something negative (the lack of multiple views on one topic etc.) (Catterall and Maclaran 2006). This opinion seems to have overshadowed the possibilities of exploring consensus seeking in itself. For example, literature on group interviews does not fully deal with questions regarding how consensus making can inform our understanding of a topic, or the dynamic in the group. Yet being aware of and looking into consensus seeking can help us explore interaction and collective sense making in a group interview setting. For instance, from an interactionist approach to learning (such as in this study), we can notice how people learn as part of a group (for example by sharing stories of shopping or strategies for approaching the market). That is people learn to identify and interpret the ways someone speaks about something (as well as the reactions from other participants), and by doing so they together create a collective sense of what certain responses and actions mean,

which results in the creation of a system of meaning that aids learning in the group (Cf. Mead 1938/1972).

Consensus seeking can be identified in the interview data in three different ways. First, consensus can be identified in language use. For instance as Morgan (2012) notes, consensus is expressed as participants link what they say with the words that were just uttered by another participant. That is, participants make this connection by adding similar content to the utterance that was just said (Morgan 2012). Second, in the contents, consensus is created by certain actions and/or expressions by participants such as nodding (Morgan 2012). Third, when it comes to compilation, consensus can be identified as attempts made by participants to tie the conversations just had to other conversations previously occurring in this project (Morgan 2012). That is, participants would enquire about what other people spoke about in earlier interviews, and then evaluate the information and make a comment. This might be interpreted as participants wanting to learn from others, and for them to create consensus with a wider community of fast fashion consumers. To conclude, consensus making is an intriguing aspect of the interview data as it shows how participants might learn from each other, or how ways of learning about the market are jointly created and/or maintained (not challenged) in the interview setting.

Hearsay ethnography and taking photos of the fast fashion store

The interviews provide rich data on the activities participants use to explore and learn about a fast-changing market. In addition to the interviews I have, during the research process, spent time in the retail fast fashion stores to get a sense of how the retail store communicates the logic of speed, as well as how consumers and sales assistants interact and use the space to make sense of the fast fashion rhythm. Between 2012 and 2015, at different points in time, I wandered around these shops in smaller and larger cities including Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, Lund, Helsingborg, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Oxford, Edinburgh and London.

Spending time in retail stores did not follow a strict observation schedule, nor a strict protocol of sampling concerning what cities or fast fashion stores should be included. However the visits were characterised by three main procedures. First there was a focus on store layout, and observations have included how the retailer communicates the logic of speed by for instance the placement of clothing racks, the use of garment colour and the design of wall paintings and pictures. This is a common way of organising the servicescape, and may perhaps be understood as somewhat standardised (Burt, Johansson and Thelander, 2011). Second, the focus is on getting a sense of the rhythm of speed in the store by observing for instance the type of music played, the wall paintings that underline the message of speed,

the rhythm of how sales assistants move around in the store, and how consumers enter and move around while shopping. Thus thirdly it has included noticing how the consumer approaches the fast fashion store. For instance observing activities such as wandering around shops, waiting in line, trying on clothes, walking/running in and out of fast fashion stores, but also listening to consumers chat to each other. The time spent at retail stores has advanced my understanding of how the rhythm of the fast fashion industry/system comes into play in the retail store.

All of the above mentioned experiences are part of the shopping activities in fast fashion stores, and as such have become part of the analysis. Moreover they are all common procedures when wanting to capture the atmosphere of the retail store, and establish some kind of understanding regarding the sociality and the interactions of the different actors present in the retail store (Cf. Abbott and Sapsford 2001; Persson and Sellerberg 2011; Östberg and Svensson 2013). For instance, in their work on fashion consumption Abbott and Sapsford (2001) describe how they spent much time in city centres walking around inside retail stores taking part in shopping activities. These procedures can also be understood in terms of hearsay ethnography (Watkins and Swidler 2009). As Watkins and Swidler (2009) explain, hearsay ethnography is a method of non-participant observation that takes as its focus eavesdropping on daily routines. It has a close connection to sociological curiosity and fieldwork done by for instance Berger (1963) in which he observed actions of people as well as listened to what people were talking about and took notes of these conversations, if they found the talk interesting to the topic of the research, but did not themselves participate in the interaction (Persson and Sellerberg 2011). Here in this study, the procedures above are similar to hearsay ethnography, as I have wandered around in fast fashion stores listened to music and conversations, and first made mental notes and written down recollections of the vital parts of these conversations in notebooks soon thereafter. Here one may raise some ethical concerns regarding how people are unaware of someone listening to them and the consequences this may have. Yet the fast fashion store is a public space, and Persson and Sellerberg (2011) explain that in public settings it is common knowledge among people that others may hear what they say or take notice of how they act.

Also, in order to get a sense of and document how the retail store communicates the logic of speed I have taken photographs in the shops. As Peñaloza and Cayla (2006) write, photographs help consumer researchers to better contextualise the consumption venue, as well as better document, grasp and communicate the findings of visual artefacts at the venue. In addition to using photos to document, analyse and illustrate the findings, in this project the photographs taken have also aided the group interview conversations as they assist further inquiry into shared uses or understandings of the logic of speed in the fast fashion store. For instance,

in H&M stores there are large murals with messages that say "Grab it now, tomorrow it might be gone forever!", and during group interviews participants chat about the importance of daily visits and the particularities of such activities related to speed. Thus the logic of speed is reflected in the conversations of consumers, the design of the retail store and in the media representations of fast fashion consumption. To conclude, this is also a common use of photos in consumer research (Cf. Peñaloza 1994; Cayla 2003), and it helps us to unpack a phenomenon and situate consumers within their social times and cultural contexts (Cf. Peñaloza and Cayla 2006).

Data analysis

The methodological strategies in this study mainly come from a symbolic interactionist approach, but in the coding and sorting procedures this approach is complemented by work from a grounded theory tradition. The addition of grounded theory for data analysis is necessary as the symbolic interactionist approach in itself lacks any coherent and generally accepted procedures for coding and sorting. This may be due to the lack of a systematised organisation and publication of results from a symbolic interactionist approach to method. As Charmaz (2014) explains, symbolic interactionism provides a perspective of viewing social realties, it gives a way of knowing about accomplishments and activities as members of the studied world view them. However, even though symbolic interactionism is referred to as both perspective and method (as the title of Blumer's most influential publication reads: *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*) the method part is much less developed, as Blumer did not fully explore the methodological potential (Charmaz 2014).

Symbolic interactionism is commonly associated with grounded theory, since grounded theory can provide a methodological apparatus for empirical investigation (Charmaz 2014). A note on the combination of grounded theory and symbolic interactionism takes us back in time to the development of Charmaz as a scholar. In an interview with Keller, Charmaz explains how her work is rooted in a constructivist grounded theory approach, and she describes how she, throughout her career, has been influenced by the work of both Strauss and Glaser (Charmaz and Keller 2016). Furthermore, Charmaz tells us that she was the Ph.D. student of Strauss at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), but she learned grounded theory from Glaser as she mostly attended his classes (while Strauss entered her Ph.D. education later on as a supervisor). Strauss in turn was educated and trained by Blumer at the University of Chicago (the Chicago School). Thus, the lineage of scholars has influenced the development of a constructivist grounded theory approach, and an advocator of a constructionist understanding, such as Charmaz, will argue that grounded theory is a constructionist methodology since its roots lie in symbolic interactionism and "it recognises the mutual creation

of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed and aims toward interpretative understanding of subjects' meanings" (Charmaz 2003:250). From Charmaz's viewpoint the fusion of the two approaches of grounded theory stresses the methodological strategies of relativity and reflexivity found in the work of Glaser, but does not include any procedure that forces the data to conform to "rigid application of technical procedures" (Charmaz 2011:365), found in the work of Strauss (and especially in the work of Strauss and Corbin (2015)).

The procedure for data analysis utilised in this dissertation is influenced by the work of Charmaz (2014, 2011, 2003), and Spiggle (1994). The reason for a combination of these coding procedures is to get a set of procedures that place emphasis on emergence, and thus supports a strategy of going from empirical specifics to general understanding of the emergent codes and the relationship between these codes. In this study the initial stage of data collection is where the analytical process starts, and it continues throughout the different stages of the research project (data collection and analysis continually inform and shape each other). Thus this process is iterative in its nature (Charmaz 2014).

Reading the data transcripts, and manually working through the text line by line constitutes the coding procedures of this study (Cf. Charmaz 2011). I have been looking for words and utterances which indicate different forms of activities/strategies participants have mentioned (activities/strategies utilised to learn in the marketplace). Indicators include learning activities/strategies such as approaches, tactics, means and manoeuvres (in the data this can be manifested in empirical notions of scanning, screening, imitating or touching and sorting) to reach better insights about the marketplace. Indicators are a main tool in grounded theory as they work, in a way, as correspondence guidelines, linking theoretical ideas of learning activities/strategies to observable examples in the data (Charmaz 2014). Meanwhile coding notes were written in the margin. These notes are the indicators being accounted for.

To concretise the work of coding and analysis provided by Charmaz (2011;2014) I have used the work of Spiggle (1994). Spiggle (1994) identifies a number of different operations that can be applied. She has in turn used grounded theory to develop these operations. These different operations are not to be followed in a sequential manner, rather they can be continually applied. In this study I have used the following operations: comparison and selective coding (Spiggle 1994).

(Constant) *comparison* was in the beginning of my research a way to explore the data and work with it. The aim was to get to know the data and figure out the next steps in data collection. For instance, in the beginning the data collected consisted of Post-it notes, and the start of group interview data. The comparison consisted of reading the data, looking for things that surprised me, as well as things that were familiar to me. Also the objective in this process was to find out if the data could

work; i.e. if it had the potential to become a rich data set in which tensions and nuances could be identified.

As the data continually accumulated throughout the project, the investigation of data became more structured. The procedures of comparison were systematic in terms of colour tagging sentences or units of sentences (sequences of utterances) based on commonalities and differences identified in the data. Constantly comparing and contrasting the indicators mainly established the differences and similarities of activities/strategies. The constant comparison is made possible as transcripts are read multiple times, and as new data is added to the study. At the start of readings there were many categories of activities/strategies identified in the data, as the data collection and coding proceeded some of the categories were combined. For instance, exploring and screening were combined with scanning. These activities have a common way to approach examination of market offerings, which is about looking for something carefully yet going after it quickly. The mention of speed in activities/strategies is common in the data, and many of the categories account for this.

I want to point out that, when reading this account of data analysis, one may get the impression that the process was straightforward. However, the colour coding has taken the form of recoding (for instance changing codes and adjusting codes based on new data added, and as mentioned above, categories have been combined), and some of the utterances are coded as belonging to a number of categories. For instance, sometimes sections of sentences belong to more than one category, especially if they are coded as representing some kind of nuance of different types of strategies/activities.

Analysis work also consisted of note taking in a separate document, keeping a sort of memo, documenting the categories and different possibilities of how these categories can relate to each other in forming an understanding of how learning in the marketplace can be manifested. This is a common procedure in grounded theory (Charmaz 2014). In notetaking, *selective coding* (Spiggle 1994), is utilised for developing a "higher" level of analysis than coding. That is, to construct the relationships between the categories selective coding was used. In this selective coding process identification has gone beyond labelling/naming codes, it has concerned the whole picture of data, alternating between the big story and the codes, tracing connections and thus putting categories together into a big picture (Cf. Charmaz 2011; Spiggle 1994). In this process I have also used scissors to cut the actual transcripts into pieces of text (such as the different utterances in the different categories), experimented with the combinations in categories by placing all items on the floor, moving sections around, and as the story of learning in the marketplace evolved, pasting them on sheets of large coloured paper (following the colours of the four main categories as explained below). This work has

resulted in delineating a core category (here: learning in the marketplace) around which sub-categories will revolve. There are four main sub-categories, which account for learning in the marketplace. Each category consists of a number of sub-categories. All of these categories symbolise the building blocks to understand learning in the marketplace. The four main categories are pictured in the mind map below together with a few examples of sub-categories. The four main categories have the following names and colour codings:

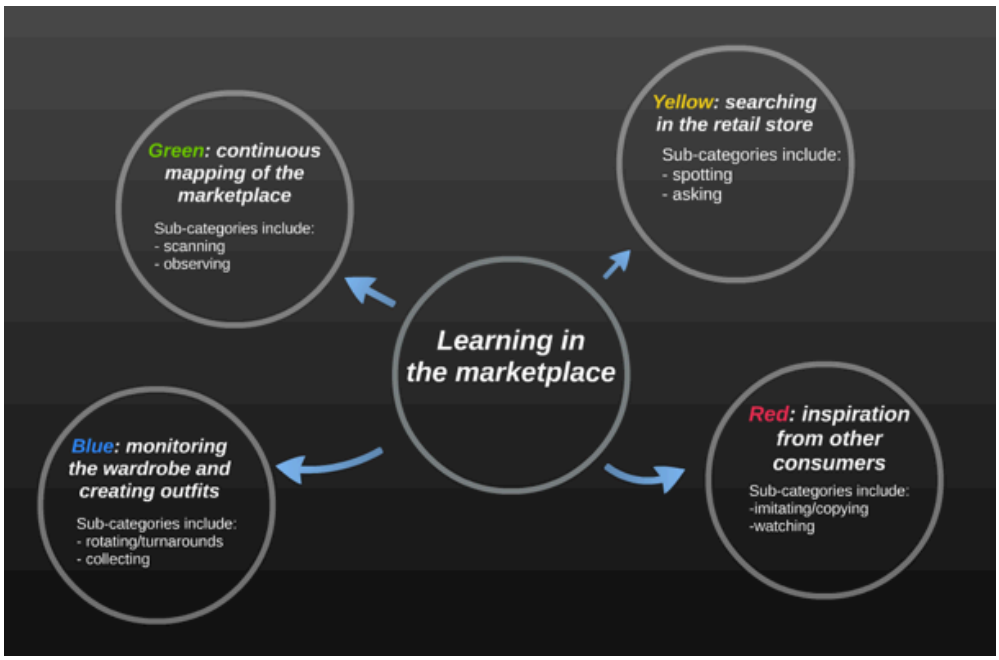


Figure 4.2:
Mind map of the categories making up learning in the marketplace.

To conclude this section of the method chapter, and to introduce the analytical chapters, a note on how the three analytical chapters are related to each other may be appropriate. Chapter five concentrates on discussing the contexts (the marketplace) of fast fashion and social contexts of the meaning of fast fashion consumption among participants of the study. The goal of this chapter is to provide an understanding of how the market works and how participants create meaning in relation to fast fashion, in order to better understand the learning activities discussed in chapter six. Chapter six investigates the nature of Consumer Contextual Learning by discussing the different learning activities utilised by participants (like scanning, asking or imitating). While chapter seven advances understanding of Consumer Contextual Learning activities by bringing forward a specific character of the learning activities, namely temporality. It looks at how

temporality is connected to consumption practices, that is, the strategies participants utilise in their learning activities to manage the fast-moving character of the market.


Final
Favourites

Chapter 5

Social and cultural contexts in consumer learning

This chapter pays attention to the different contexts that condition fast fashion consumption. The micro-social context refers to the direct everyday setting with different characteristics, for instance values and norms in social lives of specific groups, and also the store environment (Dilley 1999). The wider context of context refers to the "societal class divisions, historical and global processes, cultural values and norms" (Askegaard and Linnet 2011:396), and is discussed in terms of, for instance, industry development of fast fashion retailers globally and in Sweden.

The ambition is to provide a contextualisation of the social world consumers of fast fashion engage in. Consumers as learners are engaged in both the direct context (everyday visits to stores as meaning-making activities etc.) and in the broader/wider context of the marketplace (reading about fast fashion etc.) within which these social contexts are produced (e.g. the Swedish context of the welfare state) (Lave and Wenger 1991). Consequently, concerning the three dimensions of Consumer Contextual Learning, this chapter gives the foundation for the concept. That is, consumers learn by participating in social processes in cultural contexts, and the contextualisation provided in this chapter is the environment the participants of this study are engaged in. Hence this chapter provides a stepping-stone to chapter six, in which strategies of consumer learning will be explored.

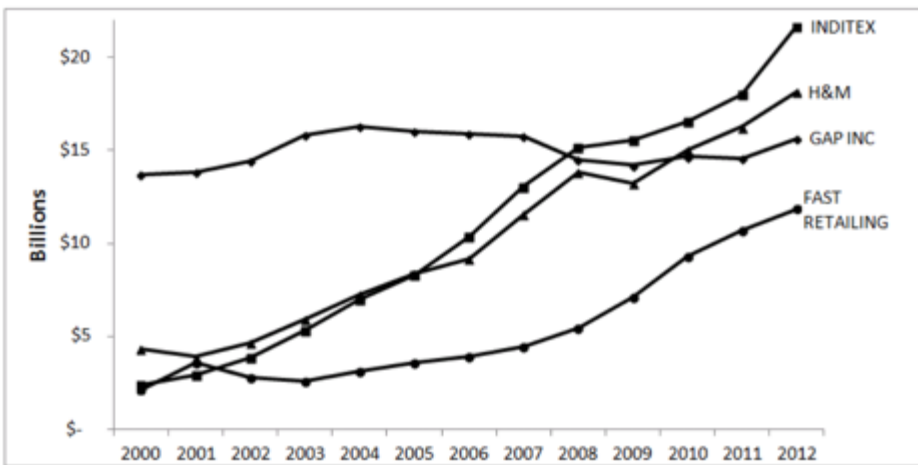
This chapter proceeds with identifying and describing types of contexts. The types of contexts are here: the different fast fashion retailers and the representations of fast fashion retailers and consumers in international news media. The outline is as follows: the first part describes the fast fashion retail market and its different actors, in relation to how consumers understand and interact with them. The second and last part provides an overview of identified representations of fast fashion retailers and fast fashion consumers in news media.

Fast fashion retailers

This sections proceeds with giving an account of global fast fashion retailers, the current fast fashion retail market in Sweden (and the domination of two large fast fashion retailers) in relation to how consumers understand and interact with these stores.

H&M and Zara are global retailers

Fast fashion retailers, such as H&M, Zara, Gina Tricot, Topshop and Mango, are some of the most important actors mentioned by participants in this study. These retailers are all multinational retail companies, with the exception of Gina Tricot. From a fast fashion consumer perspective (i.e. from the perspective of the participants to this study) the two most visited and liked retailers are H&M and Zara. It may not come as a surprise that these are the two retailers of interest for the participants in this study. If we look at the fast fashion market from a global perspective, Swedish H&M is, according to Forbes in 2014, ranked as the second largest global fashion retailer just behind Spanish Inditex (parent company of Zara) (Heller 2014). This development is also shown in the graph below from the work of Caro and Martínez-de-Albéniz (2015). Both Zara and H&M are now established as the two most recognised fast fashion retailers among consumers (Caro and Martínez-de-Albéniz 2015).



Source: Caro and Martínez-de-Albéniz 2015:238

In October 2015, Amancio Ortega (founder of Inditex) briefly surpassed Bill Gates as the richest man in the world (O'Leary 2015). The New York Times reports that H&M and Zara have been expanding rapidly since 2000 (Hansen 2012). In 2012 Inditex had 6009 stores worldwide and H&M 2776 stores (Inditex Annual Report 2013; H&M Annual Report 2013). In the annual report from 2013 Inditex reports 6340 stores (all brands included) around the world in 87 markets, with an opening of 482 stores in 2012 and 331 new stores in 2013. H&M do not measure up to Inditex's rapid expansion. Around the world, H&M has 3132 (all brands included) stores and in recent years H&M opened more than one store a day (H&M Annual Report 2013). For example in 2013 H&M opened 356 new stores. In 2013 H&M had 177 stores in Sweden (H&M Annual Report 2013). In 2013 Inditex had 1853 stores in Spain and 323 of these stores are Zara stores, and in Sweden Inditex have 14 stores, of which 10 of the stores are Zara stores (Inditex Annual Report 2013). In 2015 H&M has 3924 stores (all brands included) (H&M Annual Report 2015), and in 2015 Inditex shows a number of 7013 stores (all brands included) (Inditex Annual Report 2015). Thus it is clear that these two retailers dominate the fast fashion market globally (and regionally in Sweden) and as such have an impact on what kind of fashion is available to consumers (set the agenda of the idea of what is the most influential and/or accepted type of fashion (Cf. Kawamura 2005).

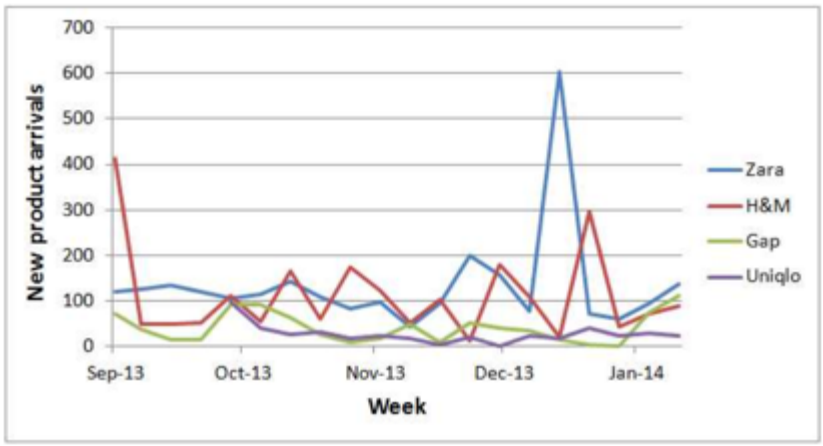
Yet as Caro and Martínez-de-Albéniz (2015) write, one needs to be careful to claim any exact number of stores. Inditex and H&M have over recent years opened more than one store a day, thus the number of stores varies on a day-to-day basis. A quote by Sull and Turconi can help us better understand why this expansion of fast fashion retailers has occurred. They take us back in time:

> Fast fashion chains have grown faster than the industry as a whole and seized market share from traditional rivals. In a challenging European retail climate, these companies are expanding their sales and profits over 20 per cent per year. Their share of the domestic apparel market (measured by sales value at retail) has grown from virtually nothing in the 1980s to over 20 per cent in Spain and 5–10 per cent in the United Kingdom, Germany and France. Fast fashion leaders typically earn higher profit margins than their old-guard competitors, averaging 16 per cent, versus 7 per cent for the typical specialty-apparel retailer. (2008:5)

What is clear here, based on the above account, is that the idea of fast fashion also manifests itself throughout the whole organisation of fast fashion retailers. That means, the vision of trendy and cheap fashion is traceable in every operation and decision made. For example, in addition to rapid store expansion, fast fashion retailers (H&M and Zara) also share a quick response and just-in-time approach to supply chain management (as mentioned above) (Cf. Barnes and Lea Greenwood 2006). This includes for instance keeping track of every garment that is produced and when it arrives in store (Caro and Martínez-de-Albéniz 2015). For example

H&M divides fashion items into at least two categories; the basic never-out-of-stock items (NOOS-items) (Ericsson Wärn 2012) and the trendy items which H&M keeps close track of by having a ten top sellers board that is updated every week (Lantz 2013). This focus on rapid turnaround of items in the store is also swiftly communicated to consumers in the form of mural paintings in H&M stores. The pictures below show some of these wall paintings and messages:

According to Caro and Martínez-de-Albéniz (2015) Zara makes around 840 million garments every year and both Zara and H&M have new arrivals every week. Caro and Martínez-de-Albéniz (2015) explain that even if there are new arrivals every week, there is also a spike in new deliveries when a new season starts. Here season refers to the traditional fashion seasons such as autumn and winter season. The graph (below) from the work by Caro and Martínez-de-Albéniz (2015) shows these spikes concerning the autumn season in September and then the winter season in mid-December. Both Zara and H&M have spikes concerning new seasons compared to other retailers such as Gap and Uniqlo that have small spikes during the weeks when new items arrive in store.



Source: Caro and Martínez-de-Albéniz 2015:240

As we can see from the account above, fast fashion retailers dominate the global fashion scene in terms of size as well as expansion rate and thus have an impact on what kind of fashion is available to consume and also probably what type of fashion is popular. If we look at the presence of these global retailers on the Swedish market we can see that these retailers are common and have a big market share (Sundberg 2006). And as mentioned above, the domination of these fast fashion retailers has led to standardisation in fashion designs and a norm in fashion consumption regarding trendy cheap fashion in Sweden (Sundberg 2006). Apart from this case, this market is also the home of fast fashion retailer H&M. As was illustrated above the fast fashion business idea of H&M has been a global success, but it is however also a concept that has local cultural ties and the nature of the concept can be traced back in history and everyday life. For instance H&M is a fashion retailer that many Swedish consumers have a strong bond to, like other Swedish companies that have had a strong impact on the Swedish economy and culture. For example, both H&M and Ikea have played their part in shaping and being shaped by consumer culture and society. A popular saying captures this influence: " Ikea möblerade folkhemmet och H&M klädde det" (Ikea furnished Swedish society and H&M dressed it" my translation) (Falk 2011:66).

Thus in order to provide a direct and wider social contextual background to how the participants in this study learn about the fast fashion market and how to participate in the consumption of fast fashion we will briefly explore some of the most important developments in Swedish contemporary history regarding consumer culture and society, with a focus on political developments and social policies that have influenced decisions made concerning the business concept and the design of fashion items.

H&M and Zara in a Swedish context

Fast fashion retailers like H&M and Zara dominate the Swedish high street. In the larger cities in particular fast fashion retailers can be found in cluster formations (Hauge, Malmberg and Power 2009). In these clusters, H&M or Zara can be found on every corner in the city centres, or alternatively in larger buildings that are the landmark of the high street (Falk 2011). Both companies have strategic localisation strategies specifically targeted at spaces that attract attention such as corners of streets or refurbished historical buildings (Douard, Heitz and Cliquet 2015). This presence indicates the strong impact these kinds of retailers have on the local fashion market. From a consumer point of view it is accessible fashion. The participants in this study value the concentration of retailers in the high street, because as they say, it enables easy access. Also it seems to simplify the search effort for new fashion items, in terms of the time it takes to swiftly move between different stores.

The participants of this study live in urban areas along the west coast of Sweden, with the majority living in the cities of Malmö, Lund, Helsingborg and Halmstad. This area of Sweden is densely populated, with Malmö being the third largest city in Sweden. Fast fashion stores are common in shopping malls or on high streets. Reports on the Swedish fashion market and Swedish fashion design in 2006 and 2013 showed that large fashion retailers such as H&M dominate the fashion market in Sweden (Sundberg 2006; Portnoff 2013). This leads, according to Sundberg, (2006) to standardisation in fashion designs and a norm in fashion demand that embraces the trendy but cheap fashion designs of fast fashion (compared to other fashion markets such as Italy or France where fashion is mostly synonymous with luxury brands). What should be noted here is how accessible fast fashion is to consumers and how big a part fast fashion is to Swedish fashion culture.

Moreover, this concentration of fast fashion garments provides a wide range of choice, which should account for the total of fast fashion offerings at the moment. There is a perception among participants that if the item is not to be found here among these retailers, it does not exist; some participants explain its non-existence either by saying that the item is sold out or has not yet been delivered to the stores. Furthermore, this agglomeration of fast fashion retailers attracts other fast fashion consumers with whom participants are consuming (at the same place at the same time) – this may result in an enhanced experience of the rush and speed of fast fashion consumption-- this is where it is happening.

H&M has a long history of being the most influential player in the Swedish fashion industry. In 1947 Erling Persson established a clothing company that later came to be named H&M. The original business concept was to provide “fashion at

prices that will suit everyone" (Pettersson 2001:51). The concept quickly developed from cheap mass production of clothes, to a focus on cheap, but trendy fashion designs (Ericsson Wärn 2012). Over the years its design department has recruited many of the most talented designers from Swedish design schools, and given them their first experience of fashion design (Falk 2011). Furthermore H&M has played a major role in establishing what Swedish fashion is; how designers think of fashion, how people in general see fashion, and what the consumers expect (Ericsson Wärn 2012). One of the key success factors for H&M is: timing. The idea may seem simple but still complicated and effective (Falk 2011). Timing is here about delivering the right kind of trendy fashion to the right place at the right time. In addition a strong sentiment of H&M has been the slogan "vi ska följa modet, inte skapa det" ("we shall follow fashion, not create it" my translation) (Ericsson Wärn 2012:133). Thus the ethos of the company is not about creating new trends, but following them and adapting high fashion design to a mainstream, but sometimes innovative, trend (Ericsson Wärn 2012).

The idea of following fashion and not creating it is a cultural aspect, and in this study it is articulated in fashion consumption. It can also be found in the narratives of the participants of this study (further explained later on in this book). Participants seem to value learning about how to follow the mainstream fashion trends. For participants, copying trends means not practicing any kind of appropriation of the specific items themselves, but rather using garments in the same way they are presented in the store. The point is that fashion items should be recognisable as a current trend. Yet, at the same time it does not seem acceptable to buy the whole outfit straight off the mannequin.

Above we have seen how Swedish fashion, if equated with H&M, can be understood as mainstream rather than producing agenda-setting new design ideas. Adding to this understanding, Swedish fashion is often described by journalists, in Swedish fashion media, as having a strong sense of everydayness. For example, journalists usually write something in terms of: the Swedish fashion industry is about simple design and practical everyday fashion, a symbol for this is H&M (Falk 2011). Throughout the years there have been many fashion journalists who have offered various explanations as to why: the cold, dark and long winters which require practical gear, or the wistfulness of nature makes designers embrace simple forms of fashion. Other explanations include the prevailing culture of mainstream and "lagom" ("lagom" is an expression that means something like "not too much and not too little" or "just the right amount"), and lastly one explanation is the lack of tradition of designed fashion that is the signifier of Italian or French fashion (Johansson 2007).

Fashion journalist, Björk (2007) highlights the 'lagom' culture in fashion design. He is almost making fun of this lagom culture, but it is possible to sense a critical

tone in his writing on how fashion is consumed. With a breezy witty tone he writes that since 'everyone' wants to be accepted and be lagom many Swedish consumers look alike. He concludes; it is difficult in a Swedish setting to spot differences in clothing style. Likewise, fashion designer and researcher Sundberg (2007) gives the example of micro differences in clothing, a seam here or a cut there is different, but the general impression of outfits is similar. A telling example of this is a situation described by Sundberg, as he wanders around Stockholm one day at the beginning of summer and notices how young people have dressed in what he calls a uniform, for both women and men this is a certain type of jeans, jacket and scarf, the difference is the shoes. In a somewhat sarcastic tone Sundberg (2007) questions whether all these people at the same time decided, like an army, to visit the stores and buy the same kind of items (or almost the same, there still might be a cut or seam that is different). Consumer researcher Östberg (2007) has observed a similar phenomenon in his work on consumer tribes (the Stockholm Brat Enclave) in Stockholm. He shows how the Stockholm Brat Enclave embrace a specific type of clothing, that is these consumers develop a particular rendition of style that makes them alike.

Apart from the attempts by fashion journalism to define Swedish fashion, the Swedish state has tried to use Swedish fashion design as a medium to communicate policies of equality in terms of both gender and class. As Falk (2011) writes, fashion has been used (and is still used) in political policies as a tool to eradicate class differences and embrace gender equality. The political programme and ambition of a progressive and equal society of the post-war era was mirrored in different ways in Swedish society, and one of the areas was fashion production and design (Falk 2011). These kinds of aspirations came to a head with H&M. Especially during the 1960s and 1970s, H&M was seen as the perfect example of a company that mirrored equality. Hence the Swedish fashion industry has a long tradition of aiming to make fashion that should be inclusive. Common sayings in the Swedish fashion industry have been (and still are to some extent): "fashion is for everyone" (Falk 2011:40) and "fashion should be democratic" (Falk 2011:63). Hence H&M (and perhaps Zara) have important roles in maintaining the idea of retailers offering fashion that is for everyone, i.e. by offering trendy affordable clothes.

There may also be a consumer culture that nowadays supports this kind of fashion. As Sundberg (2005) explains, Swedish fashion consumers expect fashion to be relatively cheap and still be designed according to the latest trends. The expectations of what consumers are willing to pay for are often not nearly as much as the actual cost of a garment (Sundberg 2005). However, fast fashion companies can offer the item at a price consumers are willing to pay (Falk 2011). Yet there is also, among fashion journalists, the argument that the consumer is the driving force behind fast fashion and as such retailers are not advocating the development

of cheap (unsustainable) fashion, but rather offering what the consumer is demanding (Falk 2011).

To give some kind of explanation (or context) as to why fashion in Swedish culture can be viewed as something that should be for everyone (that should aid in creating a more equal society) we can look at the role of creating the consumer subject in the post-war era. The formation of the consumer subject became an important tool in the project of creating the Swedish Folkhem (the vision of an ideal home for all) (Cf. Eriksson-Trenter and Hodacs 2004). From this perspective we can see how fashion consumption, such as fast fashion is contextualised and supported by folkhemmet (but shall not be viewed solely as an outcome of the folkhemmet policies).

This notion of an ideal home for all and the egalitarian emphasis resembles similar movements in other Scandinavian countries. For instance, in Denmark the form of social interaction known as hygge is about egalitarian values and norms (Linnet 2011). The home is a common setting for hygge, and Hansen (1980) explains that hygge is a way of being together and enjoying each other's company. Linnet (2011) points out that there is a focus on harmony and consensus of social interaction. Hygge almost seems utopian in the way it is described. Consequently, such a description raises questions about its particularity to Danish (or Scandinavian) societies. For instance, is hygge a type of social interaction recognisable in other cultural contexts? Linnet (2011) suggests that the everyday experience and practice of something like hygge is not reserved only for the Danes or Scandinavians but shared widely. Yet, there might be features that are particular to certain societies (Linnet 2011). Similar questions may be asked when it comes to understanding the social norms and values connected to the political vision of the Swedish Folkhem.

This political vision met challenges in the form of commercial influences from new store concepts and actors, which brought gradual changes from a production and family-oriented society to a consumer culture, and these changes introduced other opportunities for citizens to spend their time and (now) money (Husz and Lagerkvist 2001). This also brought challenges in upholding an egalitarian society. The state initiated public bodies that would support a consumer society, but in a way that would protect the consumer. These bodies were to: 1) establish and maintain product standards by organising unions and producers' groups (such as the Co-op movement) and 2) enlighten citizens about the art of consuming (Eriksson-Trenter and Hodacs 2004).

Historians Eriksson-Trenter and Hodacs (2004) argue that polices of the state directed to create the Swedish Folkhem were focused on the idea of creating a consumer subject that was educated and had predictable needs. In turn, these predictable needs should help inform or tailor social and economic relations in

society (such as the family as the unit of consumption) and equality among citizens (Eriksson-Trenter and Hodacs 2004). The historian Aléx (2003) explains how the state rhetoric not only used language aimed at educating consumers, but policies were also implemented and directed at consumer nurture. Some of the values communicated by the state policies were frugality and rationality (making the right choices – i.e. don't buy too much or too little but "lagom"). These values should help when making choices. Thus consumption should be reasonable; it should be about saving, economising and steadiness (no room for frivolous thoughts or irrational deeds) (Aléx 2003). The idea behind these recommendations and policies was to create a society that was modern but not frivolous, and that would create an environment which would (re)produce a democratic consumer subject (Aléx 2003).

Today there may be a change in how consumers approach the idea of a 'democratic consumer society'. In this study some participants advocate a view of fashion consumption being inclusive and collective, but at the same time embracing mass consumption (wanting all the latest trendy items at a reasonable price). At times during the interviews, the conversation touched upon issues concerning the questionable reputation H&M had among the mothers of the participants. H&M symbolised a disposable fashion culture (slit och släng). Some participants say that their mothers sometimes point out to them that it used to be embarrassing to shop at H&M, as H&M symbolised cheap and tasteless fashion (which did not make for a reasonable choice). Today consumers instead highlight how smart it is to buy fast fashion, if someone wants to acquire a trendy but not too expensive taste (Falk 2011). Here the trendiness does not only refer to the items themselves, but also to the popularity of the wider concept of fast fashion as a business idea (new trendy items for a reasonable priced introduced in stores within two weeks) (Falk 2011).

In fashion media (e.g. Falk 2011), there are two main prevailing of why shopping for fast fashion is smart to engage in: first the popularity of the fast fashion concept adheres to the idea that it is more fun when there are a lot of different items and styles that can be combined in numerous different outfits; second, because consumers are less impressed by brands and logos. In this study, some of the participants even express dismay with logos, as they would find it off-putting to wear a shirt with a large logo. This would make them feel like branded human advertising signs (interview Helsingborg, 2013-03-04). Instead, these participants find it attractive to engage in fast fashion consumption because their main interest is in fashion that changes rapidly; fashion should give them the opportunity to always be able to get hold of new items of the latest trend. The crucial factor seems to be: learning to get the right thing at the right time for less money. For instance participants express satisfaction with fast fashion fulfilling this role. Therese says: "cheap trendy fashion like fast fashion is cool and always new"

(2013-03-04) or as Dana explains "you are almost stupid if you don't buy this cheap trendy fashion" (2013-03-04).

As we have seen above, historically the Swedish state created rules about how to educate the consumer subject. These included values that should to be learned if one was to become the ideal consumer. However, these rules were contested and renewed. For instance, Fredriksson (1998) explains how many people in retail and politics perceived Epa, a department store, as a threat to an orderly community with social values. This is because, Epa symbolised mass consumption that embraced a consumer society (Fredriksson 1998). Yet Epa served as an educative arena for consumers, and as Löfgren (1990) explains, department stores are where the learning of consumer skills takes place. The department store taught consumers how to use a standard-price system and not to haggle, as was the practice in traditional forms of markets (Fredriksson 1998).

Media representations of fast fashion retailers and consumers

The objective of this section is to bring forward and summarise what is written about fast fashion in news media. It focuses on the stereotypical depictions and illustrations news media use in their reports on fast fashion consumers in relation to how these consumers interact with fast fashion retailers. Pictures in media texts sometimes accompany the stereotypical representations of consumers, and these pictures are included below if they are relevant to the stereotyping of fast fashion consumers. The way the fast fashion consumer is described basically contains different features attributed to the consumer such as the fickle consumer, the hysterical consumer and the demanding consumer. A description of each of these stereotypes follows below.

The fickle consumer

There is a common assumption that the fast fashion consumer is a changeable and choosy consumer who is always on the look-out for something new. News journalist Tiplady (2006) writes in Bloomberg Businessweek how fast fashion consumers tend to hang around fast fashion stores. Consumers flock there in order to be able to get ahold of the new items and choose the ones that most appeal to them. She concludes that this consumer thrives on the newness of the trendy fast fashion items (Tiplday 2006). Therefore the most important part of the shopping

venture for this consumer is, according to Tiplady (2006), to engage in hoarding of the new and shiny items and thus experience instant gratification.

Hanai (2009) explains the practice of hoarding as fickle behaviour. She paints a picture of the Japanese fast fashion consumer who seems to be erratic and inconsistent. A picture of a consumer who swishes by briefly, clutching fast fashion items emerges. The text is illustrated by an image that shows the speed of how consumers hoard clothes at H&M in Tokyo's Ginza district (Hanai 2009).

The erratic and inconsistent behaviour is mainly about how consumers rapidly enter the store, quickly sort through hangers and piles of clothes, and then suddenly grab a garment they unexpectedly find in this unorganised mess. Reuters report on fast fashion and they give a description of an erratic and energetic consumer who eagerly shops for fast fashion: "As pop music blares from a Zara store in Bangkok, Suthip Nanthavong jostles with others for bargains that might disappear in days -- from stylish thin-strap t-shirts selling for 490 baht (10 British pounds) to racks of blue-denim jeans. 'When you're in the store, there's little time to think. What's here today might be gone tomorrow', said the 30-year-old flight attendant, clutching two pairs of shorts and a dress" (Ploy and Thieberger 2011).

In a BBC (2004) United Kingdom portrayal of the fast fashion consumer it is concluded that fast fashion consumers only have one thing in mind that drives their shopping; they want it now. The BBC quotes a fast fashion consumer who tells the reporter that: "It's really important for me to get the right look for each season (2004)". A common theme in all of the above-mentioned news media is that there is little room for waiting and consumers are described as being inpatient, only seeking out instant gratification. This quest for the new is understood in news media as the driving force for the consumer, and this mission of getting the new is described as a disorganised chaos with the consumer being impulsive.

The hysterical consumer

The second assumption is that the consumer is hysterical in her way of approaching trendy items. Hanai (2009) explains how consumers see fast fashion retailers as fashion gurus with a constant flow of the new; "fast fashion is a hot issue in Japan's fashion industry, especially after the entry of H&M".

This stereotype of the fast fashion consumer is similar to the fickle fast fashion consumer in that she is constantly hungry for more new fast fashion items. The difference in these representations is the focus on the silliness of hysterical consumers. Media journalists construct this silliness by bringing forward attributes of the fast fashion consumer that make her shallow and stupid (McInnes 2010; Booker 2010; Hanai 2009). For example fast fashion consumers are believed to be

too stupid about fashion to be proper fashion consumers (Ploy and Thieberger 2011).

Moreover they are depicted as objects of pity and derision. Hanai (2009) writes, "Women always want to shop. You want to have fun shopping, like in a candy store". Elser (2011) adds to this depiction of the foolishness of fast fashion consumption as she writes: "fast fashion brings playfulness and quirk to our wardrobes. With the proliferation of stores peddling the speediest styles, we can play around with the way we express ourselves with an unprecedented level of frivolity". Thus fast fashion consumers are here seen as somewhat pathetic, and at the same time they are a crucial part of the fast fashion culture. These consumers are the ones contributing to the success of fast fashion in countries such as Japan and Australia (Hanai 2009; Elser 2011). The opening of a fast fashion store like H&M and Zara attracts hordes of consumers who show up in their hundreds, hours before the opening, and wait in line for their turn to get hold of the new items.

The demanding consumer

The last representation frames fast fashion consumers as demanding. This fast fashion consumer is described as savvy, confident and difficult to satisfy (for retailers) as the consumer has a constant need for instant gratification (Thau 2010). Consumers constantly search for information. These practices lead news journalists to conclude that the fast fashion consumer is always on top of what is trendy today and what will be tomorrow's trends (Thau 2010; McInnes 2010; BBC 2004).

In a BBC depiction of the demanding fast fashion consumer the brand director of Topshop is interviewed: "Shoppers have become much more savvy. They want to be able to buy the things celebrities are wearing or they want to be able to buy into the trends that they've seen from the catwalk as quickly as possible (BBC 2004)". The Economist writes that the value for the demanding consumer is the information on the scarcity of items and the limited batches fast fashion is produced in.

Summary and concluding remarks

This chapter has given an outline of the contexts for consumer learning. The types of contexts are here: the different fast fashion retailers and the representations of fast fashion retailers and representations of fast fashion consumers in international news media. It provides the following chapters with a frame for the environment

the participants operate within, i.e. the social world consumers of fast fashion engage in. As well as this, this chapter shows the type of atmosphere consumer learning activities are surrounded by. That is, the type of fashion industry and fashion consumption that dominates this kind of fashion market. But also it has given an outline of the broader/wider context of the fast fashion marketplace in Sweden (e.g. the Swedish context of the welfare state). Hence, this chapter has provided the foundation for the concept of Consumer Contextual Learning, i.e. the contextual part of the Consumer Contextual Learning concept. And as such it should be viewed, as mentioned above, as a stepping-stone to chapter six, in which consumer learning strategies in the fast fashion market are analysed. In the coming chapter on learning activities, the context is clearly pointed out in the text and sometimes that is implicit.


READY FOR
THE NEXT LEVEL
OF FASHION?

Chapter 6

Consumer Contextual Learning activities

The organising principle for this chapter is the three dimensions of CCL. They follow in this order: 'collective participation in the context', 'learning is about contextual sources of inspiration', and lastly 'learning by being present and close to the context'. The aim of the chapter is to show the different learning activities (utilised by participants), such as scanning, asking or imitating, associated with each of the three dimenions. That is, it shows what consumers do when they learn in the marketplace.

Dimension one: learning is about collective participation in the context

This section shows how participants learn together with others in social situations. It explores participation in different types of learning activities, such as taking part in conversations with those in the know. The discussions in this chapter put learning as being collective in the centre, and further our understanding about how learning takes place within aggregations of consumers. As a collective engagement, learning is tied to a joint enterprise, as well as to mutuality and a shared repertoire (Wenger 1998). It is about knowing the ropes, 'a way of doing things' that a group have established over time. In other words, "what it takes to act and be recognised as a competent member" (Wenger 2000:227). This means, as was discussed in chapter three, that there is a shared ambition valued by the group, and that this ambition is concerned with learning and developing competence in the market, rather than as in previous consumer research studies focused mostly on sharing the passion of a product category (e.g. Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001; Cova, Kozinets and Shankar 2007). It is also important to point out that, in the joint enterprise, the group will support, but also challenge their fellows. Then again, from an interactionist point of view, a participant defines herself and the way she learns about the market in relation to how others (other consumers)

learn in the market (Cf. Mead 1934/1967; Blumer 1969a). With the help of others the consumer can fine-tune and articulate the actions taken to learn in the market. Accordingly, learning about the marketplace occurs alongside other participants.

But learning in the marketplace can also be viewed as an individual project (Cf. Bauman 2011). It can be individual in the sense that one is focused on one's own outfits and style creation. Although to experience oneself as a unique individual is important, the collective dimension is significant to learning. For instance, learning in the marketplace is also in relation to how other participants speak about fast fashion, or how participants speak about how they have observed what other participants are doing in the marketplace (the joint enterprise) (Cf. Wenger 1998). To be part of a (perhaps imagined) group of fast fashion consumers is important because others will confirm actions and interest in the market. Similarly, previous studies on fast fashion consumption have demonstrated that consumers feel a sense of belonging because of the recognition of their actions in relation to fast fashion consumption, and these actions represent a systematic consumption style that other consumers associate with the fast fashion market (Gabrielli, Baghi and Codeluppi, 2013).

Learning together within a wider community of fast fashion consumers

This section addresses issues related to how learning takes place within an aggregation of fast fashion consumers. I start by discussing the strategy of using feedback from friends. As will become clear when reading chapters six and seven there are a number of different learning activities discussed, and to aid the reading of these activities a table with the description of all learning activities from chapters six and seven is provided in appendix two.

Feedback from friends

The strategy of learning is named feedback from friends, and learning is about using feedback from a group of friends to figure out how to approach new trends. This is done in two ways: listening to feedback from friends during the interview, and second, feedback by action (watching what friends and other fast fashion consumers do or wear in the fast fashion marketplace).

As mentioned before, learning in the marketplace is individualistic and collective in nature. The individual can focus on realising her own pursuits. Yet the pursuing of the own interest cannot be fulfilled without the support of the group. That is, relying on feedback from friends in learning about new items, and in learning about how these new items can be used and combined in outfits. In addition to this, the group plays another vital role: sometimes participants find the courage to overcome insecurity or self-doubt within the community. Subsequently, what

happens if one considers oneself too early to embrace new trends? In the interview with Emilia, Beatrice, Milla and Felicia, Emilia speaks about issues of being an early adopter. Meanwhile Beatrice and Milla provide reassurance of Emilia's willingness to try new trends early. They reassure her that they understand how she feels about wearing new trends first, but that she can do it because she has a personal style to keep up and maintain. As well as this they encourage her to keep up the good work. Beatrice tells Emilia that: "Yeah, I think you feel like 'I think this is gorgeous but do I dare wear it right now when no one else has got round to wearing it' " (Malmö, 2013-10-29). Milla adds to the support, telling Emilia that: "eah you've got a personal style, and when fashion changes you need to adapt and some things change quickly, you should choose what you want" (Malmö, 2013-10-29). Emilia is nodding as they speak and then says that "Yeah and I adapt it to what I feel like wearing" (Malmö, 2013-10-29).

Here we can see that learning is about using the feedback by listening to a group of friends to figure out how to approach new trends, such as getting an understanding that fashion changes, and fast fashion changes quickly. The support of the group can help the individual stay confident in the consumption of fast fashion. Thus learning is here about developing competence in how the market operates with the support of friends, rather than together with friends develop a passion for a specific brand as in the studies on brand communities (e.g. McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002; Cova, Pace and Park 2007; Morandin, Bagozzi and Bergami 2013) or share a consumption experience with friends over a limited time as described in work on consumer tribes (e.g. Goulding, Shankar and Elliott 2002; Schau and Muñiz 2007; Canniford 2011). In the case of brand communities, research has shown that consumers have a strong personal involvement with a brand (e.g. Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006 and Schau, Muñiz and Arnould 2009), and this passion for the brand will manifest in possession and use of the brand where symbolic ties to the brand make consumers feel connected (Morandin, Bagozzi and Bergami 2013; Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006), and the brand can sometimes perhaps be considered an extension of the self (Belk 1988). In contrast, I propose that meaning is here achieved by engaging in activities that make learning possible, that is to learn something new about the market, and become better at navigating the market as well as using market resources to construct oneself as a competent consumer. For example, as we can see above, the feedback activity makes it possible to continue to learn and feel competent with the support of the group.

Likewise, during interviews participants speak about looking for feedback through the actions of their friends: watching what friends are doing or wearing. For instance, some of the participants tell stories of how friends can provide feedback through certain actions such as commenting on the choice that they have made, or wearing the same items themselves. Similarly, supportive actions from a group of

consumers can be found in the work on brand communities by Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001). Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001) provide examples of how gestures can show friendliness, such as in the case of the Saab car owner who will, while driving around in his/her Saab, wave to other Saab drivers as a way of communicating fellowship. Here waving is a symbol of friendliness in a community. In the example of fast fashion consumption, this feedback through actions from friends is rather seen as a way of learning about what kind of consumption choices are supported and what the group does not acknowledge. Thus, feedback is an important help in evaluating skills in choosing among the latest arrivals. That is, individuals are looking for acknowledgement that the fashion choice they have made is the 'right one'. For instance, Elinor says that:

> The leopard-print jeans I got at Lindex, right I just love them and I bought them. I completely fell in love with them, but I thought that oh no I could never wear those, and then I went home and noticed that Jenny ((the girls' friend)) had a pair. Then I thought well she looked good in them so it helped me seeing someone else wearing them.

(Helsingborg, 2013-04-10)

In descriptions of successfully choosing a new garment and using "feedback by action", participants highlight themselves (the I) in the story told. This can indicate that they themselves are active in looking for feedback in what friends do or wear. And the group does not solely provide feedback.

There seems to be what Wenger (2000) would call a boundary interaction going on in the quote above which offers a learning opportunity. That is, based on the discussion above, learning can be said to take place in the interplay of personal experience and the social competence of the group. We can see how the individual experience does not fully match with the social competence of the group (i.e. the individual is not sure about her choice until she encounters one of the members of the group), but in this case instead of the social competence evolving based on new experiences being brought to the group, the individual learns from the group (Wenger 2000). This also means that, in this case social competence is maintained, Elinor identified new trendy jeans and apparently got the 'right' type of jeans as her friend already had this kind of jeans.

Also, shown in the above quote, participants learn from friends in terms of getting confirmation, and perhaps inspiration on how to wear new trends. Learning is here about feedback by action, i.e. watching what friends are doing or wearing. Interesting to note here is that among all participants in the study none of them mention that they get inspiration from celebrities/fashion models. But rather, as shown in chapter five, inspiration is looked for among fellow consumers. Remembering the discussion on media representations in chapter five, in media

talk there is an idea that fast fashion is supposed to instantly mimic celebrity trends and there is an understanding that this is why fast fashion is so popular among consumers (BBC 2004). In the interview Therese explains that:

> Yeah definitely I want to get inspiration. I check out my girlfriends and maybe I get some inspiration from you here /…/ maybe I think that your checked shirt and that exact shade of light blue is really nice when you're blonde and so you're inspired by people around you.

(Helsingborg, 2013-03-04)

Here celebrities are not included, but friends and other fast fashion consumers that have something to offer are valued, possibly because these people are closer to how participants behave, and perhaps are easy to reach out to. Yet, as we can see from this example of fast fashion consumption celebrities are not a significant source of inspiration. However, fashion and celebrity have a long relationship (Church Gibson 2012), and research on celebrity and fashion consumption has shown that fashion can be a medium to transform "an 'ordinary' individual into something 'extraordinary'" (Logan, Hamilton, Hewer 2013:379). Thus the point to be made here is that, in everyday fast fashion consumption, it seems that it is easier to relate to fellow consumers than celebrities, and fast fashion is an everyday shopping activity and not something to be utilised as a medium to become something 'extraordinary'.

People watching in the streets

The above showed how learning in the marketplace is individualistic and collective in nature. The remaining part of this section will explore another way of how learning can be considered collective. The activity of learning is here people watching, or trend spotting as it has been called in the marketing and fashion studies literature (e.g. Brannon 2005; Kim, Fiore and Kim 2011). Again, learning is about watching what others are doing or wearing, but the difference to feedback by actions (what others are doing or wearing), is that here learning from others does include learning from people who are not part of the friendship group. This is a usual strategy of learning among many of the participants in this study, and there are long conversations about the inspiration and information one can gather.

Yet there is not a specific type of person that is referred to here, rather the wider community of fast fashion includes many types of people, and as mentioned above is not limited to a circle of friends. That is to say, participants in this study also learn from strangers, these people are strangers in the sense that they are not personal friends or acquaintances of the participants (i.e. the friendship group). But they are recognised by participants as useful members of the wider community

of people who appreciate fast fashion. These people can be spotted in the street, or can be people working in the fast fashion stores. They can be an inspiration for how clothes are combined, but can just as well act as warning signs of how not to wear a new trend. For instance, in one of the interviews the conversation revolves around how people watching in the streets is done, and Dana makes a statement that she instantly begins to interpret what people are wearing, and Therese directly follows up by saying:

> Yeah but that's normal isn't it? That's what you do, you judge people straight away and yeah it's nothing you have to be secret about /…/ I think that some girls have maybe made too much of an effort but it's up to them isn't it. But that's what we're like and people who say they don't do that are lying. I'm almost a hundred per cent sure 'cause we're aesthetic people and that's the first thing we see, and you get an idea of what they're like whether you want to or not.

(Helsingborg, 2013-03-04)

This example by Therese illustrates that people watching as an activity can also give warnings signs of how a trend is worn in an off-putting way, since she points out that some girls will try too hard to look trendy.

Below follows another example of the activity of people watching. During the interviews I asked questions about the role of other people. Annie explains how she finds other people interesting and important in terms of their skills in fast fashion outfit creation; these people provide inspiration. She talks about how she keeps and eye out for other fast fashion lovers on the high streets and in the retail stores. Annie reflects on how she discovers these kind of fast fashion lovers: "yeah you can pick up on things, and ways other people are wearing it ((fast fashion)) that you wouldn't have thought of yourself, like so you just oh I'll buy a leopard-print jumper because you've seen someone wearing one" (Helsingborg, 2013-04-10). Annie then talks about how the observations she made serve as inspiration for buying new fast fashion items and combining these in new kinds of outfits. Thus the inclusion of people from the wider community is about making sure to include people who are seen as useful sources of inspiration.

With regards to this discussion, I want to reflect here upon how these activities resemble the basics of fashion trend analysis and forecasting practices (Cf. Brannon 2005; Kim, Fiore and Kim 2011). For example, fashion trend analysis and forecasting practices are systematic and include activities such as watching new trends in the streets (i.e. street fashion trends/what consumers wear), gathering information on new trends worn by consumers, and monitoring any type of sign that can signal a change in trends, as well as later on using intuition to figure out what it means for you (Kim, Fiore and Kim 2011). In the interviews there are examples of activities that resemble trend analysis activities. For

instance, watching out for new trends on the streets is a vital aspect of fast fashion consumption (as Annie spoke about above) and Beatrice puts it this way: “I enjoy shopping but then I think it’s fun to keep track of what’s out there” (Malmö, 29-10-2013). Or in the case of gathering information, Nicole speaks about how she uses different sources of information and how she combines these to get an idea of new fast fashion items that seem interesting:

> I use the H&M app and Facebook and I look at what’s new and on sale, and these days the web and the shops are much the same. That was not the case a while ago, the web was much faster. Well they don’t always have everything in the shops now, well sometimes it is a bit slower than the web and commercials/---/ well I also check Gina’s web site and check what they’ve got. They do a lot of promotion with new things every week and then I watch the TV ads, and if a garment looks interesting then I go and check the web and yeah if it still looks good, then you go to the shop and check it out in real life.

(Malmö, 2013-04-28)

So even if consumers do not wish to intervene or change the market (as discussed in chapter 1), they are participating consumers in the sense that they employ some strategies (similar to well-established strategies within the fashion industry and trend forecasting agencies) to learn about changes in fashion trends and create an understanding of what new trends are popular and out in the stores, which can aid future consumption.

The activity of people watching can also take another form. It can involve actual conversations with people, which is another type of common procedure within fashion trend analysis and forecasting practices (Kim, Fiore and Kim 2011). Thus learning from other people is not only about following people around watching what they are wearing. For example, during one of the interviews, Dana explains how she utilizes this strategy to learn the specifics about how other consumers are wearing a new trend, such as actually walking up to them at the bus stop, and asking where they got different items of the trend they are wearing. This is how Dana explains going about the activity of people watching:

> I'm a bit of a copycat. If I like something I can walk up to someone and say you look really nice and where did you find it? /…/I can stand around waiting for the bus and think oh those trousers are nice or that jacket she's wearing would fit well with so many things I've got. Yeah ((laughs)) that's what I do, so I think you find so much inspiration on the streets these days 'cause a lot of people dress really well and 'cause people have started to appreciate this cheap fast fashion.

(Helsingborg, 2013-03-04)

However, among the participants in this study it is more common to hang around in stores and streets watching what people are wearing, rather than engaging in conversation. Hence, during this interview the idea of walking up and asking questions is shared among those of us who are present. Thus I and the other participants can, during the interview, learn about a new type of strategy for people watching. This is one way that information relating to fast fashion learning activities is shared.

To conclude, learning by people watching is about drawing inspiration and expanding one's own understanding about the latest trends by acknowledging the knowledge and skills of fast fashion consumption other people have developed. Thus learning is here about developing awareness of new trends, and an understanding of how these new trends are interpreted and utilised, within a wider community of fast fashion consumers (to obtain inspiration for buying new fast fashion items). But at the same time making something new of it, translating the inspiration into their own style, that is pick and mix the impressions.

Imitation of the way of doing things

Another noteworthy aspect to highlight in the quote above is the use of the word 'copycat'. Dana introduces the use of the expression copycat in the interview. It seems to be recognised among the other participants in the interview, as the tone in the interview became energetic while the conversation about the copycat went along. There was laughter and expressions of agreement such as humming or nodding. There is agreement that copycat resonates with activities that involve some kind of imitation. Thus imitation is the learning activity to be discussed here. In contrast to people watching, the aspect of imitation is about wanting to be alike. Imitation can be the outcome of people watching, but then it is focused on making similar choices in fast fashion consumption and outfit combinations as the people that have been watched. Thus the logic of imitation can guide how participants learn what is new, or how to combine items in an outfit. Then, by following the ways of others, and embracing 'sameness', participants can develop a sense of what is acceptable and in fashion now. It is about keeping pace with what is in fashion now (Blumer 1969a).

As is well known, fashion diffusion processes have, in simplified terms, been widely discussed using the concept of imitation, and the wish to distinguish oneself from other consumers (social class), such as in the case of conspicuous consumption (Veblen 1957/1899) or trickle down of consumption (Simmel 1904). Consumer researchers have in turn discussed how people desire things other people have, and they wish they had (e.g. Belk, Ger and Askegaard 2003). Belk, Ger and Askegaard (2003) speak of the nature of social desire in terms of mimetic desire. Girard first described the logic of mimetic desire in 1977. He proposed that people want to acquire something when they see that their rival is consuming it,

meaning that the desirability of an object is awakened when it is desired by others (Girard 1977). However, the logic of mimetic desire is grounded in a battle for social recognition, and not about the material object in itself (Girard 1977). Thus, for Girard (1977) the material object is just a pretence for engaging in the mimetic battle to achieve social recognition. This means, as Belk, Ger and Askegaard (2003) note, the logic of mimetic desire is contrary to classic fashion diffusion theories and here they cite Dupuy. Belk, Ger and Askegaard (2003:329) write "whereas conspicuous consumption points to the consumer's search for the gaze *of* the Other, mimetic desire points to the consumer's gaze *on* the Other" (Dupuy 1979, p.86). I see mimetic desire as people wishing to copy another's way of going about fashion consumption, not just because of the item itself, but more because of the competence of the other person. That is mimetic desire is about social recognition of the skill of fast fashion consumption (other people are displaying similar ways of consuming fashion), and one can learn from others that are regarded as competent consumers. The basis for this mimetic activity is, here in this dissertation and examples below, one's own experience of fast fashion consumption compared to what others are doing.

When speaking about 'copycatting' Dana and Therese explain how they compare the way other people in the wider fast fashion community consume fast fashion to how they themselves consume fast fashion garments. In the interview these comparisons tend to take the "I" as a point of departure, using what they themselves do as a point of reference when it comes to determining if they like people (and their outfits) and thus are worthy of copying or not. There seems to be meaning attached to the expressions of liking someone. That is, the expression of "like" seems to mean more than having a positive feeling, rather it includes approval of the ways in which this person engages in fast fashion consumption and that this person has competence. For instance, Therese points out that a girl who seems to engage in the fast fashion market in the same way as they do is smart. "You have something in common /…/ that girl must be really smart, look what a nice jumper" (Helsingborg, 2013-03-04). Thus perhaps also saying that they themselves are smart consumers. This conversation starts as I ask the participants if they take inspiration from other consumers, the conversation is energetic and the participants follow up each other's utterances. This is how it played out:

> I: Do you think you get inspiration from others too?
>
> DANA: Yeah, and do you know what I just thought of, if we get back to fast fashion and you see someone and see that they look nice and they're wearing an H&M jumper you feel kind of a connection to that person. I like that 'cause I like that sweater too, but you kind of like others because they like what you like.

THERESE: Yeah but then you have something in common and that girl must be really smart, look what a nice jumper!

DANA: And when it comes to H&M and less expensive brands it's a little easier to like, there might be a gorgeous girl walking there she has a sense of fashion and she's out looking in shops and finds those really nice garments because they go really nicely with her shoes and, well, I like that too.

(Helsingborg, 2013-03-04)

Based on the above reasoning, it seems there is value in the learning activities of imitating. There is value in feeling connected to other people based on the ways in which they approach and understand the changing character of trends in the fast fashion market. This phenomenon can perhaps be interpreted as tied to the idea of following fashion in a wider sense, i.e. the way fast fashion retailer H&M is following designer fashion and then copying it, adapting it to cheap and trendy garments for a mainstream market. Yet as was noted above, the use of celebrity trends in fast fashion is not something participants have reflected much upon in interviews, rather, when consuming fast fashion, it seems to be fellow consumers that are sources of inspiration for fast fashion outfit combinations. However, the activity of copying can be highlighted as it refers to a cultural practice and social beliefs of how fashion is made and understood in this type of fashion market (as was discussed in chapter five). It also highlights values that are strong and present in the way fashion is consumed in this type of market. Thus the logic of copying cuts across both retailer and consumer practices, even though what is copied differs.

To conclude the discussion of the wider community of fast fashion, this last section will show the role of the shop assistants in learning activities in the market. Shop assistants are recognised as useful members and are included in the wider community by participants because of their strategic position in the retail store as well as their appreciation of fast fashion.

Asking questions of those in the know

In the interviews there are reoccurring accounts of how shop assistants can help. In previous research on retail and service work, sales assistant have been identified as having an impact on consumers' perception of the retail brand image through, for instance, the fashion clothes they are wearing while working in the store (Pettinger 2004). The fashion trends worn by sales assistants are also something that is recognised by the participants of this study as a source of inspiration in learning about outfits. However, in this study the role of shop assistants also includes acting as experts on what is going on in the retail store, as well as on the trends that are sold in the retail store. In the interview accounts, a common way of

learning of new arrivals in the fast fashion market is to ask shop assistants when the next delivery is expected. Thus, learning is here about asking questions. If the information is asked for over a period of time, the participants can continually map delivery days, and notice if there are any changes to the delivery cycle. Accordingly, Alice explain how she can use this information to, over time, develop a sense of how often, and on what days, deliveries arrive at the store:

> Yeah right I've noticed that too ((new items arrive in store regularly)) yeah the shop was full when the new skirts arrived and, yeah the girl in the shop said that new skirts will be arriving next Tuesday so then you have to make sure you go and then you know after a while when things arrive, yeah what day what arrives and so on.

(Malmö, 2013-02-13)

Alice is 29 years old, and she is a key account manager at a cosmetics company. She further explains that one of her tasks at work is to do regular store checks. This includes systematic scanning practice/observation on for instance what is new, or on the visual merchandise displays that feature the brands she works with. It can perhaps be anticipated that this store check activity (that Alice is trained in) can also come in handy as she tries to learn about new arrivals in the fast fashion store.

In discussions about the role of shop assistants, I have asked follow-up questions on what more can be learnt from shop assistants. From these discussions, participants speak about having a chat with the shop assistants on other issues such as new styles or ways to wear new trends. Thus, as was discussed above, asking questions of people who are considered to have valuable information is one way of learning. For example, during one of the interviews, Lisa speaks about frequently chatting to shop assistants, in particular she mentions that questions can happen when feeling at a loss, and thus "it can be if I need help" (Malmö 2013-04-23). Shop assistants are considered by Lisa to be a source of information. But more importantly they are regarded as having the "right" up-to-date knowledge on tips and tricks on how to wear the new trends. In one of the other interviews Dana speaks about how she learns from the shop assistants by asking questions. Dana asks questions to make sure she makes an informed choice regarding new trends, and she points out that she wants to make sure she will be wearing the item in a proper manner:

> I tried it on and compared sizes, the fit and how I would wear it and then I talked a lot with the shop assistant. I kind of like talking to them so I just asked how are you supposed to wear it 'cause you never know, sometimes you just try on a size smaller, you think it fits better but then it's too small really.

(Helsingborg, 2013-03-04)

This example shows how understandings of fast fashion items can be adjusted when talking to shop assistants, and thus new things can be learnt about how to wear fast fashion items. That is, from the experience of the fit of a specific item, the participant can then draw general conclusions about how to wear a certain trend. More, if this insight is brought back to the group (as in the case during the interview when Dana shares her experience), group members can learn something new when the experience of an individual (Dana) is added to the social competence of the group (Cf. Wenger 2000). For example, Therese, one of the participants in this group interview, confirms Dana's new insights on how to wear a new garment, when she replies to Dana: "oh that's advanced" (Helsingborg, 2013-03-04).

To conclude, participants include many different people in the wider community of fast fashion. The main reason for including people is to gain some kind of new information or understanding about the marketplace and how it operates. Thus people included need to have something to offer, while at the same time a wider community provides a social arena for fast fashion consumption. These actions of creating a wider fast fashion community which bring a sense of use value as well as sociality or community to consumers, show some differentiating points from previous work on consumer to consumer dynamics (marketplace cultures and consumption communities). First, if looking at the way participants of this study embrace sociality in consumption, the sense of community seems to be wider, it includes many types of people and is not limited to a certain close group of friends or even to consumers. Actually, it includes many types of people: the friendship group, people in the street wearing something cool from H&M or Zara (they are admired and seen to be smart), the other fast fashion consumers in the store (other groups doing the same thing), and sales assistants in the fast fashion store. Second, the inclusion of these people seems to be strategic and rather rational. Inclusion is based on whether people have anything to offer (Cf. the individual focus of sociality discussed in chapter five). Hence, sociality is important/valued when there is a need to be filled, for example when the community have something the individual needs. It seems the group of fast fashion consumers is not about the people per se, but rather about what they know and what one can learn from them. Third, people do not act together in the wider community (as is the case with consumer communities, or even tribes), but are (constantly) aware of each other, they use each other by trading-off information, and give each other learning opportunities.

The next two sections will address two distinct ways of how learning together with others can manifest itself; it will on the one hand show the supportive side of collective learning, and on the other hand show the competitive approach to collective learning. Participants describe how learning mainly takes two forms; either learning is characterised by looking for acceptance from fellow fast fashion

consumers, or learning takes place within rivalry among the members and fast fashion consumption becomes a game of competition.

Seeking acceptance from members of the group

As touched upon above, participants are looking for confirmation or understanding from people in the wider fast fashion community. Being familiar with 'certain ways' of doing things and listening to people who have experience are ways to gain this acceptance and to show that one is a competent fast fashion consumer. This can perhaps be done by engaging in what Wenger (1998) terms the joint enterprise. As previously explained, a joint enterprise is a common ambition valued by members in the group (Wenger 1998). Group members hold each other accountable, and this means there needs to be mutuality. That is, members should act in a way that others will be familiar with, and thus members use the shared repertoire of the group, consisting of for instance common routines (Wenger 1998). Acting according to these routines or norms is one way of learning about something (Wenger 1998).

Recognising activities

Following the above reasoning, the common routines and 'the way things are done' is discussed in this section to get a grasp of how acceptance from members of the fast fashion community comes about. Recognising activities is the learning activity investigated in this section. It looks at how recognising these activities will help in becoming a successful fast fashion consumer in the eyes of the beholder. That is, the acceptance given by other people in the wider fast fashion community is an acknowledgement of one being a successful fast fashion consumer. Within this community having different ways to excel at fast fashion consumption is the key to acceptance, but it is not only within this community that fast fashion is regarded as a recognised way of fashion consumption. It resonates with the commonly held understanding of trendy and cheap fashion being 'the right thing', and the type of fashion that is respectable and wanted in parts of the fashion market in Sweden (Cf. Sundberg 2006). As Sundberg (2006) writes, trendy cheap fashion is a norm among both consumers and market actors in the mainstream fashion market, which creates a demand for fast fashion.

When talking about 'certain ways' of doing things or 'specific ways' of how to approach fast fashion consumption in the interviews, there seems to be agreement about how to act. In the conversations participants give matching examples of how routines are carried out. Accordingly, there are acceptable ways of consuming fast fashion, such as norms of what can be said and done, as well as consequences if one does not comply (Cf. discussions on accountability in Wenger 1998). When

following routines or norms participants look at the behaviour of others and themselves. For example, these can be routines regarding things like dress codes, and how often one can wear a fast fashion item before one should buy something new. Recognising activities can take place in the high street and online on social media. When looking at social media, Facebook is utilised as a tracking device. This is shown in the example Leyla gives below, but is also evident in other interviews. Leyla speaks about how she uses Facebook to observe (keep track of) what she wears and when she wears specific items:

> I've got one of those photo albums from the summer of 2011 on Facebook and I usually check /…/ I have a look at the pictures and OMG! Did I wear the same shorts there and again that night, well that's what I was thinking and then first I thought, well, shit no one will know! But I learned that they will ((friends told her that it was not acceptable)) so I'll go back and look at pictures and if I was wearing them. So then I'll just have to wait to wear them or perhaps buy something new!

(Helsingborg, 2012-11- 22)

As the example illustrates, observations are made on how often fast fashion items are worn. If an item is worn too many times in a short period of time, this action will violate the norms and the 'specific ways' things are done in the fast fashion community. That is, as a member, participants are not supposed to wear the same items often, and members will keep track of worn items, and point out if there is a transgression of the established 'ways of doing things'. However, exactly how often one can wear an item is not concluded, but there seems to be a clear idea that fashion needs to keep changing, and thus one should not get stuck wearing the same items many times.

There is an observation by the participant noting how many times she has worn an item, and second there is the experience of friends observing the participant and letting her know that it is not acceptable. As Leyla noted: "first I thought, well, shit no one will know! But I learned that they will" (Helsingborg, 2012-11-22). Thus to seek acceptance from the group and show that one is a competent fast fashion consumer the 'ways of doing things' can be followed. These norms and 'ways of doing things' resonate with Bauman's thoughts on how individuals handle change in a liquid modern world. Bauman (2011:24) writes: "Time is indeed passing, and the trick is to keep pace with it. If you don't want to drown, you must keep on surfing: that is to say, keep changing, as often as you can, your wardrobe, furniture, wallpaper, appearance and habits, in short - yourself." Learning about fast fashion by recognising activities when using Facebook is a way for the participants to manage the ever-changing nature of fast fashion. Meaning that social media is utilised to keep up-to-date on appearances, and how members in the community change outfits (or not) along with the fast fashion rhythm. Smartphone applications are also utilised to make overall checks. That

means, to look for many photos and posts in a short time, participants scroll their way around smartphone applications looking for pictures. Scrolling becomes a way to find as much as possible, and if one can scroll quickly and accurately one can learn more. For instance, when scrolling down the newsfeed, there are shortcuts to get back to the top of the page and not have to flick all the way back up.

Furthermore when talking about scrolling down the newsfeed, Desirée is speaking at a slower pace compared to other parts of the interview (which is framed in a fun or energetic atmosphere). She mentions how pictures taken at all kinds of events, and everyday situations, end up on Facebook. Then she describes how she scrolls through these, making sure that she does not appear in the same outfits too often. But at the same time Desirée also notices how she would look for friends who might not follow 'ways of doing things', and are wearing the same outfit too often. Desirée speaks about her experiences of scrolling through the newsfeed on Facebook looking out for what her friends are wearing: "then you notice that someone wears the same ((laughs)) dress so you get a little (.) well ((you think)) maybe it's time for them to buy something new. It's a little rude and judgmental but that's how I feel /…/actually I have been known to react if someone has worn the same outfit twice" (Helsingborg, 2013-04-13). This is an example of how members can hold each other accountable by reacting if someone is making a mistake (Wenger 2000; 1998).

During another interview, we have talked about how mistakes can be visible to more people on social media. Here Hanna and Cornelia discuss how they try to avoid making mistakes on social media, even though they may make them "in real life" it should not show on social media (Cf. performative interactions (Trainer 2015)). The audience is much bigger on social media and the level of social humiliation can be greater. Hanna begins the discussion by noting how photos posted on Facebook should reflect the diversity and newness of the clothes she is wearing:

> HANNA: Yeah when you post photos you can't be wearing the same clothes
>
> CORNELIA: Exactly 'cause if you do, if you have a favourite dress you have to delete them ((the pictures)) because well I was wearing a favourite dress last summer /…/ I bought a dress and I really, really liked it so I wanted to wear it all the time, and I had to delete some pictures ((laughs)) it doesn't look good /…/ I think a lot of people think like that, how does it look when others are looking at the photos
>
> HANNA: Yeah you must wear something new.

(Malmö, 2013-04-10)

As we can see in this example, recognising 'ways of doing things' plays a role in how often fast fashion items can be worn, as norms and routines of wearing something new drive actions on social media. This can perhaps be interpreted as norms and routines being important guidelines in seeking acceptance, and this seems to take the form of some kind of social control of the group. It is also noteworthy that participants seem to adhere to the norms and routines, and do not seem to question them. If viewed from a participation angle as discussed in chapter one, this may not be so much about a wish to be active. Rather it may be interpreted as an approach that embraces 'this is the way it is', and the interviewees of this study seem to participate in creating and maintaining a type of mutuality and repertoire that comes by engaging, in the words of Wenger (1998), a joint enterprise.

In the interviews participants spoke about reasons for following the norms and routines. They explain that these routines, or 'rules' as they refer to them, come from social codes developed over time among the group. Cornelia explains that "there are these unspoken rules, it's probably something cultural /…/there are different dress codes for different occasions, and it doesn't look good to turn up in the same things, it's a cultural thing. These are old social codes" (Malmö, 2013-04-10). This statement is followed up by Hanna, she explains how the group of people can be rude if you fail to act as a member of the group, Hanna says "you can't break them, you mustn't break the rules 'cause you will, well people will think all sorts of things" (Malmö, 2013-04-10). These examples also show that learning can bring experiences of social pressure. Social pressure can come from the anxiety of trying to keep up with knowing how often items are worn. Learning in the fast fashion marketplace is not just an endeavour that brings satisfaction, but can be challenging. Clarke and Miller (2002) also recognise the experience of social pressure in fashion consumption, and they point out that: "even where individuals are highly knowledgeable about matters of taste and clothing, they find the everyday encounters of aesthetic choice ostensibly fraught" (Clarke and Miller 2002:193). This also seems to be the case here.

Listening to people with experience

Moreover, as noted before, it seems to be important that choices are accepted and confirmed by other people in the wider community, not just friends or other fast fashion consumers, but also shop assistants in fast fashion stores (i.e. people in the role of shop assistants). Participants tend to take a moment and listen to the shop assistants when they proceed to the cash desk. Accordingly, here the learning strategy comes down to listening. The point is, participants want the shop assistants to share information on current stock in store, or to give them suggestions, compliments or confirmation on the items they have picked up. Lisa and Maja speak in the interviews about how the conversation is usually brief, and

the sales assistant is the person initiating it as they greet new customers at the cash desk. After the typical greeting, sales assistants can move on to compliment the choices made. For instance, Lisa and Maja give an example of their experience of compliments at the cash desk at H&M:

> LISA: Yeah it's a bonus when the sales assistant says
>
> MAJA: They just say, wow this is amazing=
>
> LISA: Yeah they say shit that's so gorgeous
>
> MAJA: And that they haven't seen it in the store yet
>
> LISA: Yeah and I found this one, oh yes I did!
>
> I: So you're looking for confirmation, what, from the sales assistants?
>
> MAJA: Yeah I'm looking for confirmation I guess that's why we shop, yeah and maybe one of the sales assistants says that jumper will be so gorgeous on you, and then it's all worth it.

(Malmö, 2013-04-23)

The example shows how compliments are given to the participants. However, here we arrive at the question of how participants listen to the shop assistants. Basically, what do they hear when listening to shop assistants? It seems Maja and Lisa interpret the compliments as positive. Words such amazing or gorgeous are mentioned by Lisa and Maja in the interview, and it may be interpreted as this is the message they find valuable. Further interpretations of this quote can be that these conversations provide Lisa and Maja with confirmation of their actions, and they learn what is valued in the marketplace – to find and buy the latest items. That is, the marketplace rewards their efforts.

Competing with other fast fashion consumers

In addition to embracing the confirmation from other people in the fast fashion marketplace, participants also speak about how they experience themselves in a competitive relationship with other fast fashion consumers. Accordingly, participants experience both circumstances, through confirmation and acceptance, as well as opposition through rivalry in the marketplace. There are mainly two ways participants speak of experiencing competition in the marketplace: first, other consumers get ahold of new arrivals before participants. Second, other

consumers will hide a new arrival in the store to make it difficult for fellow shoppers to locate it. To learn about the different ways of competing participants watch what is going on. In this way, learning is here about watching out; 1) watching out for new arrivals, and 2) watching out for competing consumers and how they hide items.

Watching out for new arrivals

The setting for the competition of watching out for new arrivals is the retail store environment, and if we look at the direct context for learning it is evident that the retailer contributes to shaping an environment that highlights scarcity, and thus perhaps competition for getting hold of the latest trends (see pictures below). The pictures illustrate a messages that reflects the interview conversations with participants on competition in the retail store. The message reads: "Grab it now. Tomorrow it might be gone forever" or "New stuff is coming in each and everyday, so why not do the same?". In chapter five, we discussed how rapid turnaround of items is communicated by these messages, and here we can see how similar ideas are shared among the participants in this study.

During the interviews and in the conversations after the interview, it became evident to me that there is some kind of competition going on in the retail store. Sherry (1990) also notes the occurrence of competition in acquisition behaviours, as well as in later work by Bardhi and Arnould (2005). Sherry's discussion on searching, finding items and haggling over price in the context of a Midwestern flea market in the United States, implies that there might be slight competition going on in the locating of items (among consumers) and in the haggling situation, competing in the bargaining situation with the sales person (Sherry 1990). Bardhi and Arnould (2005) identify different ways consumers are thrifty, and these activities can be viewed as having a competitive dimension to them. For example, the practices of pre-planning and pre-shopping show how consumers are careful planners, and the actions of continually planning, searching and organising are a way for consumers to keep on their toes and get to items before others (Bardhi and Arnould 2005).

Yet, the competitor dimension to fast fashion consumption takes on another type of character, which can be added to the numerous ways consumers can be competitive in acquisition of market offerings. In fast fashion, competition is about learning to watch out for new arrivals (and as will be discussed later, watching how other consumers hide items). The competitive dimension of watching how consumers hide items concerns the way this restricts other consumers from getting hold of items, whereas the competitive element of watching out for new arrivals is

about figuring out how the market operates to be able to be at the right store at the right time before others.

In conversations participants speak about the scarcity of new items and the fear of not getting there on time to get hold of an item. Also, by watching new arrivals arrive in store, participants learn parts of the fast fashion business model, that is to say, they know that a fast fashion trend is produced in a limited number of items per batch, and that new fashion trends are delivered to the store on a frequent schedule. From chapter five, we also know that a fast fashion retailer tells the consumer to come in each and every day, just like the new arrivals (see image below). The messages are large and easy to spot, it is almost the first thing you see when entering the store (observation 2014-06-24). These messages are rather new, to my knowledge these started to show up at H&M stores in 2014 (observation 2014-06-24). Before the occurrence of these messages, a similar sentiment may have been implied by the retailer in the clothing displays within the store, trying to signal new arrivals by visual merchandising (e.g. Barnes and Lea-Greenwood 2010). However, clothing displays may be a more subtle approach, now the message is clearly visible to consumers (i.e. it is difficult to ignore).

As highlighted in the previous paragraph, there are few items of each trend. During the interviews participants describe that there is a need to be aware of delivery days, and make sure to get hold of the new items once they appear in store. By watching new arrivals in store, participants also describe how they observe other consumers rushing in to get hold of them. This may be interpreted as a fear of missing out on the latest items. This fear can perhaps be grounded in two possible issues, first the issue of the limited batches of new trends, and second the issue of knowing that other consumers might get there first. By watching out for new arrivals, participants seem to learn to make quick decisions to get hold of an item that is of limited supply, and getting it before other fast fashion consumers. In the example below we can see this as Hanna and Cornelia chat about getting items before others:

> HANNA: Right, if you really want something I know that I must buy it now ‘cause if I don’t it won’t be there next time.
>
> CORNELIA: Yes and while I’m in the shop, I take it, I can’t let it hang here and I can’t leave it. I must buy it today.
>
> HANNA: Yes /…/ otherwise someone else will get it.

(Malmö, 2013-04-10)

Thereafter, their conversation moves on to the thrills of shopping for fast fashion, and Hanna and Cornelia speak about being successful in their shopping, they talk

about enjoying the instant gratification it brings. Yet the fear of 'missing out' is always present. Discussion on the fear of missing out can also be found in the writings of Bauman in "Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty" (2007). Bauman writes about the fear of missing out, in terms of being left behind and the anxiety that expectations of making progress and succeeding in different endeavours in life bring. For instance he explains that "[i]nstead of great expectations and sweet dreams, 'progress' evokes an insomnia full of nightmares of 'being left behind' - of missing the train, or falling out of the window of a fast accelerating vehicle" (Bauman 2007:11). Additionally, turning to media talk, journalists identify the fear of missing out in their reports on fast fashion consumption. As was discussed in chapter five, there are media representations of the fear of missing out, which tend to portray the consumer as a fickle and clueless person. Representations highlight erratic and inconsistent behaviour, and shopping seems to be an impulse. However, this representation does not correspond with how the participants describe their experience. Instead participants see it as a rather well-thought-out and purposeful activity. This can, as was pointed out above, not necessarily mean that shopping for new fashion items is not an anxiety-filled activity (Cf. Clarke and Miller 2002).

Watching out for competing consumers

The competitiveness of watching how consumers hide items concerns the way this limits the possibility for consumers to get ahold of items. And when it comes to the competitive action of how consumers hide items, some of the participants speak vividly about how they find items hidden, or how trendy items gone missing in the store. I have asked about how they experience this and if they themselves participate in this 'hide and seek game'. They speak about how hidden items are sometimes difficult to locate, and for example Leyla mentions how the latest fashion arrivals in the retail store can be hidden and be more difficult to find than the stock of non-trendy product categories. Certain sizes in particular can be hard to find. She explains how she is hanging out in the store, watching for new arrivals, trying to get a glimpse of how and when other consumers will try and hide items. Also Leyla says she is doing the same when she finds a new trendy item she really likes. To sum up, Leyla is aware that other consumers hide items, she herself will try to locate hidden items, but also hide items. In the example below Leyla speaks about how she will try to locate hidden items. She explains:

> I look behind, you know to see if there's anything new, I look to see if I've missed something because there's bound to be, because other people hide things you know, they hide something they like, it's always like that. So you have to make sure to check for that.

(Helsingborg, 2012-11-22)

In another conversation, Cornelia mentions that the routine of watching how other consumers hide items has developed because new items remain in the shop (perhaps for a longer time than she first thought). But as they are no longer visible and thus detectable for everyday search strategies, she needs to actively watch for these items. As the techniques for hiding items become more imaginative, it is likely that learning by watching will evolve.

Summary of dimension one

This passage has analysed a number of different learning strategies utilised by participants to learn in the fast fashion marketplace. These strategies are the following: using feedback, people watching, imitating, asking questions, recognising activities, listening, and watching.

In this analysis learning was viewed as an activity that occurs together with others in social settings. The interest in this passage has been to discuss learning as collective and social participation in an everyday context, such as the fast fashion marketplace. It has shown how learning activities are utilised within an aggregation of fast fashion consumers, and further addressed two distinct issues of learning: seeking acceptance from members of the group, and competing with other fast fashion consumers.

In the introduction to this thesis, learning was discussed in terms of being an investment. That is, learning becomes an investment and points to the acquisition of skill, and recognition among consumers and marketplace actors. As Firat and Venkatesh (1995) suggest, usually the work one did brought social recognition, however the role of consumption in social recognition has increased. Learning by utilising different strategies in the marketplace can be viewed as an expression of consumer interest in a certain activity, and does play a role in cultivating this consumption interest. By cultivating this interest (i.e. by engaging in different learning strategies) it is possible that one is recognised as a competent consumer. Social interactions in learning activities, such as in the example of seeking acceptance from members of the group, are one way that social recognition may occur. Learning activities can therefore be understood as dedication to an endeavour, and as a way of attracting attention to the way one carries out consumption, and in the ways one creates outfits to be worn.

Dimension two: learning is about contextual sources of inspiration

Learning also requires tools. Tools are, from a situated learning perspective, seen as collective, in the sense that the way tools are used has been negotiated within a community of users (Säljö 2013). In this section tools are discussed in the way Säljö defines tools. Säljö (2013) defines tools as the material, verbal or intellectual aids that people use in learning activities (intellectual aids refer to skills and expert knowledge). Also, I want to point out that different kinds of tools can be combined to learn in the context (Cf. Säljö 2013). In this section I understand the use of tools as one way of participating in creating routines or norms of "what it takes to act and be recognised as a competent member" (Wenger 2000:227). Members of a group will identify which tools are supportive and useful for them as they move along the course of the joint enterprise (Cf. Wenger 1998), such as fast fashion shopping.

As is implied above, this section is concerned with how the use of tools can complement learning efforts made in the interaction with others in the store. These tools can function as support in learning activities. Supportive tools are social media, education or work experience. It is common in the interviews that participants speak of these supportive tools as being helpful in understanding the marketplace. In this section, tools are sometimes referred to in terms of sources of inspiration. The use of the word inspiration comes from the interviews as participants speak of using tools such as Facebook or YouTube as sources of inspiration. From the talk in the interviews, it seems that the use of Facebook and YouTube is established practice among many of the participants, and they seem to employ it and make use of it in a similar manner. This section begins with a short empirical orientation in how the participants in this study speak about using tools, and then moves on to investigate some of these tools.

Many of the participants speak of using different supportive tools (or sources of inspiration) to learn in the fast fashion market. As mentioned above, supportive tools can be commercials, YouTube films, news media or social media such as Facebook. Participants mention different types of tools, and how combinations of tools can give a more detailed picture of the fast fashion marketplace. The combination of tools can perhaps be understood as being about learning, to use and interpret different sources of inspiration, and to put these together in such a way that one benefits from different kinds of information and can use it when going shopping. Furthermore, from the discussions on how tools are utilised, some participants seem to learn how to employ tools by, for instance, trial and error or learning from previous experiences. In addition, learning also seems to be about processes of socialisation. Here participants speak of how they employ knowledge

from education such as fashion marketing or media and communication studies, or how they use skills from their work experience in aesthetic markets (such as brand managers, personal shoppers, stylists for retailers or TV shows, hairdressers etc.). The discussion of tools in learning starts by investigating social media as a tool.

Social media

The most common source of inspiration is social media. During all of the interviews, participants mainly describe two ways in which social media is utilised. First, participants use the interface of the platform (such as Facebook or smartphone applications like Trendabl) as it facilitates exploring, tracking and saving updates on fast fashion. Also it provides tags with which to check history.

Second, participants use what other consumers post on fast fashion as sources of inspiration. They read and study pictures and videos, including what is in the stores right now and how to shop for it. Important to notice here is that participants use social media and can upload pictures or post comments, but they do not contribute to it in terms of making their own videos on YouTube. It seems participants rather want to use it, not to contribute in producing more content on social media. The findings are here similar to previous work on consumers' use of social media (Cf. Heinonen 2011). However, the use of social media is more specific in the activities of learning about fast fashion items than was described by Heinonen (2011) in the context of social media usage on Facebook, YouTube and MySpace. Heinonen (2011) explained that social media use is about activities such as connecting with people, and sharing experiences with people, but did not give any examples of how social media functions are actually used. Here the findings suggest how social media functions are utilised and benefited from when figuring out how fast fashion items can be consumed.

Tracking updates

In chapter six I briefly discussed how Facebook is employed by participants as a tracking device to figure out how often an item is worn. This section further elaborates on how learning is about the activity of tracking. That is, the following section is concerned with how participants learn by tracking, i.e. how they use the template of the application to follow updates.

Template: the tool itself

There seems to be a common understanding of how templates are used, meaning that the ways tools are used has been negotiated within a community of users (Cf. Säljö 2013). For instance, taking together all of the discussions, participants speak of using Facebook to follow other consumers' posts by the functions of tagging or

hashtags. Similarly smartphone applications can be utilised to track fast fashion retailers. By tracking the posts by retailers, participants can learn when new trends are designed, and when they are expected to arrive in the store.

Hanna speaks about how she spends a lot of time online following fast fashion retailers or using other types of fashion applications to track the latest trends. She tells us about how she:

> got everything from H&M, ASOS, Topshop and Trendabl apps, you know where people just sit around posting inspiration, and there I sit and think, oh okay that looks nice! I get so much ((inspiration)) it's fun to look at stuff that's really inspiring, it's not as if I'm going to buy anything but you still get inspiration.

(Malmö, 2013-04-10)

From Hanna's experience it is clear that engaging with applications gives inspiration. Further interpretation of this experience is that inspiration comes from different sources, such as other consumers or from fast fashion retailers. Considering the other interviews as well, the most common application frequently referred to in the examples of looking for inspiration online is Trendabl. In the Trendabl application there are newsfeeds of popular content, filtered by category of garment, and based on the user's profile. Pictures of garments have hashtags, by tapping the hashtag one can follow other posts with similar content. If finding anything of interest, tags can be used to save photos for later. The activity of browsing for inspiration (but not intending to buy anything at that moment) shows how there is an interest among participants, because they spend time not only when they buy something, but have also created ways to look for inspiration. Further, as there are different ways to look for inspiration, the variation can also indicate that there is more interest in learning. Similarly, Schau, Muñiz and Arnould (2009) have shown that many types of online practices demonstrate that a group of consumers have a great engagement in the product, and a lively engagement shows that it is a strong commitment.

To conclude, by following the posts participants can gather information about what is trendy, what is new, and get inspiration, and learn about how combinations of items can be put together in new outfits. As I discussed in chapter three, previous work (e.g. Denegri-Knott and Molesworth 2013) has not clearly explored the idea that information can be used to create something new (i.e. new ways of combining outfits). Thus, the creation of something new can seem trivial when it comes to combinations in outfits, but the idea of trying to find different bits and pieces that go together in a new way shows learning in the marketplace. Another conclusion from the analysis above is that gathering of information is frequently mentioned, but participants do not refer to buying anything online by using the applications. It is acknowledged that it is possible, but it seems that participants

prefer buying garments in the retail store where they can experience the fast fashion retail spectacle in the sense as described by Kozinets (2002).

Template: What other consumers post and share online

As was noted above, participants learn from what retailers and other consumers post online, as they follow pictures and videos connected to fast fashion consumption on social media applications. For example, they learn what is in the stores right now and how to shop for it. Thus, following the findings on how social media is a supportive tool for learning in the marketplace this section will further investigate how learning is about watching social media films, and what other consumers are sharing in these videos. It is a way to keep track of what is new and trendy. This section is concerned with two types of YouTube videos; haul videos and instruction videos.

Beginning with a discussion on haul videos, this is a phenomenon that is talked about in conversations with participants of this study, and many of them highlight how haul videos can sometimes provide efficiency. In many of the conversations it is referred to as being useful because it is a comprehensive way to learn a lot about new trends from many different retailers in a short time.

But what is a haul video? The phenomenon of haul videos is rather new, and as was mentioned in chapter five, Merrick (2014) reports in The New Yorker that haul videos can be consumer-generated or co-opted by the market. Haulers (consumers who make the haul videos), present new fast fashion items they have just got in the fast fashion store, usually with the price tags left on the garment, and straight out of the shopping bag. The hauler tells the audience about each of the garments in turn, why it is appealing (for instance the colour, cut or pattern), how it can be worn, and what the material feels like.

In the fast fashion market haulers are recognised as a significant phenomenon, and haulers are seen as consumers who want recognition from other fast fashion members for their shopping skills and taste. This is summarised in the fast fashion marketplace forum Dresm in 2012:

> It's fairly simple from an outside perspective, a video of an excited shopper showing off their latest purchases. If you look beyond the brightly colored plastic retail bags and chic clothing presented, you may see at bit more to this Fashion Hauling craze. One of the most important things to note is its mass appeal. Fashion Haul videos on YouTube have blossomed in the past year. Google has seen a rise in the topic from 150,000 live videos in 2010 to 600,000 today, 35,000 of which were uploaded in July of 2012 alone. The views per video are even more alarming. Popular Haul videos breach the 500,000 views mark and even venture into the millions. /---/ Haulers are savvy shoppers who want deals, the latest of trend setting fashion finds

> and recognition for their taste and shopping skills. At its heart, hauling is based on fast fashion.

From the quote above it is clear that fast fashion haul videos are popular and a common practice among consumers. This description echoes the discussion about haul videos and value creation in user-generated content by Smith, Fischer and Yongjian (2011). In their work, they highlight how social media, such as haul videos on YouTube, provides opportunites for consumers to share and cooperate with one another, as well as learn about different types of social media collaborations (with for example marketers) (Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2011). However, in the case of YouTube, it is only a small percentage that actually create content, while the majority of active users spend their time watching the creations of other consumers (Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2011). This is also the case here, when learning about new trends from haul videos, participants are rather observers (or lurkers as Schlosser (2005) has called consumers that do not participate by generating their own content) than active haul video makers.

This means that in this study, it is an everyday activity for many of the participants to watch haul videos. As was mentioned above, according to the participants in this study, haul videos are a way to learn about and find out what is new, trendy and in the store right now without being present at the actual store. In this way, haul videos can perhaps be understood as a substitute. In this way, the use of haul videos can perhaps be interpreted as making up for lost time. That is to say, here consumers (haulers) who have been spending their day at the stores, browsing and buying new things, provide second-hand information by making and posting haul videos. In conversations following the interview Dana elaborates on following haulers and learning by watching their videos. It can be a way of sharing tips on what is in store now, and what is considered trendy.

> DANA: I started following haulers like maybe a year ago, actually I use haul videos on YouTube more than I use fashion blogs, I think it is much easier and faster, you just click 'play' and you don't have to sit there in front of your computer and read all these things which take too much time to read. I think it is a lot of fun to watch haul videos and I think the haulers are really good at what they do, I watch them and I learn from them, and I think I have like the same kind of style as some of them… actually it is a really good way to keep updated on new things if you don't have the time to visit stores and I think I can spend my money on the right things well it helps me to make better choices, and it is almost like you have your own personal shopper or like stylist that checks for the latest things and keeps you updated on what is trendy and so you can find the things you look for much faster, well for me it is like I follow certain haulers otherwise you can also Google or just try and find a specific hauler that talks about the things you look for so you can see what the things look like and so, well, hear what the hauler thinks and that will make it easier to buy things, you know, you don't get disappointed.

Haulers can perhaps be viewed as a member of the extended community of fast fashion consumers, and thus provide important information that is trusted. Another way of looking at the role of haul videos in learning within this study is to look at what is not mentioned in the interviews. That is, what is missing from the accounts of how this tool is employed. For instance, participants do not speak about being aware of haul videos being sponsored or produced in collaboration with fast fashion stores. As well as this, participants do not talk about contributing by making their own haul videos (as noted above), or by commenting on the haul videos shared on YouTube. Yet haul videos are a popular way to get information in a condensed way, and it seems to be a useful learning tool for the participants in this study. For example, Dana speaks about watching to learn. Thus in addition to being facilitators of tips on how new garments feel and can be worn, or replacements for actual store visits, haul videos also provide a large range of instant updated information on new trends available in stores worldwide. As such, even if not contributing by making their own haul videos, participants in this study are contributing to the success of haul videos in terms of number of views.

The next section moves on to discuss the other type of YouTube video, the instruction video. The instruction video is focused on strategies on how to shop in the fast fashion store and its constant flow of new trends. The instructions are constantly available, and can be watched over and over again - as a refresher or updater. For example, in the video, 'How to shop: H&M', editor-at-large Elise Loehnen at Lucky Magazine is shopping at H&M while she shares her strategies of how to shop at H&M. The strategies are shared on separate slides in bullet points, while she walks around in the store. She is performing in the role of a consumer, and showing the strategies to the viewer.

These videos are mentioned briefly in connection to the use of haul videos. It seems to be a tool utilised to learn the basic strategies of shopping in fast fashion stores, but mostly used as a refresher or as an updater, to keep the current strategies one uses fresh. To conclude, here learning is about watching instructions on how to shop at the fast fashion store. These instructions can aid fast fashion shopping, as well as contribute to creating routines or perhaps norms of how to approach fast fashion shopping as a competent consumer (Cf. Wenger 2000).

Combination of different types of tools

In the interviews some of the participants speak about combining tools to learn. For instance, they explain to me that a combination of tools can result in a more accurate picture of how new arrivals arrive in store. The combination can consist of the above-mentioned social media tools, as well as regular commercials on TV, or billboards. From this interview talk about tools, it seems that using a

combination of tools does not mean that one tool is 'better' than another, but rather that a combination can be useful.

In further talks about combination of tools some of the other participants mention that they have discovered how the time frame of billboard pictures and the posts on social media do not match with the actual stock available in the store. When they visit the store after seeing the billboards, and after following the latest updates posted on Facebook or the smartphone application of the store, the garment cannot yet be found at the fast fashion retailer. For example, during the interview Dana and Therese discuss the disappointment when their efforts to observe billboard pictures and follow updates on social media do not match the actual offerings in the store. Dana says:

> When you see it it's like oooh I just have to have it, but sometimes you see something that hasn't turned up in the shops yet/…/ so I ask in the store and well no they don't have it yet, right, then I have to look around at what they've got but you get a bit disappointed.

(Helsingborg 2013-03-04)

Therese confirms Dana's concerns by telling her that "yeah there are new items but usually they're released on the app before they're in the shops and that's kind of annoying and I don't have any patience, I think it's difficult to wait for things" (Helsingborg 2013-03-04). Hence, the combination of tools can also make the participants discover cracks in the fast fashion supply system. Dana and Therese express disappointment, but in the interview they do not spontaneously mention any ways to notice the delays in the fast fashion supply system. This illustration of a combination of tools shows how tools are employed to follow the market and learn by observing the marketplace.

During another interview Nicole ponders on her experiences of how to grasp the time lag, and how she has noticed changes, and learned over the years how the time lag has developed. The time lag she refers to here is the time lag between when items appear in commercials or online, to when they can actually be found on the racks on the shop floor. Nicole speaks about her experience:

> NICOLE: Now when everything can be found online too I'd say I know very well what they've got ((in the store)). I use the H&M app and Facebook and I look at what's new and on sale, and these days the web and the shops are much the same. That was not the case a while ago, the web was much faster, well they don't always have everything in the shops now, well sometimes it is a bit slower than the web and commercials. I mean you know because you check the app so you do have a sense of what is new and a feeling for what they ought to have in the store, and if there's something new I should look for it when I get to the store so well I also check Gina's website and check what they've got, they do a lot of promotion with

> new things every week and then I watch the TV ads and if a garment looks interesting then I go and check the web and yeah if it still looks good so you go to the shop and check it out in real life ((laughs)) what it looks like and maybe try it on so I do think I have quite a good idea of what is new in fast fashion shops.

(Malmö, 2013-04-28)

As was mentioned in the above paragraph, and what is interesting to note in the quote by Nicole is that she speaks of and has learned about the time lag. In this example Nicole shows awareness of how the retailer operates. Yet she does not speak about learning anything about why the time gap exists. The gap referred to is the time lag between a garment being promoted on the application for a smartphone or a TV commercial, and its arrival in the store. However, there are explanations for this time lag. If we look at previous research on the fast fashion market different explanations have been offered. For instance, in their work on the fast fashion retail store environment Barnes and Lea-Greenwood (2010) provide a possible explanation for this time lag. They argue that fast fashion retail store operations cannot cope with the pace of new deliveries and provide an example from one of their interviews (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood 2010:766):

> However, despite the speed of the supply chain getting new merchandise to the store quickly, store managers reported difficulties getting the new "fast fashion" merchandise onto the shop floor because of the high frequency of deliveries and the volume of merchandise: We get so much stuff delivered all the time and we just don't have time to manage getting it onto the shop floor quickly. We usually start with the stuff that is shop floor ready and doesn't need unpacking (Store Manager D).

But in the interview talk, as illustrated above in the example of Nicole's experiences, there is less awareness of how things happen in the 'back office' of the retail store in comparison to what is visible to consumers (and perhaps available), such as the shop floor, Facebook pages and commercials.

Other types of tools: using aids from work experience and education

Tools can also be skills and expert knowledge (intellectual tools), and these skills and knowledge are used in learning activities (Säljö 2013). In this study there are two common areas from which skills or knowledge are used in learning activities in the fast fashion market. These are work experience from the retail sector concerning for instance skills acquired as key account managers and personal

shoppers, and the second is university education, from studies in marketing, or media and communication.

Some of the participants speak of skills from work experience as key account managers and sales representatives. They refer to skills such as sorting, sometimes referred to as 'doing store checks'. On a daily basis for work, they practice their sorting skills as they visit stores, and it is a way to learn about the products in the marketplace (e.g. document types of products and types of displays). In their daily work, participants use sorting to get an idea of the products they are representing (as key account managers) in relation to competitors.

Sorting items

The learning activity of sorting is employed when shopping for fast fashion. Participants in the study speak about using the sorting activity when they go fast fashion shopping, or they speak about shopping for fast fashion items during the store visits, even if their first priority is work and doing store checks. Sophia says:

> I was at work and I was going to Emporia to make a store check looking for competing nail varnish brands and so on, and when I got there I just thought that I haven't really got that many jumpers /…/ and so I was walking around doing the same thing.

(Malmö, 22-02-2013)

This example shows how a skill acquired from work is also employed for one's own benefit. It seems the skill can assist in making a quick review of what is new in the store, and make a judgement as to whether the garment is interesting or not. Sorting is a skill familiar to use, and as such Sophia is trained in sorting large number of items, which can aid decision making about fast fashion items. In other interviews the activity of sorting is not articulated clearly, yet there are expressions of how the work one does every day helps in sorting and finding the item one is looking for. For instance, Melissa and Jonathan speak about finding items in the store. Melissa talks about walking around looking for new fashion items and misplaced garments. Whereas Jonathan, a personal stylist, describes how he benefits from his skills in his everyday shopping for fast fashion. He talks about how the pace of shopping is important in relation to choosing a certain garment. This makes Melissa conclude that she has to learn from the personal shopper style:

> MELISSA: Yeah so I walk around and look for it, it might be something that's not hanging where it should, and yeah I go to the makeup department and even if I don't buy anything there I look at what they've got.
>
> JONATHAN: It has to be quick, well I work with clothes and so you scan rapidly and I can't stand people who need to take out every single garment and like, yeah I

work as a personal stylist. I'm fast 'cause I usually see what I like straight away so I don't actually need to sort through every sodding shirt

MELISSA: Yeah I have to learn more from you.

(Helsingborg, 2014-02-17)

Using facts and imagination

Cornelia and Hanna speak about another way of learning in the fast fashion market. They talk about using the knowledge gained from university education, for instance from studies in areas such as marketing or media and communication. The knowledge they have about the fast fashion market and the fast fashion retailers is basically concerned with the structure of the supply chain, the design of new trends and communication. That is, Cornelia and Hanna explain to me that by choosing to write a bachelor thesis on fast fashion retailers, they have spent time researching the company, and how the fast fashion marketplace works. For example Cornelia and Hanna have written about H&M in their essays and theses. They speak about how they have learned facts about designer teams, how these teams decide on new trends far ahead of arrival in the store, and that there is little room (or no room) for improvisation once the garment is in production and in the supply chain. Also they speak of the power the design team have concerning decisions on new trends, and what will be available when in the stores. Cornelia explains how the design teams "set the agenda and decide what's coming. They do that a long time ahead so you're somehow dependent on them (.) the clothes that are available now in store have already been decided on long ago" (Malmö, 2013-04-10). More, Cornelia and Hanna speak of the time frame for new trends. For example, Hanna and Cornelia have some knowledge about the time frame of seeing a new trend on the catwalk, and the time it takes until fast fashion designers will pick it up and it will hit the shop floors of the fast fashion retailer. This knowledge that comes from studying fast fashion retailers provides some understanding of how the fast fashion industry operates, how the process of trend forecasting unfolds, which can help in consumption of fast fashion because it can perhaps give a sense of control of the speed of new trends. The knowledge participants demonstrate (however limited) is similar to procedures of trend forecasting (Cf. Kim, Fiore, Kim 2011), and as such the ways they approach the fast fashion market can be viewed as somewhat sophisticated (i.e. established ways, the way things are done in the fast fashion marketplace).

Additionally Cornelia and Hanna describe how they use their knowledge to imagine the work of the design team, such as what the different steps in the design and supply chain operations are. Participants describe learning by imagination as a way to create an idea of what is going on behind the scenes. This can perhaps be understood as that imagination can manifest itself as a type of scenario making

(Cf. Kim, Fiore and Kim 2011). Also Cornelia likes to imagine what it would be like being a fast fashion designer, knowing before everyone else what new trends will be in stores and when. She is trying to understand more about the market by pretending to be a fast fashion designer, to get the sense of or a feeling of how they work. More, she imagines what fashion designers might be thinking while they are sitting in a café watching all these people around them wearing the new trends from the fast fashion retailer they work for. Further, she imagines how designers may feel content already knowing what trends will be in fashion before it happens. Cornelia says:

> It's the fashion industry that determines what's available. I mean the designer people with foresight, those who are behind all these new trends, they know that this collection will soon be coming and people will be running around everywhere wearing it/…/they plan a year or two ahead before they release a collection or weeks for trends so they're way ahead and if it works out you usually, well then they know that the trends will be walking around town everywhere ((people wearing it)) they can sit in cafés and then they get to see their clothes like everywhere.

(Malmö, 2013-04-10)

In this discussion, learning is by imagination. And in this example, imagination takes the form of a daydream, and a daydream about people that are admired. In fashion, people that are the object for admiration are often seen as celebrities, and they can be fashion designers, fashion photographers or models (Pringle 2004; Church Gibson 2012). Admiration can manifest itself as imitation of dress, or as cherishing activities, know-how or ways of life, such as having celebrities as positive role models (Turner, Bonner and Marshall 2000; Pringle 2004; Church Gibson 2012). In this case imagination/daydreaming is closer to the role-model approach, as it seems admiration is tied to wanting to know what designers know, and perhaps wanting that kind of work in the future, however not about aspiring to be that exact person. Thus it may be about admiring the insights into the fast fashion market, and the presumed knowledge people are believed to have.

Summary of dimension two

The above sections in this passage have analysed a number of learning strategies. These are tracking and following, watching films, sorting, and imagination and daydreaming (a table of all learning strategies of Consumer Contextual Learning can be found in chapter eight).

The discussion above attempted to show how the use value of tools happens in the interplay of consumer experiences in the market (what are deemed sensible

sources of inspiration), the marketplace and what tools/sources are available (such as commercials, Facebook pages of retailers, YouTube etcetera), and other consumers such as haulers. That is, the usage of tools within the dynamics of social interactions and the way tools are used has been negotiated within a community of users. Hence, since participants in this study do not create tools, it is interesting to note that they make use of different tools, and how these tools are utilised (as shown above in the analysis). Yet participants to this study do not create any tools, neither do they in any major way contribute in developing the tools they make use of in their learning activities. But rather they follow how other consumers use tools. This consumer activity is in contrast to CCT research that has widely discussed the role of consumers in marketplace emergence, concentrating on the 'very' active consumer that wishes to bring about change in the marketplace. As discussed in the introduction chapter, some of this previous CCT work was a reaction to consumer behaviour research that sometimes simplified the role of consumers in the market, and perhaps downplayed the role of agency. However, in this case of learning in the marketplace participation occurs by utilising tools. Hence, they are still participating consumers even though their participation agenda looks different. This is of importance because their interest in the marketplace contributes to how it is evolving. That is, the activities participants engage in will have some influence on what happens in the marketplace.

Dimension three: learning by being present and close to the context

This section addresses findings related to the third dimension of Consumer Contextual Learning. It discusses findings on the geographical closeness of participants to the fast fashion market, and the importance of being constantly present. This is the focus of the third dimension, and it concerns how consumers learn by being constantly present and close to the context of their interest. This dedication to staying present is viewed as a joint enterprise because there is dedication in this 'way of doing things' to reach a common ground (i.e. to learn how the marketplace operates and get hold of the latest fast fashion items) (Cf. Wenger 1998). As previously explained in chapter three, the perspective on situated learning reinforces the idea of geographical closeness to the things someone wants to learn about. As Lave and Wenger (1991) explain, people are constantly present in the context of their interest while learning. The constant presence in the context makes learning an everyday activity (Lave and Wenger

1991). Here this means that all activities one engages in will tell you something about the fast fashion marketplace.

The fast fashion marketplace is understood as a wider sense of the retail environment. As was explained above, learning in the marketplace includes activities not confined to the retail store alone. In this study, being close to the context means valuing being physically present and geographically close to the marketplace, such as easily being able to travel or walk to, for example, the city centre and the high street. Whereas being constantly present means the time consumers spend in the marketplace, and what they learn as they spend time here. Thus what is in the centre of the discussion in the next section is the wider sense of the retail environment, and different ways many of the participants organise their lives to be able to stay close to this marketplace on an everyday basis, and how these activities make up a mobile lifestyle confined to the fast fashion marketplace. The outline is as follows: the next section highlights a wider understanding of the notion of the retail environment in contrast to previous work in consumer behaviour research, thereafter follows a discussion about the retail environment and how different learning activities are employed to spot changes to trends in the retail store. Because, even if the wider sense of the retail environment is important in how learning is approached in the fast fashion marketplace, the retail store in itself is also a venue for learning activities, and the combination of these create learning by being present and close to the context.

Learning by being physically present and geographically close to the marketplace

Learning in a fast-changing market, such as the fast fashion market, is about being physically present and geographically close to the market. Participants value the geographical closeness as this places them in direct contact with the venue where the action is taking place. That is, they see directly what is happening, and the fear of missing out on new trendy items is reduced. The cluster of fast fashion stores is the direct context of their learning, and the proximity of stores enables participants to swiftly observe what kind of new fashion items are available. It is also about watching what other people are doing and wearing as they hang around at bus stops or cafés (this was discussed above). Thus learning is here about spotting what is going on. As Fredriksson (1998) showed in her work on the department store and socialisation as learning, consumers can learn about a market by spending time there. Also, as Fredriksson (1998) argued, the time spent in the marketplace could be viewed as an investment in terms of learning outcomes.

Spotting new fashion items

The learning activity discussed in this section is spotting. To engage in the learning activity of spotting is to exercise some kind of proximity to the marketplace. For instance, making sure to constantly stay physically close to the retailers. Either by living close to the high street, which enables continued visits and walks by the stores on a daily basis, or by taking consistent detours to the retailers after leaving work or university (on their way home). The staying close to the marketplace is an everyday pursuit; i.e. a lot of time is spent on the move, that is time is spent on travelling to or from the marketplace or walking around the high street or shopping centre. Learning by spotting is basically about 'spotting on the move', being constantly in motion. Hence one of the most common activities to keep up on what is new and what is happening is to continually visit the marketplace and try to spot something out of the ordinary, finding that which is new. In the example below, Caroline, Desirée and I talk about how often they visit stores, but also how they go about doing that. In this case it involves getting off the bus a couple of stops before the actual bus stop at home, in order to walk along the high street and get a frequent update on new trends. I ask Caroline and Desirée how often in one week they visit a store, and the conversation develops into not only focusing on the store as the important venue for visits, but as Desirée points out the high street is her focus (here in this example the high street is Kullagatan):

> I: If it's kind of a normal week how often do you think you visit a shop?
>
> CAROLINE: Well that varies a lot, probably between one and five times on average, then some weeks it's more often and others none
>
> DESIRÉE: That's still rather a lot
>
> CAROLINE: Yeah and we live centrally
>
> DESIRÉE: Yes maybe not every day but every other day I sometimes get off the bus at the concert hall and walk home along Kullagatan so I can look in the shops 'cause I think it's nice to, well, see new things probably four times a week.

(Helsingborg, 2013-04-13)

Thus as was discussed above, learning in the marketplace includes activities not only in relation to the individual store, but also the high street and its surrounding areas. It is about, as we can see above in the example of Desiree's experience,

being physically present by taking a bus and alighting at the high street, making this a habit on the way home from work. In this case, her living close to the high street reinforces this action and she can "walk home along Kullagatan" (Helsingborg, 2013-04-13).

In addition to repeated walks along the high street, and keeping count of how many times they visit the high street and fast fashion retailers, some of the participants perceive the efforts they make to spot new trends as a job. There is value in spotting, and the efforts made to be physically present and geographically close to the marketplace can be viewed as a shared enterprise among the participants (Cf. Wenger 1998). The efforts made, the time and energy spent at exercising spotting, are substantial and possibly considered 'the way things are done', and keeping to it maintains social competence as fast fashion consumers. Therefore spotting is understood as work because some of the participants find that they spend a considerable amount of time and energy on participating in the marketplace, and to explore the changing rhythm of fashion. Hence it is considered work as these efforts are equated with other daily chores, such as studying at university and doing your homework or actual paid work. As Cornelia explains in the example below:

> CORNELIA: Yeah and I'm thinking that lots of people are hanging around there 'cause you want to find out if there are any new arrivals 'cause if you live fairly close to the town centre you kind of check if there's anything new in H&M 'cause I just can't miss anything like and I'm thinking that imagine how much energy you spend and time not to miss anything and why do I do it and why is it so important to us, imagine how important it is you just, you might be doing your homework and I get so…I'm thinking I might rush downtown 'cause you kind of lose time ((while doing homework)) it's so tempting, and shopping is so important well of course your job or whatever you do Monday to Friday is important but then you have to spend time on your identity in your own time so it gets, it's also a kind of a job well it takes time and commitment and there must be some kind of drive that people can be bothered to spend so much time and effort on a thing like that, instead of reading a book we're chasing around after the latest.

(Malmö, 2013-04-10)

In the example above we can see how there is value in the daily visits to the town centre in the same manner as they value work or, as Cornelia explains, whatever they do Monday to Friday. The value is perhaps tied to the fear of missing out on new items. Being physically present on the high street can thus be an activity that will increase the likelihood of not missing out. Yet Cornelia is not content with randomly being present, as we have seen above. Instead she makes an effort to be present, and spends energy and time on constantly being on the move, making sure it will bring her close to the marketplace. Thus work is here an emic term, and

concerns work in the sense that a lot of time and energy is spent on this activity, and as discussed in chapter one it can give social recognition as a competent fast fashion consumer, among other consumers. However, work is not understood as consumer production (work as economic production or having an impact on the surrounding environment (Cova and Dalli 2009)).

Timing the new arrivals

One other distinctive learning activity is timing. Many of the participants use timing, to be present at 'the right time' on the high street when the delivery lorry arrives (for example at Kullagatan on Fridays at around 10.00am there is a delivery to H&M). This is in order to be able to acquire the latest fashion. By using timing as an activity they can also learn about how important the time of delivery of new items is to understanding what kind of market offerings are in the fast fashion stores right now, and where these new items can be found. Participants describe how new arrivals tend to knock what is left of previous trends down the trend sections, to other areas of the store. Or trends that do not sell well will be moved off the shelves. Timing is thus about knowing what is out there in the fast fashion marketplace at the moment, but also being there at 'the right time' (i.e. when new arrivals are on the racks). As Klara explains: "I have a pretty good idea what's out there but I wouldn't have such a good idea if I hadn't worked on the high street, I can be there at the right time" (Malmö, 2013-04-28). Previous consumer research (Schau, Muñiz and Arnould 2009) shows how consumers have developed an understanding of how a car is manufactured, understanding the steps from order to delivery and how they as consumers are expected to act and feel during this time period. Yet, compared to the learning activity of timing discussed here, Schau, Muñiz and Arnould (2009) show that it happens, but not how this happens, i.e. how consumers come to know about the process of car manufacturing and delivery. Here we can see a bit of how this can happen, namely by being present in the fast fashion marketplace at the right time, hanging around the high street watching delivery lorries, and as discussed in dimension one, by asking shop assistants about delivery days.

Additionally, the idea of timing is one of the key success factors for H&M (Falk 2011). Here timing refers to logistics, and the ability of the retailer to get the right kind of trendy fashion item to the right place at the right time. Further, this idea of timing infiltrates the direct context of the store layout, and the spirit of timing surrounds the participants. As noted above, participants sense the importance of trying to make sense of the idea of timing, in order to get hold of the latest items. Thus timing holds meaning for the participants and they stay constantly ready and alert. The meaning of timing and being ready, and the value of new arrivals and what is "hot" now, is also reflected in the retail store messages, mentioned in chapter five. The rapid turnaround of fashion garments is communicated to

consumers in the form of mural paintings, and shop windows. The pictures below show messages of the importance of ‘now’ in window displays. In the first picture the text reads: ‘This is now: Mission Collection’. The text in the second picture reads: ‘This is now: from Monday to Sunday’.

To sum up, by being physically present on the high street or in the retail store the learning activities of spotting and timing are employed to learn about what is happening 'right now', and it seems these activities make for constant motion in the retail setting to get a sense of control of the new arrivals. In addition to these learning activities, many participants speak about how they try to pick up clues from the retail setting. Here another kind of learning activity is utilised, namely the activity of scanning.

Scanning

In the interviews some of the participants speak about finding clues by scanning the front of the stores or by scanning window displays, as they pass by on the high street. Thus scanning is predominantly an activity that is about gazing from the outside into the store. For example, in one of the interviews we had discussions about how to scan changes in window layout or store displays, such as change of garments or of text. This topic created enthusiasm in the interview setting, and I mostly asked follow-up questions for clarification. Such as in the example below, asking Caroline to further explain how she learns about new (seasonal) arrivals by how colours change in window displays:

> I: Yeah you see directly that's where I'm heading?
>
> CAROLINE: Yeah you spot a colour or yeah especially now when it's spring and the colours are coming so you can pass a shop and look at the windows and entrance and you notice that now they've arrived, yeah there are a pair of red trousers over there and then you get attracted to that.

(Helsingborg, 2013-04-13)

In one of the other interviews, Alice points out how she scan the shop windows to notice if the fast fashion retailer has changed the merchandise in the window display. If there is a change, Alice explains how this change makes her enter the store, to explore if there are any other kinds of new trendy items on the actual racks (or if it is just a teaser). In the following example Alice speaks about spending time scanning window displays in order to find out if there are new trendy arrivals in store:

> ALICE: Yeah you can see that, /…/ when you go shopping in the high street you will see that they've changed something, like at the front of the store or in the window and then you automatically check if something is new, I notice things like that and remember to look for that.

(Malmö, 2013-02-13)

In this example, Alice points out that she remembers to scan for changes. This may suggest that this is a repetitive learning activity she engages in, and it seems she has some understanding of how retail spaces work (i.e. changes in displays for the high street). Correspondingly, retail stores are places that are strategically planned by the retailer, and this is nothing new to researchers. In her work on servicescapes, Bitner (1992) argues that this places structured consumer behaviour within servicescapes. In more recent work Aubert-Gamet and Cova (1998) show how consumer experience and behaviour is not necessarily determined solely by retailer intentions, instead consumers create their own meaning or negotiate their own understanding of the servicescape. In the fast fashion retail store, the fast fashion culture of speed and newness can be translated/materialised by the retailer in the servicescape by using particular visual cues, such as the 'hero piece' (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood 2010). Barnes and Lea-Greenwood (2010) explain that a 'hero piece' is a new and trendy statement item (usually in glitter or colour) that is used by the fast fashion retailer to attract attention from consumers.

In fast fashion shopping, learning activities are not necessarily determined by retailer intentions, yet it seems consumers are influenced by these intentions. From the quote above by Caroline (2013-03-13), the red trousers can be seen as a 'hero piece' that signals that new items are now in store. Also, the quote by Alice shows that she equals a change in the display with 'newness', that is, new items have arrived in the store. Thus participants are not only aware that fast fashion retailers work in a specific way, consumers have also learned how to take advantage of this knowledge in their everyday consumption of fast fashion. As Alice says: "then you automatically check if something is new, I notice things like that and remember to look for that" (Malmö 2013-02-22). This knowledge is then meaningful to the consumer in the sense that they can improve attentiveness to new things and overall will make the shopping experience (spending time at the retailer) more efficient/worthwhile. Hence contextual learning is here tied to the experience of constantly being present and it highlights how this presence has, over time, made Alice and Caroline attuned to what is going on in the marketplace. Thus to conclude, learning in the market by, for example, using the activity of spotting, is here about being close to and present in the marketplace, and as such learning can be understood as situated (Lave and Wenger 1991). Additionally situated learning is not just about being there. While being present participants engage in a number of different activities (Cf. Lave and Wenger 1991), such as spotting new trends or scanning for the newly arrived items in the window displays.

The next section discusses the idea of learning by being physically present and geographically close to the market in relation to the actual retail store. It addresses how learning is also situated in the store, in parallel with the high street as discussed above. In addition, the next section shows how important actual presence is to the participants, despite their online activities on social media

etcetera, as discussed above in dimension two of CCL. The majority of participants speak about how learning activities, such as following on social media cannot replace being present in the fast fashion marketplace. An explanation for preferring shopping in the store rather than online can perhaps be found in the statement by John Thorbeck in the Business of Fashion article 'The Rise of Indie Fast Fashion' from 2016. ""Fast fashion has yet to be an online phenomenon," says John Thorbeck, chairman of analytics firm Chainge Capital LLC. "Zara and other big names were relatively late to online. So it's really been a store-driven experience and the online existed to drive traffic to stores" (Phelan 2016).

Learning by spending time in the retail stores

Participants spend time in being present and close to the context, and this does not only include learning about the arrivals of new trends at the high street level (as discussed above in terms of spotting and scanning activities), but also learning how to find new arrivals as they venture into the retail stores. The latter is in focus in this sections, we have spoken at length about how to identify new trends in retail stores. For example, we have talked much about how to search for new items in a manner that is meaningful to the pursuit of fast fashion consumption of the latest arrivals. Thus learning is here in this section about search activities, which are concentrated on studying the changes in the servicescape in order to figure out the arrival of new trends. That is, amongst participants a reoccurring view is that these search activities are employed in order to pay attention to what is happening in the retail store.

Searching in the store

Taking all the interviews together, I find that participants use search activities in two main ways. First, participants speak about browsing or quickly walking around the fast fashion stores. They use a general sweeping searching style, where they browse large areas of the retail store by walking along the aisles of racks of clothes, constantly letting their eyes wander over the clothes. The participants speak about gaining a rough picture of changes in the displays of clothes that indicate what is new, and the ambition is not to buy new clothes but to get a sense of what items are new and interesting. For example, Hanna speaks about browsing and how she walks in and out of different fast fashion stores:

> Well I walk in and out the shops I like, the ones I know, I don't know why I've chosen these particular shops but they're easy to go through 'cause they're bigger and if you're not intending to buy anything if you're just browsing like, well just looking around like 'cause I often look around without buying anything.

(Malmö, 2013-04-10)

Second, participants mention how they move quickly but are attentive to detail. If there is anything of particular interest, such as a specific new trend or a specific item, they argue that they will find it. It seems from the accounts given by participants, that this search activity is only, however, possible or meaningful since it is an activity that is undertaken regularly. That is, present findings can be compared to previous results from the day before and the day before that. Moreover, it is a possibility that these search activities can be understood as being quick as participants have already established a baseline, that is they know what is in the store based on their daily visits, and new items and trends will stand out from the older stock of clothes. Looking back at media talk about fast fashion consumers, as discussed in chapter five, this activity is sometimes understood as insignificant or irrational (hoarding etc.), but as explained above it can be the groundwork in identifying new items and trends.

In the same interview in direct connection to Hanna's statement above, Cornelia agrees with Hanna, and she links the content of what Hanna said to observations she herself has made on similar behaviour among other consumers in the retail store. Cornelia speaks about other consumers hanging around in the fast fashion store, implying that they are engaged in similar search activities. She mentions that if you live close to the city centre, you will check out if there is anything new. Further, she concludes that much time and energy is spent on hanging around in the stores to make sure new items are paid attention to. This way of going about identifying new trends can be viewed as an expression of what Wenger (1998) describes as the way things are done, and there seems to be a shared sense of repertoire maintained (Wenger 1998). Cornelia says:

> Yeah and I'm thinking that lots of people are hanging around there 'cause they want to find out if there are any new arrivals 'cause if you live fairly close to the city centre you kind of check if there's anything new in H&M 'cause I just can't miss anything like and I'm thinking that imagine how much energy and time you spend not to miss anything /---/.

(Malmö, 2013-04-10)

Second, participants speak of how search activities help them locate and learn about certain areas of the retail store. It tells them that certain displays of clothes

on tables are for “cheap crap” (Alice, Malmö, 2013-02-13), whereas the retailer, for example, uses other areas to display certain colours or types of clothes. Participants describe how after a while they do not need to spend much time identifying the different sections every time (every day) they visit, but can make use of their previous visits. In the example below, Alice speaks about learning the different sections of the fast fashion store. While speaking about search activities at Zara, Alice uses her hands as she visualises the store:

> ALICE: Yeah they're ((Zara)) rather consistent but H&M not at all but there ((at Zara)) you know on the top floor there is ((talks as if she is visualising the store in her head)) and then there's that, so it's enough that you just look ah right okay over there is just a lot of black so you've learned something, and the stuff on the tables it's kind of cheap crap and yeah there are other things that are really chaotic ((like the tables)) 'cause well they ((Zara)) don't care about the stuff ((if it is cheap crap)) and it probably sells anyway.

(Malmö, 2013-02-13)

However, as noted above, some of the participants also speak about how they notice how retailers (especially H&M) tend to move items around and frequently change the store layout. Yet as they explain, if you visit often and have an understanding of how the fast fashion retailer usually displays their items, then it does not take long to figure out where to find a specific new trend or a specific item.

After locating items of interest it is time to examine the trend or items closely. Participants speak of a shift in movements. For instance they explain how they go from using a distant scanning activity where they mostly use their eyes to scan large areas, to moving closer to the clothing racks using both of their hands to sort through hangers of clothes, or to examine certain items more closely and to feel the material. In the interviews I have asked questions of how to go about searching for new trends, and in the example below Nicole and Klara describe search activities and closer examination procedures, as well as how they combine these two to quickly find new fast fashion items:

> I: Would you say that when you look through the racks, do you look at each garment or do you browse?
>
> NICOLE: A bit of both, I guess I take a general look and if then I see something exciting I walk up and take a closer look but I imagine that, when it comes to most clothes, if you go shopping on a regular basis you recognise what type of garment it is and I know I don’t like to wear certain clothes, I don’t think they suit me so then I reject them straight away even if I like the colour or the pattern so this is not for me and this is not for me and then suddenly something catches your eye that looks exciting and then you have to go up and touch it

> KLARA: I go through them ((sections)) rather quickly, you kind of have an idea of what you're looking for so you kind of take a general look at the section, then you walk up to something and then I look *only* at one garment.

(Malmö, 2013-04-28)

As previously noted in this section, to identify new arrivals through these activities is only possible as participants visit the fast fashion store regularly and have previous visits to compare to. That is, the new items would not be considered new if it were not for the regular visits. If visits were seldom many more or all items would appear new. Hence participants would not be able to distinguish between old and new items, and thus would not know if they are missing out on the latest items. It seems these examination activities are important in not missing out on something new. This is also an example of how being present and close to the marketplace is key in fast fashion consumption. It shows the value of taking time (spending time on doing something) and dedicating time to learning, which has also been pointed out in the work by Maciel and Wallendorf (2016) on developing aesthetic expertise. They show how cultivating expertise in a social domain, such as the craft beer context, is a combined result of different extensive practices to develop mastery.

However, participants do not automatically purchase items only because they are new. As concluded above in chapter five, a common understanding in news media is that fast fashion consumers buy anything as soon as they find something that is new. In news media the picture of the fast fashion consumer as hoarding enormous amounts of clothes is common, and as we could see in chapter five, Tiplady (2006) concluded in her news piece that fast fashion consumers thrive on hoarding as much as possible. The most important part of the shopping venture for this consumer is to hoard new items and get to experience instant gratification (Tiplady 2006).

How then do participants learn to distinguish between the new trendy items they like and the ones they dislike, and what makes them choose certain items? Participants usually examine design, fit and colour of items. However the material of items does not seem to be a major concern among participants, and if it is mentioned it does not seem to be an everyday issue. For instance, Beatrice answers the question about whether or not she feels the material of clothes and considers wash care labels by saying that: "No I never do, but I have a friend so when we go shopping together, well she's an engineer working with textiles so she really looks at this tag, and look this is no good" (Malmö, 2013-10-29). In contrast and as mentioned above, the design, fit and colour of items seems more important to all participants, and as we can see from the example and quote above, Nicole speaks about the significance of the design (cut or fit) of clothes. In the quote following

below, Desirée, Caroline and I speak about learning about different clothing items. We are in the middle of a conversation on evaluating the new garments they have identified. As the excerpt from the conversation shows, this activity involves many steps, for instance checking for colour and fit, and then deciding if the item will be tried on in the fitting room. This means, if the item does not pass the first stage of inspection then it is left on the rack. In the excerpt below, I have just asked the participants how they investigate new items, and in answer to this question there is agreement between Desirée and Caroline that measuring clothes is one such activity. I keep probing how this is done, and the excerpt below begins with how garments are scrutinised by measuring them:

> I: Yeah that's one way of doing it. So do you usually measure the clothes like you just said?
>
> DESIRÉE: Right I do it sometimes
>
> I: Now what can you tell really?
>
> DESIRÉE: If it'll be too short, yeah but if it's a dress or tunic and you don't quite know, and I want a dress then maybe I leave it if it looks more like a tunic.
>
> CAROLINE: Yeah I always try for length and size 'cause my upper body is quite long and I've got long legs too so often dresses or well tunics are too short 'cause they're supposed to reach further down, and then I'll hold them up in front of me, especially dresses when you can put the hanger behind your neck and see how far it reaches, yeah if it doesn't cover my bum there no point trying it on really.

(Helsingborg, 2013-04-13)

Thus for an observer these purchase decisions can appear as swift and impulsive. But as we have seen above, this is a result of extensive scanning and search activities, both distant and closer examination, undertaken by participants. These activities are thoughtful, and there is both effort and time behind these activities, thus these shopping behaviours are not a whim, suddenly invented on the spot.

Summary of dimension three

The above sections in this passage have analysed a number of learning strategies. These are spotting, scanning, browsing and timing (and as pointed out earlier, a table of all learning strategies of Consumer Contextual Learning can be found in chapter eight). In the analysis above, the importance of the geographical closeness of participants to the fast fashion market, and the key of being constantly present in fast fashion consumption was discussed. It showed that a wider sense of the

retail environment is vital for consumer learning strategies. That means, it is not just the retail store that matters but the high street is also vital as well as choosing to live close to the marketplace, exiting at earlier bus stops to get a chance to walk along the high street, and organising things so that the going home route includes the high street and surrounding areas. Learning in the marketplace by being constantly present is a way of organising everyday life. As was touched upon above, being present is a key feature of fast fashion consumption, and it seems important to not disconnect from what is going on in the marketplace. Hence, place has importance in fast fashion consumption. More, it seems fast fashion consumption is a store phenomenon compared to an online fashion consumption (at least within this group of consumers). Perhaps for this group of consumers, fast fashion is not an online shopping option because the time it takes for delivery might not be ideal. Particularly if delivery cannot be made before the items arrive in stores.

Summary and concluding remarks

This section first addresses conclusions from the analysis of chapter six, and secondly turns to new questions that have arisen. These new questions will be addressed in chapter seven. This chapter has shown the nature of Consumer Contextual Learning by discussing learning activities utilised by participants. It has aimed at teasing out what kinds of activities are used, and how these activities are utilised to learn in the marketplace. It has identified how learning is multifaceted as it concerns many kinds of strategies employed to explore the marketplace of fast fashion from various angles. Furthermore it has shown that activities of learning are 'strategies of how', such as imitating, imagining, scanning, or spotting. It means that the focus is on what consumers do as they learn, and not the way learning activities develop over time, or why these activities develop.

Furthermore, for dimension one participants seem to be more active themselves in engaging in ways of how to get to know the marketplace, whereas in dimensions two and three the context is more present in shaping learning activities. However, as was discussed, even if participants do not, for example, create any tools or in any major way contribute to developing the tools they use, they are still participating consumers but their participation agenda looks different. It is more aimed at following. Also, even though the three dimensions of Consumer Contextual Learning have largely been discussed separately (for the purpose of helping us study and discuss what Consumer Contextual Learning is), it is still important to remember that these dimensions in practice overlap and interact with each other.

In parallel, the chapter has demonstrated the number of different ways one can be sure to get hold of the latest fast fashion items. Basically, the learning activities are also a means for getting ahold of new items. The participants demonstrate how learning in the marketplace concerns matters such as what to do to find out if, or when, the latest item is in the stores, and how they can get hold of it. The goal seems to be about mastering issues such as 'instant gratification', 'not missing out', and 'timing'. It seems to come down to: how to handle the changing character of the fast fashion market.

Similarly the findings in the chapter show that there is more to the story on learning activities. When examining the many learning activities we can see that there is high value attached to the new. In a context of constant change the quest for newness takes centre stage. It is connected to the understanding that fast fashion provides 'buy now, wear now' kind of garments, and it caters to the widely known practice of instant gratification in the fast fashion marketplace. There is no waiting around for seasonal collections, but in a similar way we are

now instantly streaming TV series on Netflix and music from Spotify, fast fashion offers a constant stream of new fashion items.

In this discussion, new should be understood in the temporal sense. Meaning that the new is about change, the new does not imply anything different/novel (such as a technical innovation) from what went before/came before this trend (it was just another trend), rather it is about cyclical, such as weekly, change (i.e. new arrivals on a weekly basis) (Cf. Campbell 2015). Seen in this light, the driver of consumption can be freshness (the new as fresh and newly created), and there can be a sense of both the thrill of the new and a replacement need (Campbell 1992).

Just as in the study of consumer desire (Belk, Ger and Askegaard 2003), the journey (how to go about acquiring new items) can in itself be fulfilling, not just the outcome of getting hold of the new. Meaning, the thrill of the chase is important, and it seems the appeal for newness is a central issue for how participants operate in the market (handle the changing character of the fast fashion market).

The urge for the new can be connected to how participants tend to use the rhythm/speed, (experienced in the marketplace) in learning activities. The speed of fast fashion is accounted for by, for instance, trying to adjust experiences of a high paced environment through strategies which can make speed feel less constant. Thus there can be rhythm to learning activities, and the next chapter addresses what it means for learning in the context of the fast fashion market.


GRAB IT NOW
TOMORROW IT MIGHT

Chapter 7

Time work in Consumer Contextual Learning activities

This chapter advances understanding of Consumer Contextual Learning activities by investigating the temporal character of learning activities. Temporality is an intrinsic aspect of consumer behaviour (e.g. Woermann and Rokka 2015; Van de Peer 2014; Cotte, Rathneswar and Mick 2004), and as Arnould (2005) shows, retail environments can make market offerings seem more appealing and attractive to consumers if the environment mirrors consumers' preferred timestyles. While research on timestyles of consumers has illustrated how retail environments can be temporal resources, this chapter focuses on investigating temporality in consumption of the new. In this consumption there is a systematic appreciation for the new; there is fascination in experiencing what is new. This appreciation of the new has been studied in other fields of consumption, such as food tourism consumer behaviour. Hall and Mitchell (2003; 2004) term the attraction to the new, neophilia. They use the example of the interest and involvement of tourists with new foods to describe this love for the new. Hence what is important here in this study is the craze for the new, the systematic appreciation for the new in consumption activities, such as the learning activities tied to the constant chasing and acquiring of the new; new arrivals and new items in the fast fashion marketplace.

Hence, this chapter looks at how pace is connected to consumption activities, that is, the strategies participants utilise in learning activities to manage the fast-moving dimension of the market. As discussed in the summary of chapter six, Consumer Contextual Learning activities concern, for instance, the chasing and acquiring of new items. The new is highly valued, and participants relentlessly seek new arrivals in the fast fashion marketplace. But to effectively get hold of new items, the speed of the market needs to be handled by employing strategies to manage the pace of fast fashion.

Participants use the speed of the market. Thus the experience of speed is in focus (the experience being the actions of seeing and doing things). Participants notice the speed and act on it. They align learning activities with the rhythm experienced,

or they can try to alter and control this experienced pace of the market. In connection with this experience of speed and pace, it is timely to point out that the empirical notions of pace, rhythm and speed are treated as synonyms in this chapter and refer to and describe the 'fast' aspect of the fast fashion market.

In the next paragraphs I introduce the concept of time work (Flaherty 2003, 2011). In this study time work equals the strategies participants utilise to manage the fast moving dimension of the market. That is, time work constitutes the learning activities. The merit of this concept for this chapter lies in how it acknowledges that people can alter or customise temporal experience to get a sense of control of what is going on in their surroundings.

Flaherty (2003:17) defines time work as "individual or interpersonal efforts to create or supress particular kinds of temporal experience". These time work efforts are marked by purposefulness, and their distinguishing feature is the dedication towards a goal (i.e. for instance controlling time to make it go faster or slower) (Flaherty 2003). Time work is about individual experiences in a situation but created in the interaction of people. It is a committed work shared by people, and as such it bears similarities with the ways of learning (such as the social competence, individual experience and the joint enterprise) formulated by Wenger (1998), and which was used in chapter six to discuss CCL. For instance, as we discussed in chapter six there is dedication in 'a way of doing things' to reach a common goal (Wenger 2000). Additionally, Wenger (1998) points out that 'the way of doing things' is constantly reinvented: "Because the world is in flux and conditions always change, any practice must constantly be reinvented, even as it remains "the same practice"" (Wenger 1998:94). It is a response to a world that frequently brings new circumstances (Wenger 1998). The point to be made here is that bringing the two streams of literature together we can hopefully unpack how participants learn together with others and how these learning activities can be temporal in their character.

Flaherty and Fine (2001) build the concept of time work on the writings of Mead and his ideas on time. Yet even if Mead's (1938/1972) ideas of time is his least developed work, it holds central insights into how people's experience of time is formed in the interaction with other people and the situation they are in. For Flaherty and Fine (2001) the appeal of Mead's work concerns the symbolic interactionist approach to time, as well as Mead's (1938/1972) distinct attention to people actively imagining and interpreting past and future events to make sense of time.

Flaherty and Fine (2001) and Flaherty (2003) develop a concept that shows the capacity for action people have as they engage in time work. For example, one can choose various responses to different situations, not just react the same way to every situation. As was noted, the concept of time work includes both individual

and interpersonal efforts or actions (as defined above). In this study, I see the room for manoeuvre in time work actions as the possibility people have to (micro)manage their own involvement with the surrounding environment (by for instance altering the experience of time). Flaherty identifies different broad themes that account for different types of time work: duration, frequency, sequence, timing, and allocation (Flaherty 2003).

Furthermore, as mentioned above the concept of time work is both about individual actions and interpersonal efforts. Thus Flaherty and Fine (2001) and Flaherty (2003) argue that time work can be articulated and manifested as individual strategies. That is, time work would be the strategies a consumer uses to alter or customise their temporal experience. Consequently, altering or customising actions describes how individuals attempt to manipulate or control their own experience of temporality. For example, Flaherty (2003) shows how people can avoid looking at their watch during a long-haul flight to make time pass faster, or how people will try to control how often something happens, like making a schedule for the frequency of going to the gym. Yet as the definition of time work shows, time work is also about interpersonal efforts and these actions are conditioned by social relationships (Flaherty 2003). Relationships, at the same time, encourage or discourage particular forms of efforts, the social interaction can limit the room of action of individuals and at other times it can support their efforts (and give them encouragement and energy). More, the context (in this case the fast fashion market and social norms and values) of these efforts conditions time work. Thus time work strategies are formed in social interaction with other people (people make meaning together), and in interaction with the market, at the same time people have choices in how they engage in time work by for instance manipulating or controlling their temporal experience (Flaherty 2003).

To summarise, Flaherty (2011) explains how people engage in time work efforts to alter or customise temporal experience. According to Flaherty (2011), altering or customising is further understood as either manipulating or controlling temporal experiences. In time work activities in the fast fashion market it seems possible for participants to use a number of strategies to alter or customise the experienced temporality of, for instance, how often new arrivals can be found and bought. To give an example, consumers can try and increase the frequency of their visits to the store, they can modify the experience of the number of visits with the help of others (i.e. watching haul videos can substitute for a visit to the actual store).

To conclude this section, on the one hand, many of the CCL activities discussed in chapter six (such as scanning or observing) are concerned with temporality even if that was not the main focus in the above analysis. On the other hand there are other types of activities (other ways of looking at the same kind of activities, as

well as different activities), which have a more evident temporal character. These learning activities will be investigated in this chapter.

The next sections will investigate different types of time work efforts in the fast fashion market, which will show how participants use strategies to account for their temporal experience in order to learn. The first section investigates how participants utilise different types of time work strategies to manage the newness of fast fashion. This section has two sub-parts, where the first part deals with how time work activities are employed to keep up with the pace of the fast fashion market. This is followed by the second part, which is an account that addresses attempts at slowing the pace down by using time work strategies to make sense of the market. The chapter ends with the second section, which provides a discussion on a central issue of fast fashion consumption, namely, when does the new turn into the old? It addresses associated time work strategies identified among participants' approaches to this question.

Newness

As highlighted at the beginning of the previous section, the new is highly valued. The newness of fast fashion items plays a significant role in the everyday life. Melissa speaks about how wearing a new item makes her feel reassured during the day: "I don't think I could get through the day if I didn't feel safe with what I'm wearing because I know it's the new latest thing" (Helsingborg, 2014-02-14).

To further illustrate the central role of newness in fast fashion consumption an excerpt from a conversation between Amina and Therese follows. Amina starts by saying: "I think it's interesting this attitude to fast fashion that you buy a lot and the price doesn't matter as long as it's trendy and new. Like let's say from Gina and H&M, when you buy something new everyone says, ooh that's good" (Helsingborg, 2013-03-04). Here we see that the new (and trendy) is valued more than price, and furthermore it is valued among the group of friends that encourage the choice of purchasing something new. Therese follows up by adding that: "it's cool if you find something new as soon as it arrives, and yeah that's really important" (Helsingborg, 2013-03-04). Later on in this same conversation Amina concludes with a powerful statement: "yeah it's good fast fashion. You've got expectations of new items, you know it's where the new fresh trends will turn up first, and we get used to it, and we teach it to our kids. That's the way it is, and yeah that's how it goes" (Helsingborg, 2013-03-04). Thus according to Amina the new seems to hold such a value that the benefits of fast fashion are taught to the children. Furthermore, Amina's concluding words on the place given to fast fashion in their lives point to a way of being and thinking, in a particular kind of

consumer culture. That is to say, fast fashion is consumed because of the newness it offers, and it fulfils the high expectations of providing new items when wanted.

The new is what fast fashion consumption revolves around, and thus it involves creating ways of getting hold of this newness. In this study, efforts to acquire new items are recurrent in the narratives of the participants. Participants speak about seeking new arrivals in the fast fashion marketplace. In the data there are various ways participants report of newness. For instance, many speak of efforts made to constantly stay up to date, and explain how they sometimes want shopping to be fast in order to get hold of new items before they are sold out.

In the following sections different forms of time work activities which account for experiences such as 'shopping should be fast', and other forms of temporal experiences of consumption activities are addressed. All time work activities are efforts made to make sense of the fast changing market and to get hold of the latest fashion items. Before moving on to the various ways participants report of making sense of newness and thus finding ways to get hold of it, the notion of newness is defined and then briefly discussed in connection to participants' experiences of the fast fashion marketplace and its changing character.

Newness can be defined as the quality of being new (Coskuner-Balli and Sandiki 2014). It is this quality of being new that has significance here. The state of newness and its appeal is tied to the social meaning of a new item/product among consumers (Cf. Coskuner-Balli and Sandiki 2014). In a fast fashion context, the social meaning of newness revolves around products being fresh, shiny and trendy. The attraction to newness is linked to its role in the constant game of competition and acceptance from other fast fashion consumers (as explained in chapter six). Likewise newness is central to the project of renewing the wardrobe (as discussed in chapter five, and will be discussed here at the end of this chapter).

The point of departure in this chapter is that participants perceive, and speak of, the fast fashion market as being constantly changing, meaning the experience of temporality is tied to a context which is in flux, never stable but always shifting (Cf. Wenger 1998). Accordingly this is the context in which time work activities are utilised. Jonathan speaks about the context and why he finds an interest in the never-ending change of fast fashion: "Well to me fashion is something that's constantly changing, that's why it's interesting. I like to keep track of it, and I've always worked with clothes in one way or another, so it's natural but the fact that there's something new all the time that is important /…/, and if you talk about fast fashion it changes all the time so you never reach the end, there's always something going on (Helsingborg, 2014-02-17). As addressed in chapter five, the fast fashion market is about speedy change/cyclical change, such as new arrivals on a weekly or daily basis. For instance there are new collections arriving each week, while each arrival of a new collection is not reserved for one day in the

week, but delivery occurs on several days in the week, each day seeing the arrival of a new collection (hence new arrivals on a weekly and daily basis).

In the fashion literature, fashion is usually understood as a process of recurrent change (e.g. Aspers and Godart 2013; Kawamura 2005; Breward 2003). In this study this cyclical change does not imply predictable change (or perhaps mechanistic change), rather the cyclical change of fashion is in flux, and created in the social interaction of people's actions. For instance, in the fast fashion store, as we have seen in examples in chapters five and six, new arrivals should arrive every week and be available for consumers, yet the cyclical flow can sometimes seize up. Meaning floor ready merchandise may get stuck in the delivery room (see also Barnes and Lea-Greenwood 2010). Thus it does not make it to the floor at the time it was set to, yet it made it to the retail storage area on schedule. Scheduled arrivals (like new arrivals on a cyclical schedule) are however the type of new items participants care about. That said, the social meaning of the new is what is central to the participants. The new arrivals (even if they arrived in the store a while ago) will be new to the participant until she finds it in the racks on the shop floor. Hence, change to new fashion trends in fast fashion is not straightforward, and in the next section I address how participants speak about making sense of change and keeping up with the new arrivals.

Chasing the market

There are common features in the data that concern activities which are described as fast or quick. This section addresses efforts made by participants to follow and keep up with the pace of new arrivals in the fast fashion market (by using these speedy/quick activities). It investigates what keeping up with the pace of the marketplace means. That is, chasing the market by looking at speedy or quick activities using the notion of time work. Time work activities addressed in this section are: creating routines, setting a time frame for store visits, and moving quickly in the store.

Participants seem to share a common approach to the rhythm of the market. They speak about a fast-moving marketplace and how they, in their actions, try to keep up with this perceived pace. In this section, time work activities that occur as participants try to align their actions with the pace of the market are discussed. Monitoring and trying to keep pace with a fast-moving market is perhaps a way to keep in control of what is going on in the market.

Furthermore, trying to align efforts with the pace of the market creates a particular kind of temporal experience. This kind of temporal experience is here understood as actions involved in 'chasing the fast fashion market'. The following discussion looks at time work strategies involved in learning the pace of the marketplace.

That is, the time work activities that occur as participants try to align their actions with the pace of the market.

Creating routines and regularities

'Chasing the market' is about figuring out the pace of the fast fashion marketplace. As participants try to align their actions with the rhythm/tempo of the market, they try to figure out how the marketplace operates. One important aspect seems to be to figure out the pace of new items, how items arrive in store and when they become sold out (i.e. the chase of new arrivals). The time work activity in this case is about creating routines or repetitive actions. For instance, participants speak of learning that a new item needs to be bought straight away. In the data a recurrent action many of the participants underline is: acting on the spot. This action is perceived to result in new arrivals being secured. As Therese tells us about in one of the interviews, market offerings tend to run out quickly and if she wants to get hold of the new items she says she has learnt to act straight away:

> I have an idea of what's new and you want the latest and if you find something you want right now, you have to go for it before it disappears, so you have to buy it straight away at the first visit, that's something I've learned, you can't think about it too long you have to buy it straight away.

(Helsingborg, 2013-03-04)

More, the time work activity of creating routines can also involve actions of trying to figure out when new arrivals are due, and making room for visits to the store at the time of delivery. In the same interview Amina adds directly to Therese's comment by saying that: "I've noticed that too! It's not there anymore and the shop was full when the new things arrived and the girl in the shop said that new things will be arriving on Tuesday so then you have to make sure you go" (Helsingborg, 2013-03-04). Here we can see that it seems important to create a routine of visits that follow this arrival schedule, as Amina puts it when you get information on new arrivals "then you have to make sure you go" (Helsingborg, 2013-03-04).

Here we can see how Therese and Amina speak about learning the pace of the market by using a time work activity about exercising some kind of regularity of visits (which corresponds with information about new arrivals). Nonetheless, since new arrivals are an ongoing event, there will be new items on an everyday basis regardless of whether the participants are present or not. The question is then, how often will one decide to encounter this newness. That is, how often does one make new arrivals part of the daily agenda? And how long a time does one choose to spend in the fast fashion store?

As noted above, Therese and Amina talk about exercising some kind of regularity to learn how the pace of the market works. They are not alone in this endeavour. What is interesting in this approach to the market is that most participants visit the fast fashion stores frequently; several times a week and during a weekend visits are longer and more frequent. That is, in the data we can see how it is possible to customise how often something occurs (Cf. Flaherty (2011). Participants can choose (and tailor) the regularity of visits, by how often they choose to go shopping and visit the fast fashion store. Sometimes the participant visits stores a couple of times a week, and sometimes just once a week, there is no set detailed schedule for the frequency of visits yet some participants have established a regular pattern of visits. There are several visits a week, and often participants go every day after work or university lectures. As mentioned above, in their free time, such as weekends, the visits are longer and more frequent. Here, Lisa tells us that when she went to Stockholm for shopping she visited five different shopping centres over a weekend and she explains, "I visited loads and went to several on the same day (.) I think three in one day" (Malmö, 2013-04-23). In another interview Melissa speaks of her regular and long visits to H&M: "I visit H&M regularly and I spend a long time at H&M, last time I was there an hour (.) 'cause I sat down to have a look at what to pick of the garments" (Helsingborg 2014-02-17). Thus as we can see from the above discussion, participants tend to visit the stores frequently and spend a lot of time in the store.

In connection to this, the importance of the regularity of visits can perhaps be understood as creating a solid understanding of how the marketplace changes that is based on several frequent visits as well as visits that are longer (Cf. spending time in the marketplace in chapter six). Thus it is not only about being present for a certain amount of time (as discussed in chapter six), but also to make many reoccurring visits to create an understanding of how the market operates. Accordingly, it is about creating a consistency concerning the way to approach the fast fashion market, and making sure that the understanding of the market is based on first-hand observations in the context of the market.

Setting timeframes

Following the above discussion on length and frequency of visits, the regularity of visits can further be controlled by how long each visit is. Thus another time work strategy is to set time frames for each visit. This is of relevance in 'chasing the market' because it highlights the necessity of knowing how much time is needed to spend in the store to learn get a sense of the pace of this place. It is about spending enough time each time to be able to figure out the pace of the fast fashion marketplace. As was asked above, how long a time does one choose to spend in the fast fashion store? This differs among participants, some do not have a clear picture of how long their visits are, but rather speak in terms of spending

much time in the store or on the high street. For instance, Felicia tells us that: "just being there (.) hanging around spending time on the high street (.) scanning (.) well I must admit it happens a lot (Helsingborg 2013-10-29). Others describe how they set a time limit for their fast fashion store visits, so they know that there will be time for shopping even if there are other things that need to be done in the same day. Klara and Nicole ponder the time limit they set for shopping and compare the set time to the desired time for shopping (which seems to be a whole day or five hours):

> KLARA: When I'm shopping I usually set a time, it's not often I can spend a whole day shopping so if I'm working and I only have 45 minutes for lunch then that is the time, or if I have to get home and clean up 'cause someone's coming over in the evening I set a time=
>
> NICOLE: It's the same for me, I set a time
>
> KLARA: Normally I can't spend five hours shopping.

(Malmö, 2013-04-28)

As we can see in the above excerpt there is a discussion on the time one can and wants to spend on fast fashion shopping. As Klara explains it is not often she can spend the whole day in fast fashion stores (even if that may be desired), thus she has to make do with the time she can set aside for store visits. Such as her lunch break of 45 minutes. More, as we can see in the above conversation between Nicole and Klara, they are adjusting and balancing the estimation of time between shopping for fast fashion, and spending their time doing something else. As they point out they have other things to do as well (going to the gym or cleaning their home). Thus knowing the time for fast fashion shopping allows making room for shopping in their everyday schedule. Yet to assign a time period for shopping also points to the creation of establishing consistency in store visits. Setting a time frame for shopping is one way to control how many hours are spent in the store, and thus make sure that these visits are recurrent as they should fit nicely into the daily schedule (of other daily activities). For instance, one could spend a number of lunch breaks a week in the fast fashion store.

As we know from chapter six, there is a common feature in the data that shows how participants enjoy spending time at the retail store. The focus in this section is however on the estimated duration of the visits or the frequency of the visits, as illustrated above. What is not yet addressed (in conjunction with the duration and frequency of visits), is the justification participants provide for the choice of spending time (a set time of a number of hours) on fast fashion, and the frustration

that comes with spending much time on something that is valued but at the same time is met with suspicion or difficulties/challenges from people close to them.

Some participants justify the amount of time they spend on shopping to their family by comparing it to a leisure-time activity, as Caroline says "to me it's more of a hobby" (Helsingborg, 2013-04-13). A hobby is time-consuming, and since other family members also have time-consuming hobbies, they reckon it should be alright to spend time on fast fashion, it is just a matter of different interests. As Nicole declares: " I can feel a lot of joy and pleasure it's not as if I think now I've spent let's say three hours of my day doing this, it's a hobby, like playing golf or whatever (Malmö, 2013-04-28). Further, participants explain how they free up time every day to engage in this hobby, and some days they will fit their life around the hobby. It is evident that this hobby is enjoyable for some of the participants, yet at times it can be overwhelming. As much time is spent on an activity, there are bound to occur a number of experiences that are not equally enjoyable.

Moving quickly in the retail store

The following paragraphs move on to another form of time work activity for figuring out the pace of the market. This time work activity is about moving quickly in the fast fashion store. By aligning movements to a perceived pace (which is communicated in the retail servicescape through such things as pop music or the movements of other fast fashion consumers) the speed of fast fashion consumption can be brought to attention. Many of the participants speak about looking at garments quickly, and how being quick is useful when chasing the latest new arrivals. This statement is usually connected to an understanding that the marketplace is fast moving in terms of getting hold of the new item before it disappears into the hands of other consumers. As mentioned above at the beginning of this section, Therese speaks about the importance of not missing out by always acting instantly: "if you find something you want right now, you have to go for it before it disappears, so you have to buy it straight away at the first visit" (Helsingborg, 2013-03-04).

The time work activity, moving quickly in the fast fashion store, also concerns getting one's bearings to efficiently and with speed move around in the store. In the interview Klara mentions how she wants shopping to be fast: "it has to be quick and you know roughly where everything is, and if you can't find something, you can't find it because it's simply not there" (Malmö, 2013-04-28). As Klara says, she knows roughly where everything is located. This is an important remark. If one knows the location of items it makes it efficient and easy to get to things before others. It is evident in most of the interview conversations that participants have a clear understanding of how the shop floor is organised, such as location of aisles, sections of different types of garments, types of racks (round racks are

quicker to browse as they rotate and rotation can speed up if wanted) escalators, fitting rooms and cash desks. Sometimes there are also signs that will help consumers get their bearings in the store. For example, during the observations in the fast fashion store I encountered signs that provided directions to where the "next level of fashion" is located (see picture below).

Some of the participants speak about the organisation of fast fashion in the store. For them, this organisation seems to mean a way of going about shopping for fast fashion. For example, Milla and Emilia speak about starting in a certain place in the store:

> MILLA: Yes I think starting to the right is quite common
>
> EMILIA: Yeah that's where you look when you enter a shop, normally when I go shopping I know what I'm looking for and it's so much more efficient 'cause I know, I mean I scan and I know what type of garment I'm looking for so it's quick, I'd never imagine to slowly, like item by item go through the racks to see if there's anything I like.

(Helsingborg, 2013-10-29)

Furthermore, we can see that Emilia points out that she knows what she is looking for and thus, even though she starts at the right, she does not go through each item on every rack that follows in the line of clothing displays, but rather scans the entire set of racks. This may indicate that Emilia does not walk by every rack in an attempt to locate a new item as she says: "I'd never imagine to slowly, like item by item go through the racks to see if there's anything I like" (Helsingborg 2013-10-29). But rather, Emilia can use scanning to speed up the process. This speeding up of the process can perhaps be seen as utilising a certain type of pace (that comes with scanning) when entering the stores. I understand this as if a starting point is identified (to the right), and then the time work activity of moving quickly (in this case scanning) is employed to identify the new trendy item.

Moreover, Alice and Sophia describe how it is easier to move quickly in Zara compared to H&M stores, because Zara has a certain organisation of the garments. It seems from their descriptions that this organisation resembles some kind of category management approach. Drawing on their explanation of a perceived clear organisation of the servicescape, the clarity seems to support the time work activity of moving quickly in the fast fashion store as it facilitates speed by not making the trendy items difficult to locate and discover. The following passage shows how, Alice and Sophia describe how they have learnt to navigate in this system:

> ALICE: I go to Zara, it's chaotic too, but at the same time it feels as if I've learned how to navigate because there is an order, there I can look at the whole system, you

> see everything when you walk around the store ((she demonstrates how she enters the store and walks around)) it doesn't feel as if there are so many things on each rack
>
> SOPHIA: Yeah there's more space in those stores
>
> ALICE: Yeah and in one section, they have clothes for work and then they have other sections with other items.

(Malmö, 2013-02-22)

As was noted above, Klara and Alice describe how the order of this organisation system has made it possible to walk around in the store with a sense of clarity, as Alice point out: "you see everything when you walk around the store" (Malmö, 2013-02-22). If one can get a clear picture of everything in the store, it can make it easier to identify new items and get to these items quicker (and hopefully before other consumers). Knowing the way around the fast fashion store is one way of making sense of how it operates and at what pace it is moving (i.e. to identify new items, and to make quick moves before other consumers).

In one of the interviews Klara tells us about a situation when the organisation of an H&M store changed. Thus the way she knows it and has learnt to navigate it changed. She tells us that one day when she arrived at the H&M store, she discovered how the trendy section with the latest arrivals had been moved upstairs. She says:

> There was a time at H&M here at Gustav when they changed sections, so suddenly the new arrivals were upstairs and I found that a bit awkward and tedious ((laughs)) 'cause then I had to go upstairs like it is not efficient, well no surprise I didn't spend as much time up there and you notice how important easy access to new trends is, or well important to me as a customer, actually I changed stores.

(Malmö, 2013-04-28)

In this case, Klara finds the new organisation redundant (tedious and not efficient). Furthermore her pace of moving through the store changes due to the changes in the servicescape. The latest trends are now located upstairs and thus away from their original placement. Originally the latest trendy items were located on the ground floor, close to the entrance and to the right (where some of the participants start their search). The time work activity of moving quickly is disrupted and replaced by inefficient actions such as going upstairs; Klara describes her way of moving through the store by saying that: "I had to go upstairs like it is not efficient, I was used to quick browsing and having the new items close" (Malmö, 2013-04-28). Furthermore, there are other consequences to this change. As Klara explains, she changed stores. In this way, quick access to the new is prioritised (as

clarity and knowing the way around in the store results in following the pace of the market (i.e. to rapidly identify new items, and to make quick moves before other consumers). However, later in the interview Klara concludes that she heard from friends that this particular H&M store had changed the sections back, placing the new arrivals yet again close to the entrance of the store. To sum up, the above has attempted to show how pace/speed can work as an organisational principle of how the fast fashion market is made sense of. For example the time work strategies of length, frequency and regularity are utilised to get hold of the latest fashion items. Further, it shows how time work strategies can account for different types of temporal experiences of consumption activities.

This picture shows the direction to the “next level of fashion”. It is taken in the morning, at an H&M store in Malmö. It has just opened for the day and I am the first to step into the store. Everything is neat and tidy.

Tackling market pace

This section examines the findings on how different forms of time work strategies are employed by participants to manage the speed of the delivery of new arrivals at the retail store. The next sections explore two main ways of handling the speed of the market; decluttering and compartmentalisation.

Decluttering

These time work activities can seem, in comparison to the fast-paced activities above, 'slow' in character. Hence, the following sections will begin by exploring forms of time work activities which in different ways are interpreted as having a 'slow' pace. When it comes to the 'slow' paced time work activity, the activity of decluttering can be distinguished in the data. Some participants speak of feeling tiredness and experiencing chaos as they enter the store and ready to search for new arrivals. Annie, for instance, says:

> Sometimes I think it's tiring 'cause you kind of have to look, well there are so many different things. They cram in a whole lot of different styles in kind of small spaces and there's kind of a crazy mix and you don't know what to do so you kind of don't, well I don't always feel that inspired in there 'cause sometimes it's downright chaotic.

(Helsingborg, 2013-04-10)

Thus, while speaking about the joy and pleasure of this hobby, it is not unusual for participants to also express frustration. This frustration is probably tied to the idea of wanting to quickly get hold of the new items, and if this is not possible due to the messy or chaotic state of the store, the pace of actions is reduced to a slower pace than the usual speed discussed above.

Participants tell many stories about how the stores can appear chaotic to them. In particular, the disorganisation of messy piles of clothes, and the scattering of clothes around the store (meaning that sizes of certain items can be found all over the store) appears problematic to the participants. For example Desirée says that "it gets messy when there are too many people around and they spread the clothes around in the store" (Helsingborg 2013-03-13). In connection to this utterance, Desirée concludes that crowds of people in the fast fashion store will slow her down: "I've noticed that if there are a lot of people about I don't go to H&M 'cause well to try and move quick and 'cause it will take half an hour before I get into a fitting room and then I avoid H&M it is not efficient" (Helsingborg, 2013-03-13).

Moreover, some participants find it chaotic if the crowds of people are combined with other disruptive elements such as if the store is noisy (there is loud pop music

and people are chatting intensely) and if the light is too bright. For instance, Anja, Elinor and Annie speak about crowds of people, the music and the lighting to be disruptive elements:

> ANJA: When I enter Gina Tricot at Väla I just have to leave straight away, it's too crowded.
>
> ELINOR: I understand it can be really annoying
>
> ANNIE: I agree
>
> ELINOR: Yeah and when you're in a rush and the music is really loud and then the lighting is too bright
>
> ANJA: Yeah and it's supposed to appeal to people like us, but then it doesn't.

(Helsingborg, 2013-04-10)

In addition, Sophia and Alice speak about how H&M stores feel chaotic, and they take special notice of the fact that many of the H&M stores are crowded with people who will make a mess out of the logic they carefully try to maintain and keep (in order to keep up the quick scanning activities). Sophia remarks that "lots of H&M stores are so, oh there's so much disorganised stuff ((because of all the people)) it's so crowded! And it's chaotic and there's so many people!" (Malmö, 2013-02-22). And Alice concludes "and then it feels as if there's no logic anymore" (Malmö, 2013-02-22).

From the above discussion we can see that participants express frustration in different ways. Annie explains that if she finds the store to be in a messy state, she feels tiredness. Alice says that she has lost the logic she usually knows, and Elinor think about it in terms of crowds being annoying. This frustration can occur because participants have developed a systematic scanning skill (as discussed in chapter six). Thus if the store is messy, this learning activity will not work smoothly, and needs to be preceded by preparation activities. This is where the time work activity that is termed decluttering is utilised. Decluttering is a slow activity, it is about carefully investigating items and thoughtfully sorting out a mess to create order. Creating order in a way that makes sense to the participants, and at the same time learning details about the new arrivals. However, it should be noted that decluttering is understood as a slow activity only in contrast to the fast-paced scanning activity or browsing activity (as discussed above).

For example decluttering is a slow activity, as it requires stopping movement and staying put at a location in the store for a longer time than when, for instance, the scanning activity is used, since the scanning activity typically is about moving around constantly and getting an overview of items from a distance. By

decluttering, details of new trends can be learnt by sorting through the messy piles identifying what type of garments there are among the new arrivals (style, colour, trend etc.). Some of the participants speak about how they want to touch the material, and can learn how it might be in the wash, how it might fit their body, how it can feel to wear, how it can fit with other new items in their wardrobe. It is a way of examining the nature of the new arrivals. For example, in one of the interviews Caroline, Desirée and I have a conversation about stopping to touch and examine the new trendy items:

> DESIRÉE: I think you see the clothes in a different way when you touch them
>
> CAROLINE: Yeah touching them and my boyfriend says it can't be much fun buying girl's clothes 'cause everyone has touched them 'cause you hold it and like feel it and then you walk over to the next rack and touch them, yeah like this
>
> I: And why would you do that?
>
> CAROLINE: Well it's the quality I suppose
>
> DESIRÉE: Yeah I usually, well one thing is that I hate ironing and that's something there are some clothes, you notice that straight away, like if you squeeze them a little they crease immediately and then I leave them. And also I want to know that it isn't too sheer 'cause and H&M it can be sheer
>
> CAROLINE: Yeah or I'm looking out for like stiff fabric, I think it won't be comfortable 'cause you will feel it all the time.

(Helsingborg 2013-03-13)

Here we can see that the information gathered is richer and more detailed compared to the information collected as one carries out the quick scanning activities, which are usually employed only to identify the latest new arrivals. Decluttering activities take more time but give another form of experience in the market. Later on in the same interview Desirée explains how looking closely at an item will provide important characteristics of the colours of an item such as the hues. I ask Desirée what she can tell from holding up the item in front of her looking in the mirror as she examines the hue of the new trendy items she is examining. She explains:

> You can see whether the colour's right (.) cause there are some colours I've got (.) certain hues like blue that don't (.) now it sounds as if I choose my blue colours really carefully but well certain loud colours won't (.) if you're really pale like in the winter so no maybe not, so that's what I can make out.

(Helsingborg 2013-03-13)

Additionally, decluttering activities can also result in investigation of the quality of fast fashion items. Participants describe how they, as they sort through the messy piles, stretch or pull the items, to see how or if it holds up. Thus they are learning the quality of items, as well as pondering the quality of the item compared to the price they find on the price tags. Hanna says that:

> You really need to check the garments like stretch them and feel 'cause the quality has been so-so at H&M, not the best, but the quality is still better for what you pay. They have that trend label, it's rather good quality, the prices are roughly the same, and it ((the quality)) is better than Zara.

(Malmö, 2013-04-10)

Here participants speak about taking time to figure out what is worth buying (balancing quality and price). It seems as though time-consuming activities, such as decluttering, are a way to discover details about the new trendy items which can be lost in the quick time work activities such as scanning. The next section will address a focus on details while trying to keep up efficacy, but from another approach. It will look at an activity that is focused on systematisation of the new arrivals.

Compartmentalising

In the data there is another kind of time work activity which concerns attempts to manage experiences of a constant flow of new arrivals. The attempts are efforts to break the experience of the constant flow of new arrivals down into manageable parts/sequences. Here these efforts are viewed as an attempt at learning how to handle the flow of new garments. This time work activity is termed compartmentalising. The activity is further about dividing the different sections of the merchandise displays into compartments. Compartmentalising is a routine activity, repeatedly carried out in order to make shopping more efficient but also for careful examination. Compartmentalising is the time work activity in which participants concentrate their scanning abilities on specific sections of the merchandise, scanning one by one. It is about moving systematically through all new merchandise, one section at a time. Participants speak of the sections as being easier to manage, as the overview is quicker, than scanning the entire merchandise all at once. By dividing displays of merchandise into sections, the flow of new arrivals is examined little by little. The impression of many different types of trends and new items can become more focused. Focus is here about attention and efforts going into the particular isolated separate section. Klara, Nicole and I speak about balancing focusing on a section of merchandise with still being efficient:

KLARA: I go through them ((sections)) rather quickly you kind of have an idea of what you're looking for so you kind of take a general look at the section, then you walk up to something and then I look *only* at one garment

I: Only that particular garment?

KLARA: Yeah I only take a closer look at that

I: And if you should decide that you need a pair of trousers too, you have to look at everything again?

KLARA: Yes then I don't stay in that area, but I will back off a little, go back to the starting point, scan a little, and then I find the section for trousers and I go there. It might be because I want it to be thorough and go quickly anyway even if I have plenty of time for shopping I still want it to go quickly so I don't want to look through everything 'cause that would have been rather boring.

NICOLE: Yeah true it has to be efficient, it is fun but it has to be efficient somehow.

(Malmö 2013-04-28)

We see here how isolating and focusing on sections separately is described. Klara and Nicole explain how they go about looking for a white shirt among the new items, that is, how they get an overview of all types of white shirts that are available at this moment. In more detail, they speak about creating a focus on a separate section while downplaying the surrounding sections, it is an intense focus on one section but for a brief period of time, and it is about closing one compartment (one section) before moving on to opening up and focusing on the next section of the merchandise. As Klara explains, when shifting focus to a new item she will stop looking in the current section: "I don't stay in that area, but I will ((laughs)) back off a little, go back to the starting point, scan a little, and then I find the section for trousers and I go there" (Malmö 2013-04-28).

Furthermore, the activity seems to account for both thorough examinations and efficiency. As the participants single out items and take a closer look at a certain garment, time is spent looking at just one garment. It means a focus and thorough examination of specific garments, but not wasting time investigating all items. This investigation may be short in duration, indicating a wish for efficiency. Looking at it from an efficacy point of view, previous studies on retailing have shown that shopping can be an act of necessity or thrift, and consumers can be rational actors (Babin et al. 1994; Fuentes 2011; Bäckström 2013). Fuentes (2011) writes about a practice he terms speed shopping, a practical task carried out efficiently with no intention of learning about the market offerings. Efficient shopping takes on another form in the case of Consumer Contextual Learning, as

efficiently examining specific items is a way of making sense of a shifting market and thoroughly learning about specific items. Yet at the same time, shopping is here described as efficient and fun. As Nicole points out: "it has to be efficient (.) it is fun but it has to be efficient somehow " (Malmö 2013-04-28). The pleasure of shopping is tied to efficiency. It means that an activity does not have to be either/or (i.e. it is only about plain fun or only about necessity) (Cf. Bardhi and Arnould 2005; Bäckström 2013), but it can be both (coexist) in the context of shopping in the fast fashion market. As Bäckström (2013) similarly shows in her study on leisure shopping experiences, these experiences can take the form of involving seemingly opposite activities such as including dimensions of fantasies and fun as well as rational calculations.

In the activity of compartmentalising, we can see how this time work activity builds on one predominant type of reoccurring temporal activity, that of repetition of an activity in a specific order. To understand the temporality of these activities I use one of the time work activities discussed by Flaherty (2011): sequence. Flaherty (2011) explains that sequence is about doing things in a specific order, a temporal organisation of behaviour, and if one follows the sequence they have created there should be a sense of control of the situation. For example, Flaherty (2011) mentions to-do lists that establish one's priorities, such as order of importance, that should help people achieve a sense of control of their time and the situation, such as managing deadlines. Compartmentalising contains sequencing efforts, for instance the different types of sections can be thought of as sequences. That is, the opening and closing of sections as described above, can be one way to gain some control of the speed of new merchandise, as well as learn about specifics of the latest arrivals. The point to be made by bringing in Flaherty's work on sequence is to show how the sense of control of temporality can be different in different situations. People manage temporality differently. In the case of compartmentalising it is not only about having a sense of control concerning one time-specific occurrence, such as a deadline or getting hold of the latest arrivals, but it is also about managing the activity of sequencing itself - that is, keeping to the repetitive activity of starting over with opening and closing sections as one enters the store for one's daily or weekly search efforts. This is important, because the focus is on carrying out the activity well in order to be more efficient or to get a sense of control, not just a focus on the end result such as a deadline, or in this case grabbing the latest trendy item.

To conclude this section, the ambition was to show how different strategies can be employed to gain some kind of control of the experience of speed/change in the market. For instance, this section has identified strategies such as decluttering and compartmentalising. The temporal experience of consumption is here interpreted as having a 'slow' pace, in contrast to the temporal experience in the time work strategies concerning frequency and regularity.

The new and the old: when does the new turn into the old?

This section will discuss a central issue of fast fashion consumption, namely, when does the new become old? It addresses time work strategies identified to learn how to make up a rotating organisation of garments in the wardrobe, and the creation of a wardrobe that keeps new items in the centre and easily accessible. Meaning a wardrobe organised to function so as to focus on the new, and to let the old items be disposed of or moved to the back of piles and hangers. Hence when saying old it means items that are not used anymore and that are disposed of, or items that are no longer found attractive but kept in the wardrobe.

Ordering the wardrobe

In contrast to the earlier discussions in the study, this section considers the efforts made in the home to create a collection of clothes that is shifting concurrently with fast fashion trends, and that maximises the number of outfit combinations. Keeping up with trends and hunting for the latest items are important because creating trendy up-to-date outfits is a main activity. In creating a wardrobe there are two main things that are important to the participants: 1) to have many items, and 2) to have new and trendy garments. This making of a wardrobe concerns time work activities of ordering. Ordering is an activity that ensures that items are worn on a regular schedule, in a certain order, and thus that the inflow of new fast fashion items will provide for outfits which are trendy and varied. Ordering is about creating a routine of how often an item is worn, by using different ways of tracking the number of times an item is worn. The next paragraphs will investigate how ordering is made; how participants use ordering activities to create change and variety in outfits.

First and foremost, the wardrobe is a central part of the home of the participants. A considerable amount of time in the home is spent on organising the wardrobe. Yet many participants live in apartments and the space for a wardrobe is limited. Some of the participants keep walk-in-closets, whereas others make do with regular Ikea-sized wardrobes. Klara speaks about the challenges of finding room for all of her clothing items in the Ikea wardrobe, and she says that "I tend to find little nooks and crannies in my closet ((everyone laughs)) where shall I put that? Well actually at the moment we have an empty kitchen cupboard…!" (Malmö, 2013-04-28). Likewise, in general participants are trying to make the most out of the space of the closet, and items are organised into categories, such as seasons, colours, type of garment or type of occasion. What kind of organisation system one chooses seems to be based on what makes the most sense to the participant.

The garments in the wardrobe consist of the essential staples, and to a greater extent, trendy items from the latest arrivals to fast fashion stores. Thus the majority of the wardrobe is constantly changing as new trends arrive. Yet in contrast to what one may expect, clothes are kept for rather a long time, making the wardrobe expand. Furthermore, clothes are sold just as often as they are thrown away (to generate some income for new fast fashion items). This means that the fast fashion closet is a continually expanding and changing wardrobe.

Hence there is a need for constant organising of items, and items are organised into categories, such as seasons, colours, type of garment or type of occasion. After the conversations in the interviews we moved rooms, to take a look at the wardrobe. As we looked at the organisation system of the wardrobe, many of the participants pointed out how they keep track of the pieces of each category of clothing. As we can see in the pictures of the wardrobes below, items are organised in folded stacks. Moreover some participants keep separate racks in their bedroom for hanging clothes they use frequently, at the moment, or for the outfit put together for the next day.

Pictures show items organised in stacks, and a separate rack in the bedroom.

How then do participants use ordering activities to create change and variety in their outfits? How is ordering utilised to learn how many times items have been worn? The ordering activity participants predominantly mention concerns keeping

track of how many times one item has been worn by following specific systems they have made up. The main concern is to ensure change and variety in outfits by not repeating items in similar combinations in outfits. This is accomplished by keeping rotating stacks of clothes and rotating hangers (wrong way round). This means that after a specific item is worn it ends up at the back of a pile of clothes, or on a hanger that is turned in the opposite direction. This allows repetition within a number of days depending on the number of items in the specific pile. Thus the rotation of clothes and the order of how to get dressed is not left to chance. As Flaherty (2003) also points out, the ordering of an activity presents an opportunity for temporal organisation of behaviour that can make up a way of controlling the situation one is experiencing. So in this case making up a system of ordering can give consumers a sense of control of the way to get dressed, i.e. ensuring variety in clothing. Participants speak of creating change and variety in their outfits by knowing how many times each item has been worn. For example, Sanna, Nicole, Louise and I speak about how to ensure change and variety by keeping track of items in the wardrobe:

> I: Would you remember when you use things? Like I used this dress today and yesterday, you?
>
> SANNA: Yes of course!
>
> NICOLE: Absolutely! ((everyone laughs))
>
> I: How do you keep track of items in your wardrobe?
>
> KLARA: Oh I do remember, I track all my items by keeping a rotating stack
>
> NICOLE: Yes exactly, and so it is in a certain order. I know that what is at the back is what I used last and things on the top I can wear now. So all the time I track items, and I really try to go through all items, well continually use items as long as they are trendy.

(Malmö 2013-04-28)

Here we can see how participants describe the utilisation of the ordering rotation system. As Nicole points out she aims to use all items, yet only as long as they are trendy. This means that many of the items are used, but for a limited time. More, during the other interviews we speak of ordering of items based on, for instance, colour. Thus, adding to the rotation system, variety in outfits is also assured by organising items based on colour or type of garment. That is, the ordering systems are utilised in multiple ways as it makes outfits varied both in terms of frequency

(when items are worn), and in terms of style/design of items and colours of items. Annie, Anja and I speak about how colours are organised:

> I: Do you have a system for how you organise your clothes?
>
> ANNIE: ((laughs)) Yeah I do
>
> ANJA: Yeah you really do! It's so impressive
>
> I: Okay so what do you do?
>
> ANNIE: Right well I have those racks you know, and at Easter I had a bit of time so now I've sorted them according to colour
>
> ANJA: Oh but you had them according to colour before too
>
> ANNIE: Yeah but sometimes it gets a bit out of order when I'm short of time, but now I've done it again so I kind of know that if I want something white it's right there.

(Helsingborg, 2013-04-10)

The above are ordering activities that bring about organisation of the wardrobe, and participants utilise these activities to make up styles and outfits. These activities help participants discern between the new fashion items and the old clothes. Some of the participants attach value to the new items, yet the old items are not worthless and many of the old garments are kept in the wardrobe but for different purposes (such as decoration in the wardrobe, an accessory, or if the trend comes back into fashion). Leyla shares the story of her green jeans in one of the interviews. These jeans are special to Leyla, she bought these jeans, wore them and then washed them. The colour faded, and she took them back to the store to get a new pair, the same thing happened and she got a third pair. This time she does not wear them or wash them, but she keeps them because they are a pretty decoration. She says:

> I've never worn these new ones 'cause I don't dare to wash them! I don't dare to, but I want them, but like no but actually they're now hanging up nicely in my closet like decoration, and well I was really disappointed 'cause I bought them and I really want them

(Helsingborg, 2012-11-22)

The ordering activities also bring a cycle of change to the wardrobe. Updating the wardrobe is a crucial activity. By adding new items, turning around seasonal items, and throwing away items participants ensure themselves of a fresh

wardrobe. Still participants speak about maintaining classics and keeping essential staples as well as collecting favourite items, however, most importantly their focus is on upgrading the wardrobe and keeping in step with the latest fast fashion trends. Hence, this ordering of clothes also raises the question of how long one can keep an item in a rotating stack before its use expires. When does the new qualify as old? When is it no longer the latest arrival? In one of the interviews I speak with Caroline and Desirée about the new arrivals, and Caroline answers the question by first stating that it happens when she chooses not to use it anymore, and then the conversation moves along:

> I: When does it become old? When I say old I mean that you don't use it anymore or that you don't find it attractive anymore
>
> CAROLINE: When you choose not to wear it, right it's well you might still keep it. Some things get old when you've worn it once. You use it and then you don't feel like wearing it anymore or you buy something new that's similar like a pair of jeans for example so you've got a pair of jeans that are the latest and you stop using the others 'cause they've been used up
>
> DESIRÉE: Yeah jeans keep for a long time and they don't get old until you suddenly realise that they…
>
> CAROLINE: That they've shrunk in the wash
>
> DESIRÉE: Yeah or well you've put on weight or a dress ages a lot faster, you can use the same pair of jeans over and over again but you won't go to a party wearing the same dress.

(Helsingborg 2013-03-13)

In this conversation we can also see how it differs between type of garment, some kinds of garments are considered old after only a few times worn, whereas other types of garments like jeans can be worn many times. This is recurrent in the descriptions of the old. Annie and Elinor, also speak about different types of garments when we discuss when an item is regarded as old, and thus no longer a functioning part of an outfit. It differs between types of garments, as everyday items can be worn multiple times during a week before being regarded as old whereas clothes for parties are worn once or twice:

> I: You said before that you get tired of things, but how do you know when it happens, or well when does something new become old?
>
> ELINOR: Well it depends on what it is and how often you use it

I: Yeah but like everyday items?

ANNIE: Well like a week is enough. If you wear it often enough you might get tired of it after a week

ELINOR: I think party clothes they don't last as long 'cause you wear them once and then

ANNIE: Yeah they are kind of special so you can't wear them more than once or twice 'cause everyone has seen them.

(Helsingborg, 2013-04-10)

Taking the above into account, the interest in the time work activity of ordering seems to be to create variety and change in their appearance (their outfits). In the creation of styles or outfits, there seems to be value in the prospect of flexibility in styles and outfits, making it possible to change the style one has several times a month. This changeability makes for a fluid style. Alice says that: "I'll start wearing this style like rock and then days later I started to buy like this hippie style" (Malmö, 2013-02-22). In another interview conversation Anja points out that " I like it too ((the quick changes)) and as I said earlier I don't spend a lot of money on things I want to renew /…/ changing is fun 'cause fast fashion changes all the time" (Helsingborg, 2013-04-10). There are also signs in the fast fashion stores that show messages which emphasise the flexibility of items to be utilised in more than one look, claiming that: there are two ways to every look, try them both:

The flexibility can offer possibilities of ways to create different styles. It can offer freedom and fun, nonetheless it provides many choices and thus probably just as many opportunities to make the "wrong" choices that may not be accepted by other fast fashion consumers. Hanna and Cornelia speak about the importance of dress and responsibility:

> HANNA: I want people to perceive me as the person I am because of the way I dress, so clothes are very important to me
>
> CORNELIA: I think that everyone who lives in this consumer society in some way or other can't avoid it, regardless of whether you're making a choice or not you will still, you will still need to take responsibility for your own identity. Somehow it feels like that.

(Malmö 2013-04-10)

This prompts the questions of how flexible change can be in fast fashion? How many times need one make choices to change to be perceived as taking responsibility for identity? Well, according to Cornelia, regardless of making a choice or not there are still consequences for the identity as the example above illustrates.

Summary and concluding remarks

This chapter has explored how temporality is connected to consumption practices, that is, the strategies participants utilise in their learning activities to manage the fast-moving character of the market. Drawing on the concept of time work it has investigated the temporality of learning strategies utilised in the fast fashion market. That is, the concept of time work acknowledges how people can customise temporal experience to get a sense of control of what is going on in their surroundings. This is to say, participants of this study create learning activities that they believe will keep up with the new arrivals in the marketplace. For instance, sometimes activities have a "slow" pace in contrast to the perceived speed of the market, and at other times participants choose to 'chase the market' to keep on top of changes.

Hence, furthermore the chapter has discussed the importance of the new. For participants it seems to be about making sure to find a combination of activities to not miss out on the latest new arrivals and thus succeed in constantly changing (fashion) markets. As Bauman (2007:103) points out: "Time flows on, and the trick is to keep pace with the waves". Furthermore, there is fascination for the new, and a systematic appreciation for the new. This means, experiences of the new seem to be exciting, and the new attracts the consumer to the fast fashion marketplace. That is to say, it is the craze for the new itself that is the most important, not the object in itself. And the craze for the new ultimately brings change into the picture. Here, this means that experiences of the new come with a wish to organise change (i.e. perceived control of change). The analysis above identified a number of ways used by consumers. For example, ordering is a way to control change in the way to get dressed ensuring variety, and compartmentalising is an activity to manage the constant flow of new items in the fast fashion store.

Furthermore, this chapter has shown how learning activities are both slow and fast in character. This points to the overall issue of fast fashion consumption concerning the interplay of dwelling, and the efficiency logic of quickly in and quickly out of the fast fashion store. As was shown above, both of these approaches point to the ambition to get hold of the latest arrivals, i.e. by being slow there is perceived 'control' of the speed of the marketplace, and by moving quickly there is the possibility to grab the latest items before others. Hence, what is of interest to discuss here is the importance of instant gratification in fast fashion consumption. As Joy at al. write: "Fast fashion has been referred to as "MCfashion," because of the speed with which gratification is provided" (Joy et al. 2012:276). MCfashion is derived from the perspective of McDonaldisation that describes the social process transforming contemporary society (Ritzer 2002). If fast fashion can be viewed as MCfashion, i.e. the McDonaldisation of fashion,

qualities of speed and efficiency are brought to the centre. As discussed, the speed and efficiency of the fast fashion business model ensure new trendy items and instant gratification of trends. MCfashion does not fully fit into all of the dimensions of McDonaldisation, yet from a retail perspective it captures two of them well. Firstly, MCfashion exemplifies the dimension of calculability, in the exact number items per batch of each trend, ensuring that trends move fast on the shop floor (as well as emphasising the scarcity dimensions, meaning that consumers need to calculate the time and timing of their shopping to get hold of the latest arrivals) (Cf. Ritzer 2002). Secondly, in MCfashion we see the assumption that fashion can be predictable, that is the identical trends in the local fast fashion store and in stores all over the world (Cf. Ritzer 2002). As well as, fast fashion is predictable as it gives no surprises, dedicated consumers know that there are new batches of trends coming in each and every day, and they know when the delivery is for these new trends.

What then, does this mean for consumer learning in the fast fashion marketplace? Learning activities are both slow and fast in character, and by being slow there is perceived 'control' of the speed of the market through decluttering activities, while being fast also generates a sense of 'control' as it ensures quick acquisition of the latest item before other consumers get hold of it. These activities can be viewed as creative or inventive. That is, as the discussions have shown, consumers do come up with different activities to learn in the marketplace, and such activities are ways to handle the market pace. One reason for this may be that consumers view fast fashion as challenging, and there is thus a need for finding activities that can help make sense of the marketplace. This in turn means that the consumer may not (at least in the first encounters) see the marketplace as particularly predictable. On the other hand, from a retail perspective, the two dimensions of predictability and calculability rather show a standardised market. Taken together, the consumer can view this as challenging, whereas from a retail perspective one can see this as a consistent or uniform way of organising the marketplace.

Chapter 8

Conclusions, contributions and discussion

The overall contribution of this book has been to investigate consumer learning by discussing how consumers learn as participants in social and cultural contexts. It has sought to explore the role of context; how consumers interact with the context, with each other, and how consumers understand the context and use tools. In doing this, it offers a shift in focus from the ways in which consumer behaviour research has studied learning. This shift concerns moving from a view on learning that focuses on content-specific attributes of products in a controlled setting, to how learning is about participating with others in the marketplace (such as the fast fashion marketplace, learning how the fast fashion market operates in terms of the rhythm of supply chain or in the speed of other consumers' shopping activities).

It also involves a shift in the understanding of tools and consumer activities, for instance it has shown in a Consumer Contextual Learning perspective how consumers learn by choosing tools, what kind of tools are used and how these tools are utilised, in contrast to how choice and combination of tools in experimental research are controlled by the researcher to find answers to specific research questions. Thus a Consumer Contextual Learning approach highlights the role of context and tools (and activities) in consumer learning.

So, what happens when we look at learning from a CCL perspective? It brings to the fore issues such as consumers' ways of approaching the marketplace to learn about how it operates. By highlighting a consumer participation perspective it shows the number of different strategies consumers speak about using. Then what can we see when there are activities in the marketplace designed by consumers, and what is the difference in the learning compared to when it is placed in a controlled setting? From the analysis in chapters six and seven I want to highlight two main issues that are important. First, a significant concern in consumer activities is the dedication to spending much time in the marketplace, and efforts are made to stay close to the marketplace. To stay close to the context of interest is open to adjustments, consumers may stay for longer or shorter periods, yet the importance is to be there where the action is. Another significant concern in the

marketplace is that there can be movements and changes to what is going on (the rearrangement of displays and new wall paintings and messages), and we can see how learning is dynamic and made to fit the setting, such as in the case of the speed of the market and the design of slow activities and fast activities. This involves dedication and a trained sensibility, which it could be assumed that consumers develop over time as they engage in learning activities in the market.

Another question to ponder is: how do consumers learn if the concept is CCL? In a Consumer Contextual Learning approach, learning does not occur, for example, in the comparison of different brands. Rather learning is the whole experience of participating in the marketplace, it is about learning by socialising in the marketplace over a long time (i.e. learning is not confined to certain moments in time). It is the combination of learning activities and what these activities together tell the consumer about the marketplace. The learning activities of Consumer Contextual Learning have been analysed separately above, but in this concluding discussion I want to point out that it is a whole experience, every strategy together that tells consumers something about the marketplace. A combination gives a sense of overview as well as a detailed understanding of specific issues of the marketplace.

Furthermore, in a Consumer Contextual Learning approach learning has been discussed in three dimensions (for analytical purposes): 1) learning is about collective participation in the context, 2) learning is about contextual sources of inspiration, 3) learning by being present and close to the context. These three dimensions connect and complement each other in the following ways. The three dimensions show different actors which the consumer engages with in the context, there are other consumers and shop assistants (dimension 1), social media (dimension 2) and the high street and retailer (dimension 3). These actors all complement each other in the kind of learning experiences the consumers make in the marketplace, as well as complement each other in what consumers learn. Besides, the three dimensions connect to each other by bringing together different types of settings for the study of Consumer Contextual Learning.

What do consumers do when learning? The analysis has shown a number of different strategies employed to learn in the marketplace. The table in appendix two is a framework of these different activities. It shows the name of the activity (as analysed above in chapters six and seven), the description of the activity and the type of activity (where it is situated). These activities are the way consumers learn in the marketplace. And all this together should give an overview of all Consumer Contextual Learning activities (capabilities in fast fashion).

One can view all these activities in the light of the two main ways of seeking to learn, as I highlighted above. The issue of staying close to the marketplace and the issue of learning in a dynamic marketplace characterised by speed. In an attempt

to illustrate this I have created a perceptual map (sometimes also called a positioning map). In this case, this is a tool that attempts to illustrate the consumers' main ways of seeking to learn in the marketplace through CCL activities. In the illustration, the fast-slow axis focuses on the activities of pace, and the close-distant axis focuses on activities regarding presence in the marketplace. Keep in mind it is consumers' perceptions (perceived pace etcetera), which are in the map. The illustration shows how activities can be viewed if understood in relation to each other; that is we can see the main ways of seeking to learn in the marketplace intertwined. Accordingly the map highlights the range of activities consumers use (that was discussed in chapters six and seven) but in an aggregated manner. Thus the illustration shows the bundles of learning activities: slow and distant activities, distant and fast activities, close and fast activities, and slow and close activities.

A perceptual map is a common way to illustrate consumers' perceptions of competing market offerings, and the idea of using this kind of map is that learning activities can be viewed as different activities on offer in the learning pursuit for consumers. Hence the point is that consumers not only make up learning activities to consume different market offers but, just as important, also consume different types of learning activities. When they use an activity to learn in the marketplace, they are also consumers of that particular activity.

Looking at the map in figure 8.1, it shows how a bundle of activities can be viewed through the lenses of fast-slow and close-distant. But what does that say about consumer learning? That is, what happens when it overlaps: i.e. if fast and close overlap for example, what is the meaning for consumer learning? The overlap may create a temporal approach to distance, that is a 'pace of distance' meaning that we might be able to speak about how pace is tied to distance in a social and cultural way, and that learning activities can be both fast and slow regardless of whether the distance is close or distant to the marketplace. Pace has importance but so does distance, both have implications for consumer learning, especially in a fast-moving market. For instance in the bundle of fast and close activities, the value may lie in the tight connection to the marketplace, in the presence in the retail store, and in the high pace of learning activities that aligns with the speed of the market. This can be illustrated by the learning activity of moving quickly in the retail store. The activity is tightly connected to the retail setting, because it involves a thorough sense of place of the retail environment (i.e. getting one's bearings in the store in order to efficiently (and with speed) move around), which is only possible if one is close to the action by visiting the retail store. While it is also concerned with pace because the importance of being able to move with speed is tied to the idea of chasing the latest arrivals and the point that the marketplace is fast-moving in terms of the speed with which new items disappear into the hands of other consumers. While engaging in these kinds of

activities, consumers may sense that they are in tune with the place and with the pace of the (fast fashion) marketplace (sense of place reinforces sense of rhythm). Whereas in the merger of distant and fast activities, it shows for example how value can be tied to being able to keep up with the pace of the marketplace in 'real' time, while being unable to visit the stores, such as in the case of using instant haul videos as a replacement for visits to the store (consumers may then sense that they are in tune with the pace of the market, while not however feeling the same close connection to what is going on in the marketplace).

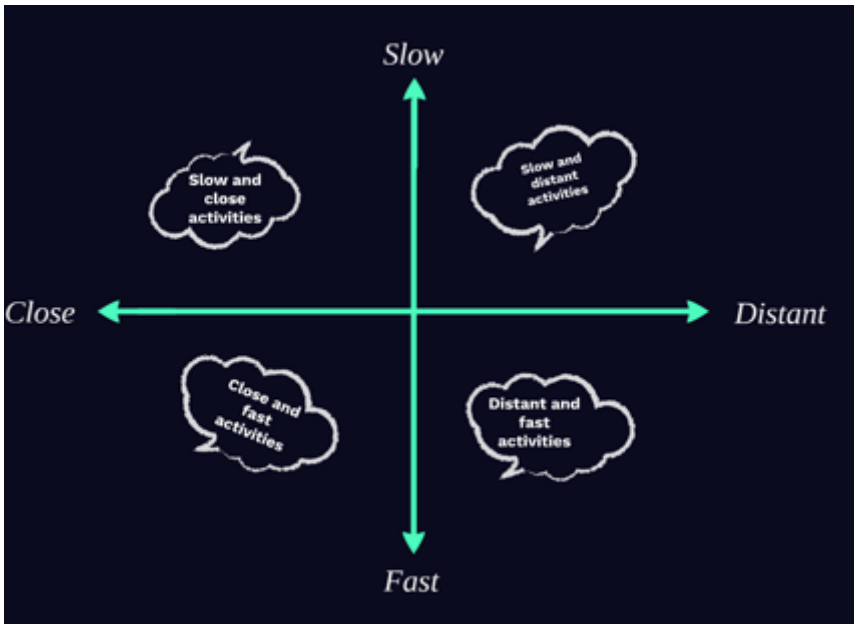


Figure 8.1.
Perceptual map of the main ways of seeking to learn in the marketplace

To conclude, the above illustration again shows how the present study has investigated how consumers use different learning activities to learn in the marketplace, that is learning activities are 'strategies of how' (i.e. moving quickly) thus for future research it would be of interest to extend this work, and explore how learning activities are fine-tuned and advanced by consumers (i.e. studies of how learning activities develop over time).

The involvement in activities also points to a central observation in this study that consumers appreciate and judge each other based on the knowledge they have regarding what activities to use and know about, and the capacity to learn from these activities. Thus the consumption of the learning activities in themselves is a vital part in why and how consumers do engage in participation in the

marketplace. That is, consumption of learning activities underlines the significance of how other consumers judge what you know and how you engage in learning activities, not only what you got in terms of latest arrivals. That is, the driving force of engaging in learning activities may be living up to what one knows and what one has in the wardrobe. The capacity to learn how to get hold of new items and make them part of the outfits and the wardrobe is an issue of concern in fashion research. For example, how consumers manage to get dressed in the first place may not traditionally have been an area of interest, but rather there has been a strong focus on what consumers are wearing, especially a focus on construction of identity and the use of symbolic signs (Thompson and Haytko 1997; Murray 2002; Marion and Nairn 2011). Thus this present study may contribute to discussions on how consumers 'manage to get dressed'. As Cwerner notes "theories of fashion have focused almost exclusively on why people dress the way they do, while very little has been said about how they manage to get dressed in the first place" (2001:81). Therefore, studies such as the present study that emphasise the ways in which consumers know how to chase the market and hunt for the latest items should bring about some interesting discussions.

The ways consumers approach the learning activities show that there is aim and ambition. There is a lot of effort, eagerness to know more, and much time spent on this. It is a rather focused consumer, well informed about the market. Thus it is not aimless, but rather a forward-looking consumer, and this type of fast fashion context encourages a strategic-oriented behaviour among consumers. One aspect of this strategic-oriented behaviour is the focus and systematic craze for the new. As discussed above there is value in newness, consumers learn the rhythm of the marketplace, and a new type of shopping emerges: fast shopping. It shows how the value of the object is transformed; it is not about the item in itself but about having the competence to acquire the latest items faster.

But what does it mean to be part of this speed culture driven by the fascination of newness? Based on the above discussions on the extensive interest in getting hold of new arrivals and following fashion trends, one may wonder why consumers value the fast fashion business model. For example, why is the type of fashion provided by fast fashion retailers chosen? And why is the keeping up with fast fashion trends and hunting for the latest items important? What is the value of fast fashion consumption? And what does it mean to speed shop?

In approaching and reflecting on these questions I use Kawamura's thoughts on fashion as an idea. Fashion is often discussed in terms of clothing, but Kawamura argues that fashion and clothing are two separate entities and as such can be studied separately (Kawamura 2005). Fashion is an idea negotiated within, for example, aggregations of consumers, and as such it is an understanding of fashion, a way to approach fashion or an attitude towards fashion (Kawamura 2005). The

point of treating fashion as an idea is to highlight the idea of newness, i.e. the fascination for the new, and the systematic appreciation for the new. The systematic appreciation for the new is central to why fast fashion is appreciated among the group of consumers in this study. Newness attracts the consumer to the fast fashion marketplace. And this is the deciding factor, the systematic interest for the new in itself is the most important for fast fashion, not the fashion item itself. It is clear that fast fashion is a unifying idea of what fashion is to the group of consumers in this study. That is, there is a shared understanding among participants of the different characteristics of fast fashion: instant gratification, trendy dreamy new arrivals each and every day, fun, and sparkling shiny newness.

Furthermore, it is clear that there is a unifying understanding of the benefits of fast fashion. Because there seem to be a common ground in what matters in fashion consumption, and a common idea of what fashion is (Cf. Kawamura 2005). That is, there is a shared sense of how fashion in general is understood among participants. This idea of fashion is about understanding fashion as temporal and always fast changing, as an endless supply of newness, as novel and shiny, and of providing the opportunity of constantly being in fashion and never going out of style. Hence then for participants fashion equals fast fashion; not any other kind of fashion such as vintage fashion or luxury branded fashion goods. This unifying idea about fashion seems to give participants a purpose in fashion consumption, and furthermore, it seems to create a group of a specific type of fashion consumer. As Ozdamar-Ertekin similarly has noted in fast fashion consumption "consumers have changed their priorities in buying clothing. Instead of assessing for quality or looking at labels, they started to search for what is new" (2016:10). Consequently today, consumers in a fast-changing market use learning activities that are fast paced and the rhythm of shopping has changed to the rhythm of speed, all taking place in what Bauman (2011) would call an increasingly liquid world.

From an emic view, what does it mean to embrace fast fashion? In this present study, there are two main reasons why this interest for newness is of importance. First, because participants spend a lot of time and effort in creating ever-changing outfits, or in the long run developing a sense of style which embraces variability and the speed of newness in fast fashion. Fast fashion offers limited availability of trendy items. The consumer is interested in the benefits fast fashion can offer in terms of production in limited batches, which gives the consumer the opportunity to build outfits that are trendy at the moment but not mass produced. Consequently the value is tied to newness, the keeping up with fast fashion trends in order to not miss out on instant gratification. Second, keeping up with new trends is important because the fast fashion wardrobe needs constant updating. Thus to successfully put together outfits, one needs to have control of the inflow and outflow. Therefore, participants spend time on organising the constant motion and flow of new items from fast fashion consumption.

Following this emic view, one may perhaps ask the question: Has fast fashion changed the way we shop for fashion? It may not have changed as such; fashion has always been a search for the new, on the lookout for trendy styles, and being in step with the times (Blumer 1969a; Breward 2003; Craik 2009), or as Simmel wrote in 1957/1904:547 "Fashion always occupies the dividing-line between the past and the present". But what may be different in fast fashion consumption is how the new seems to be more articulated (there is a systematic appreciation for the new). In fast fashion consumption the emphasis is rather on the new (and the future) and not so much on the present. It seems being in the present is overshadowed by the constant speed of the fast fashion model with its continual supply of new trendy items (i.e. as H&M writes in the wall messages to consumers: New stuff is coming in each and every day, so why not do the same?).

My hope for the research in this study is that it has demonstrated the values and drivers of fast fashion for consumers, and that the nuances of fast fashion shopping have become more visible. This present study has contributed with some understandings of how fast fashion is consumed, and why this type of fashion is important for consumers. From a societal perspective, it is particularly important to see these nuances of fast fashion shopping today. Media talk is a powerful mediator of ideas and images of fast fashion consumption. For instance, if we look at media talk it makes fast fashion shopping visible, especially in the light of and in comparison with sustainability and consumption of 'slow' fashion. Thus fast fashion shopping has been in the limelight, as the debate on sustainable ways of consuming fashion has become more lively vigilant. Yet in comparison little room has been given to details of consumption. As for example the typology of stereotypification in chapter five showed, there have mainly been simplified descriptions about fast fashion consumption and the fast fashion consumer.

If we know how fast fashion is consumed it can further our understanding of why the praise and admiration (from shop assistants and friends) of consumers' skills of fast fashion consumption can contribute to furthering the interest and immersion of fast fashion consumption among consumers. This praise and admiration functions as a confirmation from consumer society. For example knowing how to manoeuvre in a fast-moving market by locating hidden items. Getting hold of the latest arrivals to ensure instant gratification shows how consumers have mastered the ways of consumer society, and can participate in the fast fashion marketplace. Thus the actions made, and the 'know-how' consumers use, is not useless or a waste of time. Rather this knowledge is rewarding not just in terms of the items purchased, but also in terms of the confirmation in consumer society.

From the present research we know more about how fast fashion is consumed, which in turn may have implications for not only a more nuanced understanding of the speed consumption phenomenon but also for the ways in which retail

servicescapes are designed. For instance, there may be managerial implications for how speed is manifested in servicescapes, and a more fitting name may be speedscapes. For example, the messages of speed, articulated as new trendy deliveries on an everyday basis at H&M may indicate an emphasis of speed culture in fashion consumption. This may pose new questions such as what the consequences may be for how consumption is carried out and the way we learn about and understand the supply of new goods. It certainly raises questions regarding sustainability and future research may examine such consequences in the marketplace, particularly for the shopping for fast fashion which is significantly tied to the speed of new trendy items.

Sammanfattning

Den ständiga jakten på de allra senaste trenderna är en tidskrävande och intensiv aktivitet bland konsumenter som vill hålla sig uppdaterade inom det snabba modet. Fast fashion konsumtion ger möjligheter för konsumenter att hitta och prova nya trender, skapa de senaste klädkombinationerna, och leka med olika stilar. Att hänga med i tempot av nya trender är populärt bland fast fashion konsumenter, och då krävs både hängivenhet och engagemang.

Detta betyder att konsumenter spenderar mycket tid på att försöka lista ut vad som händer med fast fashion trender, och konsumenter skapar olika strategier för att hålla sig uppdaterade på en snabbföränderlig marknad. Det är ett systematiskt sätt att närma sig konsumtion där olika rutiner avlöser varandra; dagliga besök till butiker och shoppingstråk, tajming av leveransdagar och genom att följa social medier eller regelbundna iakttagelser av andra konsumenter är återkommande aktiviteter.

I avhandlingen analyseras hur konsumenter lär sig om produkter på marknader som är snabbföränderliga. Detta görs genom att utveckla en begreppsapparat för att studera hur konsumenters lärande är kontextbaserat i bemärkelsen att praktiker och strategier för lärande skapas och förhandlas i sociala interaktioner med andra konsumenter och marknadsplatsen. Tidigare forskning fokuserar på experiment och beräkningar av hur lärande sker, men saknar insikter för hur lärande går till genom att konsumenter skapar olika konsumtionsstrategier för att få inblick och kunskap. Denna avhandling bidrar därför till vår kunskap om hur lärande i konsumtion går till.

Metoder som används i denna avhandling för att studera konsumenters lärande är fokusgruppintervjuer med fast fashion konsumenter, samt observationer i fast fashion butiker. Fokusgruppintervjuer har genomförts hemma hos konsumenter där vi under flera timmar vid middag eller fika haft långa konversationer i grupperna om hur fast fashion konsumeras. Observationer i fast fashion butiker har fokuserat på hur butiksmiljö och utformning kan användas som verktyg i att få kunskap om hur fast fashion framställs.

Den begreppsapparat som utvecklas i avhandlingen sammanförs i ramverket konsumentens kontextuella lärande (på engelska benämnt Consumer Contextual Learning). Detta ramverk består av tre dimensioner av hur lärande går till;

kollektivt deltagande i en kontext, kontextuella inspirationskällor samt närvaro och närhet till kontexten. Dessa dimensioner uppvisar ett spektrum av aktiviteter som konsumenter använder i lärande på en marknad som är snabbföränderlig. Aktiviteterna utgörs bland annat av strategierna: timing, identifiering, spårning, samt scenarioskapande och fantasi. Många av dessa aktiviteter är tidskrävande, och visar även hur fast fashion kontexten uppmuntrar ett strategiskt orienterat konsumtionsbeteende.

Därutöver visar dessa resultat att lärandeaktiviteter kan karakteriseras mer eller mindre av att upplevas som antingen långsamma eller snabba. Att använda olika tempo i lärandeaktiviteter visar sig vara centralt för en upplevd känsla av kontroll av den hastighet som nya trender introduceras och konsumeras på en marknad som är snabbföränderlig. Logiken som underbygger dessa aktiviteter är effektivitet. Att vara effektiv är eftersträvansvärt eftersom det upplevs som en grundförutsättning för att hänga med i trenders rytm och uppleva den omedelbara tillfredställelsen. Detta förfarande skapar ett starkt fokus och intensivt sökande efter det nya. Det nya i sig värderas högt och eftersträvas bland konsumenter av fast fashion.

Denna avhandling bidrar till kunskap om hur lärande i konsumtion går till. Den visar hur lärande kan ske genom deltagande aktiviteter i olika sociala situationer i en kulturell kontext. Specifikt lyfter avhandlingen fram hur lärandeaktiviteter är knutna till kontexten och det visar sig genom en enträgen närvaro och konstant koppling till vad som sker i exempelvis butiksmiljöer. Avhandlingen bidrar även till den växande litteraturen om tid och shopping genom att visa hur konsumenter lär sig om marknadens rytm och en typ av shoppingpraktik framträder: ”tempo shopping”. Här visar avhandlingen också hur värdet av konsumtionsobjektet förändras; det handlar inte om att värdet ligger i själva objektet utan om att ha kompetens till att införskaffa de senaste trenderna snabbare. Till sist så bidrar även avhandlingen till diskussioner gällande konsumtion och meningsskapande. Om tidigare studier visat hur varumärken och stil är viktiga aspekter inom meningsskapande för modekonsumtion, så visar denna studie hur konsumenten blir bedömd utifrån den kunskap hen har, samt vilken förmåga och engagemang hen har för att lära.

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Appendix one

Name	Age	Education	Marital status	Occupation
Alina	22	University	Single	Student (Social work)
Leyla	22	University	Single	Student (Social work)
Cornelia	28	University	Cohabiter	Sales assistant fast fashion retailer
Hanna	27	University	Single	Student (Media and communication)
Amina	29	University	Married	Parental leave
Therese	26	High School	Single	Personal shopper and stylist (TV4)
Dana	23	University	Single	Student (Marketing)
Siri	22	University	Single	Student (Marketing)
Lisa	29	University	Single	Kindergarten teacher
Jasmine	29	University	Cohabiter	Kindergarten teacher
Maja	28	University	Cohabiter	Kindergarten teacher
Alice	29	University	Cohabiter	Key Account Manager (Cosmetic company)
Sophia	30	University	Cohabiter	Key Account Manager (Cosmetic company)
Desirée	28	University	Married	Parental leave
Caroline	27	University	Cohabiter	Sales assistant fast fashion retailer
Klara	22	University	Cohabiter	Journalist (Fashion)
Nicole	29	University	Married	Statistican (Cosmetic company)
Sanna	28	University	Cohabiter	Key Account Manager (Cosmetic company)
Anja	26	University	Cohabiter	Sales assistant fashion retailer
Annie	26	University	Cohabiter	Nurse
Elinor	27	University	Cohabiter	Nurse
Beatrice	29	University	Cohabiter	Communication Manager
Milla	28	University	Cohabiter	Human Resorces
Emilia	29	University	Cohabiter	Sales assistant fast fashion retailer
Felicia	28	University	Cohabiter	Manager
Melissa	26	Vocational University	Single	Hairdresser
Jonathan	36	High School	Single	Personal shopper fashion

Appendix two

Name of activity	Description	Situated (where it takes place)
Feedback from fellow consumers	Listening to feedback from friends, and feedback by friends' actions	During the interview, in the retail store, and the high street
People watching	Environmental scanning. How others wear trends, what items worn and when these items are worn	Utilized in the streets of the city
Imitating	Copying and making similar choices as other consumers and develop a sense of what is acceptable. It is about keeping pace with what is in fashion now.	Utilized in the streets of the city
Asking questions	Gathering information from shop assistants. For example, information asked for over a period of time, provide basis for learning delivery days, and notice if there are any changes to the delivery cycle.	Employed in the retail store
Recognizing actions	Observation of 'certain ways' of doing things. There are specific ways of consuming fast fashion, such as norms of what can be said and done, as well as consequences if one does not comply.	Utilized on social media (Facebook), high street and the retail store
Listening	Listening to people that has experience, to get confirmation of fashion consumption or suggestions and compliments on the items they have picked up.	Utilized in the retail store
Watching out for changes	Monitoring for new arrivals in stores, and watching out for competing consumers. Watching how other consumers behave in the retail store, for example hiding items.	Employed in the retail store
Tracking updates	Follow what other consumers wear. Date of post and repetition of use of the same items.	Social media, Facebook
Sorting	Organizing a mess in the store to create order. Creating order, in a way that makes sense to the participants, and in the same time learning details about the new arrivals.	Utilized in the retail store
Imagination	Learning by inspiration as a way to create an idea of what is going on behind the scenes at the fast fashion retailer. Daydreaming creates scenarios of what is happening at the retailer in terms of design and production of new trend collections.	At home, in the streets and the retail store
Spotting	Noticing what kind of new fashion items is available at different retailers and change of trends at a specific time.	Utilized in the high street, cluster of fast fashion stores
Timing	Trying to get a sense of control about new arrivals, knowing what is out there in the fast fashion marketplace at the moment, but also being there at 'the right time'.	Utilized in the high street and the retail store
Scanning	Identifying and collecting clues by examining the front area of the stores or by skimming window displays, as passing by on the high street. Clues about for example new colour for the season.	Utilized in the high street
Searching	Browsing is a general sweeping searching style. Browse large areas of the retail store by walking through the aisles of racks of clothes constantly letting eyes wander over the clothes. General understanding of what can be found in the retail store.	Utilized in the retail store
Creating routines	Continuous monitoring or repetitive actions to ensure instant gratification and understanding of how the market operates.	Utilized in the high street and the retail store
Setting timeframes	Strategic planning for visits to the high street, to ensure there is time for shopping and that this time is spent efficiently.	Utilized in the high street
Moving quickly	Rapidly go around in the store to get hold of the new arrivals, facilitated by knowing the way the store is organized and having a sense of the pace of the fast moving marketplace.	Utilized in the retail store
Decluttering	Systematically sorting piles of clothes to carefully and slow examine new arrivals. Identifying what type of garments there are among the new arrivals (style, colour, trend etc.), and assessing quality of items and compare with price.	Utilized in the retail store
Compartmentalizing	Refining impressions by examining specific sections of the merchandise, scanning one by one. It is about moving systematically through all new merchandise, one section at a time.	Utilized in the retail store
Ordering	Making sure that items are worn on a regular schedule, in a certain order, and thus that the inflow of new fast fashion items will provide for outfits which are trendy and varied. Ordering is about creating a routine of how often an item is worn, by using different ways of tracking the number of times an item is worn.	In the home, wardrobe management.

Printed by Media-Tryck, Lund 2017 NORDIC ECOLABEL, 3041 0903

Consumer Contextual Learning

This dissertation explores how consumers figure out different ways to keep up with the accelerating speed of fashion trends. These activities are in this study seen as learning activities, which focus on getting to know the marketplace. The context is the fast fashion marketplace in which offerings are desirable because of their limited availability. This study advances our understanding of consumer learning by developing the concept: consumer contextual learning. In contrast to previous work in consumer research, which predominantly understands consumer learning by experiments in labs, this concept goes beyond cognition and highlights the notion of marketplace participation. The findings of this book show how consumer learning entails a constant connection to or presence in the marketplace, and how consumers use a spectrum of learning activities, such as spotting, timing and imagination. These activities demonstrate how the fast fashion context encourages a strategic-oriented behaviour among consumers. For example, consumers employ rhythm in the learning activities to get a sense of control of the fast-moving marketplace. It points out how rhythm of learning activities creates a new type of shopping: fast shopping. In fast shopping the value of the object is transformed; it is not about the item in itself but about having the competence to acquire the latest items faster.

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Department of Service Management
and Service Studies
ISBN 978-91-7753-252-1